

The mystery of male and female: biblical and trinitarian models

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An imaginary interview with C.S. Lewis on the subject of male and female might take this shape:

RPS Dr Lewis, I understand that you are not really convinced about the equality of the sexes.

CSL I have the highest regard for the opposite sex. But there is no equality anywhere. In the great deep dance of heaven there is no equality. We are not like stones laid side by side, or one on top of the other, but stones ordered in an archway with each of us interlocking with Him, the centre. We are all equally at the centre and none are there by being equals.¹

RPS But whether you use the word equality or not, both men and women are needed in church leadership equally, since both men and women are made in the image of God.

CSL Only a man in a masculine uniform can represent God to the church, since the church is essentially feminine to God.²

RPS Dr Lewis, your argument is curiously reversible. If only men in a masculine uniform can be in church leadership because church leaders represent God to the church, then is it not true that only women in feminine uniform should be in church leadership when those leaders represent the church to God by offering sacrifices of praise and worship? If the church is the bride and Christ is the groom, then the ministers and those appointed to act on behalf of the church must all be women!

I am sure that C.S. Lewis would explain that he is neither deprecating women, nor against female leadership or women in ministry, but repulsed by the modern addiction to the idea of equality. He would probably want to point out that while the Bible exalts sexual differences, it sees no differences in the rights and privileges of men and women when they are in Christ. But that leaves us with a dilemma which must be resolved if peace is to come in the battle of the sexes at church and at home. The problem is partly caused by the apparent double message of Scripture.

Inspired ambiguity

It is no wonder that competent biblical scholars line up on both sides of the women's ministry issue, some defending what they call parity of the sexes at home and in the church, others defending distinctive roles and governmental differences between the sexes.³ Both sides claim the authority of Scripture.

I have come to the conclusion that the ambiguity at the root of these differences is not accidental but God-inspired. God's Word puts us in a bind, a bind which only faith can resolve, as the following brief overview suggests:

1. Radical sexual equality in creation and in Christ

On the one hand, the Bible teaches radical sexual equality as illustrated by the following summary points:

★Both sexes are created in the image of God: each images God as fully as the other; and it takes both men and women to express the image of God on earth.⁴

★Full side-by-side complementarity of the sexes is God's intended plan. The archetypal passage in Genesis 2, to which both Jesus and Paul refer, confirms that men and women were side-by-side companions and partners, not leader and follower, or sovereign and assistant. Nothing deprecating is implied by the word 'helper' (it is used of God himself, Ps. 54:4). There is nothing in the passage to reinforce the sovereignty or superiority of the male. We are not

justified in concluding with Susan Foh⁵ and others⁶ that the archetypal passage in Genesis 1-3 proclaims both an ontological equality of women to men (equal in receiving the benefits of Christ) and the subordination of woman in government, rendering women unfit to hold teaching or ruling positions in the church.

★In Christ, the curse experienced by male and female is substantially reversed. While we are still exploring time-honoured and culturally-bound misinterpretations, I must acknowledge my gratitude for Susan Foh's helpful treatment of the curse in Genesis 3:16. She shows that the effect of sin was negative for both the man and the woman. One result of sin is that man will now rule his wife, instead of being the side-by-side companion of Genesis 2:18-25. The woman will desire to overthrow that rule: as signalled by the curse, 'your desire will be for your husband' (3:16). Susan Foh shows conclusively that the etymology of the word 'desire' supports a non-sexual understanding of the word, similar to its use in 4:7 for the desire of sin to overmaster Cain. Men rule; women revolt. Sometimes the rebellion is overt, sometimes it is covert, as with the woman who said, 'My husband is the head, but I am the neck and I can turn the head any way I like.' Both are the result of sin.⁷ In Christ it is different. Instead of the politics of rule and revolt (Gn. 3:16) in the home, there is the grace of mutual submission. Christ equips husbands to love their wives sacrificially, instead of ruling them. Christ equips wives to bombard their husbands with undeserved respect instead of rebelling against their husband's rule overtly or covertly (Eph. 5:21-23).

★Male and female enjoy full equality in Christ. There are no second-class citizens in God's kingdom (Gal. 3:28). As we shall soon see, this passage teaches the elimination of all disadvantages, not of all distinctions.

★Men and women are joint heirs of the spiritual gifts and co-leaders of God's people under the new covenant. All the spiritual gifts are given without sexual distinction (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; Eph. 4). In these 'last days' both men and women are fully equipped by the Spirit to prophesy (Acts 2:17-18). Even the so-called 'leadership gifts' of apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers (Eph. 4:11) are granted without sexual differentiation. Rich testimony to this is given in Paul's greetings in Romans 16, which refer to nineteen men and ten women known to him. Women played a key role in the churches under Paul and it is hard to imagine that when 'leading women' followed Paul (Acts 17:4, 12) they adopted silence and ceased to give some kind of leadership. Paul is neither a traditional hierarchical (men over women) chauvinist, nor a radical feminist.

The advocates of female equality and interchangeable ministries seem to have the Bible on their side. But so do those who insist that sexual differences are entrenched in creation and exalted by Christ. I repeat, the bind about women's ministry is caused by Scripture. It is intentional.

Another sampling of biblical truth on radical sexual differentiation will reveal how deep the ambiguity in this area goes.

2. Radical sexual differentiation

★The physical constitution of each sex suggests that there are profound differences in both psychology and spirituality. It is generally recognized that women, who have their sexual and reproductive organs inside their bodies, are more totally identified with their experience of sexuality. Men have their organs on the outside and tend to be less totally identified. Jean Vanier speaks of the woman's sexuality as interior and the man's as exterior.⁸ Every cell of the body exhibits sexual differentiation. These differences have become incarnated

in the norms and traditions of every culture and have profound implications for our spiritualities.

★*The apostle Paul finds in the creation of woman from the man (1 Cor. 11:8), for the man (11:9) and after the man (1 Tim. 2:13) an argument for some kind of male priority, not merely in the culture of his day but entrenched in creation. Exactly what constitutes this priority is the issue at stake. To show how sensitively Paul balances sexual equality in Christ and sexual differentiation we must note how Paul stands his own creational argument (for, from, after) on its head by saying, 'in the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman' (1 Cor. 11:11), clinching his synthesis with another creational analogy, namely that all men are now born from women!*

★*Scripture contains three corrective passages which insist that sexual distinctions must be made in ministry. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 14:34-36 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 are notoriously difficult to interpret, especially in the light of Paul's affirmation of women's ministry elsewhere. But all three underscore that men and women must be in right relationship for worship to be orderly and God-honouring.⁹*

★*The marriage headship problem. Unfortunately the headship of the husband is often understood as power and authority. In contrast to this, Ephesians 5:21-33 exhorts the husband not to overpower but to empower his wife through loving, sacrificial service to her. On the matter of power and authority Paul actually uses the word *exousia* in 1 Corinthians 11:10 for the woman's own authority to minister (not the husband's through delegation), this view being conceded even by scholars who insist on hierarchical headship.¹⁰ Whether one understands 'head' incorrectly, in my view, as 'chief over', the way James Hurley does, or as 'source', the way Gordon Fee does,¹¹ one is left hanging on the horns of the headship dilemma: some distinction within marriage is called for under the metaphor of headship, a distinction directly exhorted by the apostles and modelled by Christ's relationship with the church. Earthly marriage is designed to be a heavenly parable, not merely a convenient way of cohabiting. The problem with most books which correctly defend male-female equality is that they usually do so by eliminating headship or by reducing it to a meaningless anachronism.¹²*

★*The Father God whose image both male and female bear. One can appreciate the logic of Lewis' statement that males should represent God to the church when the church is feminine to God even if one disagrees. There is not a single case in the Bible where we are exhorted or even encouraged to call God mother. To speak of God as Father is fundamental to biblical faith. It is what marks our peoplehood with our covenant God. When the Hebrew people spoke of God as Father (Is. 9:6; Mi. 2:10) they did so understanding that fatherhood confers relationship. All *patria* in heaven and on earth is derived from the Father (Eph. 3:15).¹³ In contrast, no Muslim ever addresses God as Father.*

Nevertheless, the Bible is rich in feminine imagery of God. God is a midwife (Ps. 22:9), a winged bird under whose wings people take refuge (36:8). God is both master and mistress (Ps. 123:2). The Hebrew word for compassion (*rachim*) conveys the notion of God's motherly compassion.¹⁴ Paul speaks about his relationship with Christians for whom he felt responsible in language effusive in both paternal and maternal imagery (Gal. 4:19). And why should he not? It takes both male and female to be the image of God.

Commenting on the paucity of feminine imagery in the NT (except the 'hen' passage in Mt. 23:27) and the preoccupation of the church with exclusively male images of God, Kenneth Leech notes that it was all too easy for the Mother of God (mariolatry) to replace the missing note of God as Mother. We may, he suggests, carefully speak of God as the Lord whom we have come to know as both Father and Mother,¹⁵ which is not the same as addressing God as 'Mother'. David Jeffrey, on the other hand, tends to downplay these feminine references to God (for good reason)¹⁶ and makes the astute observation that the net effect of vertical inclusive language is not the feminization of God but *neutering and abstraction*, 'by means of which the central character of all biblical language about God — that it is personal and intends to reveal divine personality — is blunted or entirely effaced'.¹⁷ Neutering God has the effect of neutering ministry, of dissolving the mystery of male and female into androgyny. Here then is the other side of the argument: the Bible exalts sexual differences in personal faith, marriage and church ministry.

Scripture presents us with two seemingly irreconcilable truths. First, God created the differentiation of the sexes. Sin brought alienation and negative power politics into the home, and the effects of that curse are still with us. Christ's saving work has substantially reversed the curse but does not reverse creation. Male and female differentiation continues in marriage and ministry. However, at the same time, a marvellous unity and equality was implied in God's plan for the sexes, a unity once lost but now substantially rediscovered through Christ. Rather than imitating Adam and Eve in their fallen hierarchical relationship, Jesus and Paul invite us to find our model in the original couple before the fall. Thus, Adam and Eve are not only our past, but our future. But how can we resolve the bind in which this leaves us?

Scripture, like the gospel itself, is characterized by reversal, a 'but' that forces us to see another viewpoint. And good preaching takes the perceived ambiguity in a text and explores in its light the human predicament with sufficient depth that one is 'set up' to discover the resolution of the bind in Christ and the gospel.¹⁴ Scripture is the ultimate preachment in just this sense: it plunges us into a bind that affects our experience and perception of what it means to be human — male and female. It defines or even exaggerates the itch before it tells us how to scratch, revealing Christ and his gospel as the resolution only when we have fully perceived ambiguities within the issue.

Inspired resolution: the battle of the sexes peaced

The clue to the resolution of the bind is found in the book that evokes the tension in the Bible. Paul says in Ephesians 5:32, 'this is a profound mystery — but I am speaking about Christ and the church'. A mystery is a deep truth about God and his dealings with man. It takes us beyond normal human categories to find an answer to an apparent contradiction. Mystery points to incomprehensible fact, to transcendent truth, to a reality appreciated by worship, to the experience of Christ in the living out of our lives. To begin unpacking the mystery of biblical unity at least partially we will explore three inspired analogies, all from Scripture, and all associated with the mystery of Christ. All show that biblical unity is a social complex.

1. The mystery of Christ and the church

Marriage as designed by God is a pale reflection of the mysterious unity of Christ and the church. It is a two-way lens, on one hand enabling us to 'see into' God's covenantal relation with his people through a universal life situation: the covenant of a man and a woman. On the other hand we can 'see into' the male-female covenant by viewing it through the ultimate prototype: Yahweh's irrevocable covenant with Israel and Christ's with his bride.¹⁹

The mysterious unity of Christ and his church is such a profound intercourse that we may speak of the church as Christ's body — not as an extension of himself, not even an extension of his incarnation, but his body. So identified is Jesus with his own body that a rejection of his bride is a rejection of himself, as Saul the Pharisee discovered (Acts 9:5). We may reverently speak of a mutual covenantal filling: Christ filling the church (Eph. 1:23) and the church filling Christ by being his inheritance, his treasure (Eph. 1:18). It is the difference and the interdependence of head and body, groom and bride, that allow us to speak of the unity of Christ and the church as a sacramental unity, a divine mystery worthy of contemplation.

Christ does not control or rule the church, not at least in the same way that he brings inanimate creation and the entire cosmos under his headship (Eph. 1:22). Instead of overpowering his spouse, Christ so invests himself in his own bride that he can commit himself to the bride's decisions (Jn. 15:15; Mt. 18:18; Jn. 20:21). Thus, the Christ-church relationship is the perfect model of husband-wife. The husband is head not by overlordship but by empowering his bride.²⁰

If a superior (Christ) and an inferior (church) can enjoy such unity, then why cannot two creatures who are equal but gloriously different? That seems to be the thrust of Paul's first inspired analogy. Here is rich unity because there is both equality and differentiation, thus modelling full male-female partnership as a much richer reality than mere interchangeability.

2. The mystery of Jews and Gentiles in the new humanity

Paul also uses the word 'mystery' to describe the marvellous new humanity Christ created in himself from two very different

humanities: Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:14-15). Jesus did not fashion Jews out of Gentiles, or Gentiles out of Jews, but rather incorporated both into a unity that transcends the differences without obliterating them. The mystery is that the church experiences more unity with both Gentiles and Jews than it could as a mere messianic Jewish community, or a mere Gentile church, a truth largely obscured today.

Nothing thrilled Paul's heart more than the mystery of God's dealings with Jews and Gentiles bringing both together in a unity of equality and differentiation. This mystery is the climax of his letter to the Romans. He concludes his contemplation of the Lord's social miracle worked among Jews and Gentiles (chapters 9-11) with the longest doxology in the letter (11:33-36). He coined new words and phrases to express this mysterious togetherness: made alive together (Eph. 2:5), raised up together with Christ (2:6), seated together in Christ (2:6), citizens together (2:19), joined together (2:21), built together (2:22), heirs together (3:6), embodied together (3:6), partakers together (3:6), knitted together (4:16). This miraculous togetherness is not because the two peoples are similar (Jews and Gentiles, or males and females) but precisely because they are both different but, in Christ, a social complex rich and mysterious. Once more we see a pattern for the rich unity of full male-female partnership that celebrates rather than merges sexual differences.

But the third inspired analogy requires more comprehensive treatment: the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Paul makes this deliberate connection in Ephesians 4:4-6: our unity in the church originates in the unity within the Godhead, one God, one Father, one Lord. We may speak of this transcendent unity as Trinitarian unity.

3. The ultimate analogy: the mystery of the Holy Trinity

The theological parallel for androgyny (the merging of the sexes, or the desexualization of humanity) is Islamic monotheism, or Unitarianism. The impoverished unity in each results in abstraction rather than personhood. No Muslim calls God 'Abba'. Ironically the central tenet of Islam, that there is but one God, is Christianity's profoundest preachment. Social Trinitarianism proclaims a unity of God deeper than the abstract unity of Islam. Perhaps this is the ultimate irony in the history of religions that, far from proclaiming tritheism, the Christian church humbly confesses the deepest truth of the Muslim creed: one God. And we do this by insisting that we have come to know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Dr J.I. Packer's definition of Trinitarianism in *The New Dictionary of Theology* is succinct and helpful: 'Within the complex unity of his being, three personal centres of rational awareness eternally coinhere, interpenetrate, relate in mutual love, and cooperate in all divine actions. God is not only *he* but also *they* — Father, Son and Spirit, coequal and coeternal in power and glory though functioning in a set pattern whereby the Son obeys the Father and the Spirit subserves both. All statements about God in general or about the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit in particular, should be "cashed" in Trinitarian terms, if something of their meaning is not to be lost'.²¹

The Orthodox church has probably best understood the awe-some beauty of this. While the Western church, starting with Augustine, started with the philosophical notion of the unity of the Godhead and then attempted to explain the differences of the persons, the Eastern church started with the apostolic witness and the church's experience of three divine persons, and then explored, as an act of worship, the marvellous unity within the Godhead. The Orthodox theologian Tomas Spidlik notes that within Orthodox spirituality 'the divine Trinity is the fundamental mystery of the Christian faith'.²² He notes that 'only the Christian revelation teaches the highest and most intense union as embracing that which in the finite realm divides and is a principle of division: the personality'.²³ In other words, God is more one because he is three.²⁴

According to Orthodox spirituality, Christian experience is nothing more or less than being included in the unity of the Trinity, participating in the mutual love, order and interdependence of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. When Christ prayed that 'they may be one as we are' (Jn. 17:11, 25-26), he was not merely praying that individual believers would be united with God, but that believers would participate in the social unity of the Trinity by experiencing loving communion with one another. Speaking to this, James Houston says, 'to know the Triune God is to act like him, in self-giving, in inter-dependence, and in

boundless love'.²⁵ In contrast, we reduce fellowship to camaraderie, or likemindedness. It should be the mystery of God replicated, albeit imperfectly, in the mystery of the church and the mystery of marriage. We should not cheapen this mystery either by unisexing the church or by compartmentalizing the sexes in the church: women ministering to women and men to both men and women. This is the one community on earth that bears the image of the triune God.

Male and female celebrators of one God

We become like the God we worship (Ps. 115:8). Trinity-worshippers become celebrators of community and cohumanity. We are called to deal with the battle of the sexes not only by resisting the megatrend towards androgyny in society and unisex ministry in the church, but by calling men and women to find their life together in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Reverently we may suggest that the unity of the Holy Trinity is like the unity of the sexes, though we must immediately affirm the greater accuracy of the corollary: the unity of the sexes in Christ is a pale human representation of the eternal divine model.

We have explored these three analogies (Christ and the church, Jew and Gentile in a new humanity, and the Holy Trinity) because they are revealed and transcendent truths about unity in Christ. They are inspired windows on the final reconciliation of male and female. In each there is true unity in Christ because there is differentiation, not because there is sameness. There is true unity in the Christ-church reality because the head is distinguishable. There is more unity in the church because the Jew-Gentile differences have been transcended though not eliminated. Jews have a position of priority (Rom. 1:16) but they do not rule Gentiles in the mysterious social unity of the church. There is truly one God because he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the last two analogies (Jew and Gentile; Father, Son and Holy Spirit) there is equality of persons. Inequality is not the necessary consequence of differentiation. In each of the analogies there is a person or people with a priority. Jesus has priority in relation to his church. Salvation comes first to the Jews. The Father has priority with the Son. So we have three biblical analogies of male-female unity in which differentiation and priority contribute to unity rather than prevent it.

Bringing peace to the battle of the sexes will not be accomplished by appealing to this or that text. We must exegete the whole Bible, to find the answer in biblical theology and ultimately in worship. If man (male and female) is created in the image of God, and if both the marriage couple and the church are a mystery of Christ, then we discover our true sexuality through a worshipful imitation of our triune God in the living out of our lives. It remains for us now to anticipate some of the fruits of living out the mystery by celebrating gender spirituality, full partnership in ministry, deeper marital companionship and deeper personal authenticity.

C.S. Lewis uses the analogy of the violin bow and the string. Both are needed to make one sound. There is more unity with a bow and a string than in a room full of bows, or a room full of strings.

Some would rather not have any mystery. They want explicit sex. They want male and female roles put down in black and white. They want things arranged in neat hierarchies. They want the functions of the sexes institutionalized in job descriptions and sexually-determined leadership offices. Others want to strip away the mystery by unisexing everything, including the ministry. But for my part, I will devote myself to the life-long, indeed, eternity-long, adventure of discovering the mystery. And equipping the church theologically for full male-female partnership is itself an act of worship. As Lewis said so insightfully, 'We are not like stones laid side by side but . . . like stones ordered in an archway with each of us interlocking with Him, the centre. We are all equally at the centre and none are there by being equals'.²⁶

²¹From *Perelandra*, or *Voyage to Venus* (London: Pan Books, 1983).

²²Cited in Janet Moreley, 'In God's Image?', *New Blackfriars* 63:747 (1982), p. 375, quoted in Kenneth Leech, *Experiencing God: Theology as Spirituality* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985).

²³The most recent is the Danvers statement advertised in *Christianity Today* (13 January 1989), pp. 40-41, in which the subscribers say 'in the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men'. It is otherwise a helpful statement.

⁴The definitive piece of scholarship on this text is Phyllis A. Bird, 'Male and Female He Created Them: Gen. 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation', in *The Harvard Theological Review* 74:2 (1981), pp. 129-139. The gist of her linguistic analysis is that the parallel coda (in the image of God he created him/male and female he created them) is progressive and not synonymous. She argues convincingly that the specification of humanity's bisexual nature is dictated by the larger structure of the chapter. Therefore she concludes that the first meaning of 'male and female' is not a reference to the relational nature of the image of God but to fertility. There is therefore no word about the distribution of roles, responsibility, shared dominion or sexual equality, but rather the divine blessing of procreation. She does, however, concede that the Yahwistic account explains the primary meaning of sexuality as psychosocial, rather than biological. And, in conclusion, she agrees that 'the juxtaposition of these two statements does have consequences for theological anthropology and specifically for a theology of sexuality. Sexuality and image of God both characterize the species as a whole and both refer to Adam's fundamental nature; but they do so in different ways . . . To be human is to be made in the image of God. And if to be human means also to be male or female (the plural of v. 27 also works against any notion of androgyny), then both male and female must be characterized equally by the image. No basis for diminution or differentiation of the image is given in nature. . . . Contemporary insistence that woman images the divine as fully as man and that she is consequently as essential as he to an understanding of humanity as God's special sign or representative in the world is exegetically sound even if it exceeds what the Priestly writer intended to say or was able to conceive.' Bird's analysis surprisingly ends up supporting the view of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, expanded by Karl Barth and many modern scholars, that the image of God is relational, and that both sexes are required for God's full representation to be made in the human race.

⁵Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979), p. 1.

⁶E.g. Bruce Waltke, 'The relationship of the Sexes in the Bible', in *Crux*, Vol. XIX No. 3, September 1983, pp. 10-16.

⁷S.T. Foh, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-69. Bruce Waltke supports Foh's interpretation by offering two further lines of evidence: Waltke, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁸Jean Vanier, *Man and Woman He Made Them* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1985), p. 50. The seeming anatomical justification of the double standard (that a man may have sex with several partners, since he is not marked by the encounter, but a woman may not, because she has allowed a man to come inside her and so is indelibly marked) is not supported by Scripture. This is carefully considered by Helmut Thielicke, 'The Mystery of Sexuality', in *Are You Nobody?* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), pp. 45-60.

⁹See especially Gordon Fee's treatment of the Corinthian passages in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 498-530, 699-713, and John Nolland, 'Woman in the Public Life of the Church', *Crux* 19:3 (1983), on 1 Tim. 2. It appears that 1 Cor. 11 deals with relationships, not ministry, on the assumption made by some Corinthian women that since the end had come sexual differences were meaningless. Paul repudiates this eschatological breaking down of sexes, as he would repudiate androgyny today. 1 Cor. 11:2-3 does not teach a chain of command but male-female relationships that resemble God-Christ. 1 Cor. 14:34-38 is textually the most difficult of the three as it seems to contradict Paul's clear teaching in 1 Cor. 11:10 that a woman has her own authority (*exousia*) to minister in prayer or prophecy when she is in right relationship to men. Judging the passage in 14:34-38 as non-Pauline appears to me unwarranted, so we are left making a sanctified guess: Was Paul forbidding women to evaluate prophecies in public, a role normally assigned to elders? 1 Tim. 2:8-15 addresses an ad hoc situation in which false teachers (2 Tim. 3:6) had doctrinally seduced the women, making it a replay of the Garden scene (1 Tim. 2:14). Here Paul shuts down women's ministry completely (2:12), using, once again, a creational argument (2:13). All three of these passages have been weighted disproportionately, especially in the light of the example of Jesus in relation to women, a fundamental truth usually ignored.

¹⁰James Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), p. 176.

¹¹In *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 502-503, Gordon Fee notes: 'The metaphor [head in 1 Cor. 11:3] itself is often misunderstood to be hierarchical, setting up structures of authority. But nothing in the passage suggests as much. . . . Moreover, vv. 11-12 explicitly qualify vv. 8-9 so that they will not be understood this way. Indeed, the metaphorical use of *kephale* ('head') to mean 'chief' or 'the person of the highest rank' is rare in Greek literature — so much so that even though the Hebrew word *ros* often carried this sense, the Greek translators of the LXX, who ordinarily used *kephale* to translate *ros* when the physical 'head' was intended, almost never did so when 'ruler' was intended, thus indicating that this metaphorical sense is an exceptional usage and not part of the ordinary range of meanings for the Greek word.' Fee surveys all the relevant studies on *kephale* in his footnote, especially Wayne Grudem's survey of 2,336 examples of *kephale* (Wayne Grudem, 'Does Kephale Mean "Source" or "Authority over" in Greek Literature? A survey of 2,336 Examples', published in Knight III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Chicago:

Moody Press, 1985). A careful examination of Grudem's examples shows that 'chief over' is the exception rather than the rule. Although Christ's headship over creation (Eph. 1:22) is obviously 'chief over' or 'head' rather than 'tail', in the marriage passages 'source' fits the context best. In 1 Cor. 11 Christ finds his source in God (in a non-Arian sense); man finds his source in Christ; woman finds her source in man. Priority but not rule is implied in this. In Eph. 5 the husband-wife/Christ-church analogy is not expounded in every respect. The husband cannot save or sanctify his bride (5:26-27). But the point of the comparison is the quality of relationship. The husband becomes 'source' as he voluntarily gives himself sacrificially to meet his wife's needs. In the light of this, the wife's voluntary submission and respect make sense as she relates to her 'source'.

¹²Two recent examples of this are worthy of note. Patricia Gundry's *Heirs together: Mutual Submission in Marriage* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) is a well-placed stick of dynamite, destroying hierarchy in the home. But she does so at the expense of headship. Gretchen Gaebelein Hull's *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home* is even more problematic. After defending her view of biblical inerrancy, Hull goes for the jugular: patriarchy. But her understandable attack on the dreaded fruits of patriarchy are, in my view, *historically incorrect* (what patriarchy became under the birthing of the nuclear family after the Industrial Revolution is a far cry from patriarchy in the preceding extended family), *culturally insensitive* (as David and Vera Mace show, patriarchy in the East has worked well for 4,000 years, aligning purpose and direction to the life of the individual) and *dispensationally inaccurate* (her inductive judgments on the OT patriarchs are made with NT eyes). Once again Hull, by eliminating hierarchy and roles, appears unable to give any clear idea of what headship in the home, or male 'inseminating' leadership in the church, actually means.

¹³See David Jeffrey's splendid treatment of the linguistic basis of God as Father as a response to the *Inclusive Language Lectionary: A companion work under the National Council of Churches to the RSV revision*: David Lyle Jeffrey, 'Inclusivity and Our Language of Worship' in *The Reformed Journal*, August 1987, pp. 13-22.

¹⁴Kenneth Leech, *op. cit.*, p. 353. A contemporary Jewish scholar makes the same point: 'Some may interpret [the male blessing] as grudging resignation to a lesser state, or as the acceptance of one's fate. But Rabbi Aaron Soloveitchik, a leading contemporary Talmudic scholar, views it as a blessing that affirms woman's innate superiority over man. It is God's wish, he says, that human beings achieve the Divine qualities of compassion and mercy. Woman is naturally closer to that level of perfection than is man. She was given the gift of mercy and compassion. Is not God himself addressed as *Rachum*, the Compassionate One? And is not *rechem*, the Hebrew word for womb (the part of the body that more than any other distinguishes woman from man and symbolizes her essence) a form of the same word that means compassion? A woman can therefore proudly claim to have been fashioned 'according to his will'. Man, on the other hand, cannot make the same claim. . . . He starts with a baser nature than does woman, and is therefore in need of greater refinement' (Donin, *op. cit.*, p. 196).

¹⁵Leech, *op. cit.*, p. 366. Jeffrey carefully shows that some feminist writers, in their concern to identify characteristics in God that are feminine or maternal, have wrongly deduced from the feminine article required by the Hebrew words for spirit (*ruah*) and wisdom (*hokma*), that these justify considering them metaphorically feminine. An appropriate parallel is 'la table' in French — Jeffrey, *op. cit.*, p. 19. See Barry Hoberman, 'Translating the Bible: An Endless Task', in *The Atlantic* 255/2 (1985), p. 58; also Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

¹⁶Jeffrey also notes that 'When feminine metaphors come into Christian spiritual literature . . . they are drawn straightforwardly from Scriptures and apply to personal dispositions of heart. Thus the church is seen as the Bride of Christ, and individual Christians figured as virgins who have prepared themselves for the coming of the Bridegroom. . . . The overwhelming metaphor for characterizing Christian fidelity in the history of Christian spirituality is that of the Bride, Christ's spouse and beloved, working and preparing for that day of final union and, while doing so, writing and praying, as it were, love letters to the Bridegroom. . . . Feminine metaphor is applied not to God but rather to themselves and to us, to the conception of what it is to be human and a Christian' (p. 20). Typically, Jeffrey ignores the OT in this matter and overstates his case.

¹⁷Jeffrey, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁸Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980).

¹⁹This is the theological basis of my practical book on marriage: R.P. Stevens, *Married for Good: The Lost Art of Staying Happily Married* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

²⁰In his ground-breaking study on *kephale*, Stephen Bedale makes this Christ-church analogy: 'in the natural relationship of Adam and Eve we have an analogue of the spiritual relationship of Christ to the Church. The Church is the Eve of the Second Adam — "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh". So Christ is *kephale* in relation to the Church, as Adam in relation to Eve.'

²¹J.I. Packer, 'God', in Ferguson, Wright and Packer (eds.), *The New*

Dictionary of Theology (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988, pp. 274-277).

²¹Tomas Spidlik, *The Spirituality of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1986), p. 44.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁴Expounding this, Spidlik maintains that 'the texts of the Greek Fathers . . . remained faithful to the terminology of the New Testament: the expression *ho theos* is reserved for the father of Christ (Rom. 5:6, 2 Cor. 11:31, Eph. 1:3). The Father Almighty is the creator of heaven and earth, and hence the principle of cosmic unity in the extra-divine universe. This Father, however, is also the source of intra-divine unity. The Son and the Spirit are one in the Father. And since the function of the divine Persons corresponds to the place each occupies in the bosom of the Trinity, the

salvic value of the mystery of the trinity is manifested' (*ibid.*, p. 44). Commenting on this in an unpublished paper, Dr James Houston argues that 'to all intents and purposes, Augustine states that the relations within the Godhead are irrelevant to their being God. . . . It is as if God is God, in spite of the Trinity!' In contrast to this the Greek Fathers insisted that God's relations with man are internal to God's own character. In harmony with this, Dr Houston traces the fact that in Western spirituality there has been a renewed mysticism (a direct personal experience of the presence of God) whenever there was contact with the Trinitarian insights of the Greek Fathers. Trinitarian faith invites and evokes relationship.

²³Houston, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

²⁴From *Prelaudra* (see n. 1).