

THE MALENESS OF CHRIST: REVELATIONAL OR CULTURAL?

by

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**submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER: PROF A KÖNIG

NOVEMBER 1999

TO LORI

PREFACE

A few people have given substantial help and encouragement in the writing of this thesis, and I wish to express my thanks to them. Grace Mullen, librarian at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, and Natalie Thirion, systematic theology librarian at the University of South Africa, Pretoria, have both helped in gathering bibliographical information and articles at various stages of the thesis.

My good friend and colleague, Rev. Herb Ward, in the midst of many responsibilities, provided a careful proof reading of the final manuscript. (I alone, however, bear responsibility for any errors that may remain). The faculty of the Bible Institute of South Africa, Cape Town, assumed some of my responsibilities to free me for research and writing.

My special thanks and deep appreciation are to Professor Adrio König for his stimulating interaction, helpful criticism, and kind friendship throughout the writing of this thesis. On more than one occasion, a timely phone call has encouraged me towards completing this project. His involvement has often spurred me to greater clarity and precision.

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Lori, who in her love and compassion for others reveals Christ more than I do—in thankfulness for her life and cheerful spirit.

Neil Harvey Williams
Cape Town
November 1999

SUMMARY AND KEY TERMS

The maleness of Christ: revelational or cultural? is a biblical-theological investigation of the significance of Christ's maleness. This thesis attempts to answer questions as to the significance and meaning of Jesus' maleness. Is the maleness of Christ revelational of God's being and character; is it foundational for the gospel; is it reflective of an ongoing created order? Is revelation and salvation impossible apart from a *male* redeemer? Or could Christ have been born a woman in a different time and culture? Chapter one describes the various positions and arguments: complementarian, biblical egalitarian, Christian feminist, and post-Christian feminist. Chapter two examines two related topics to the problem, namely slavery and the Sabbath. This section investigates how the church has decided, regarding other issues, what is revelational or cultural. We consider the various implications that the slavery and Sabbath debates have on our topic. Our subject relating to the significance of Christ's maleness has many interrelated concerns. In answering the questions regarding Jesus' maleness, chapter three organises much of the material under the motif of the sonship of Christ. This structure allows us to remain focused as well as interact with the differing topics affecting our concern, such as innertrinitarian relationships, the relationship between revelation and culture, the so-called subordination of the Son, the truth and status of analogy, inclusive language, and the implications of Christ as the image of God. Also included this chapter is a discussion on the relationship between Jesus and Wisdom and whether we can refer to Christ as "Daughter." The chapter concludes with a section on whether Christ's maleness either relates to an ongoing created order of male headship or allows for the transformation of patriarchy.

Key Terms:

Complementarian; Egalitarian; Feminism; Headship; Hierarchy; Inclusive language; Maleness of Christ; Patriarchy; Sabbath; Slavery; Sonship of Christ; Trinity; Women in ministry.

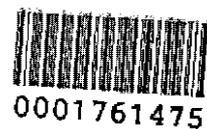
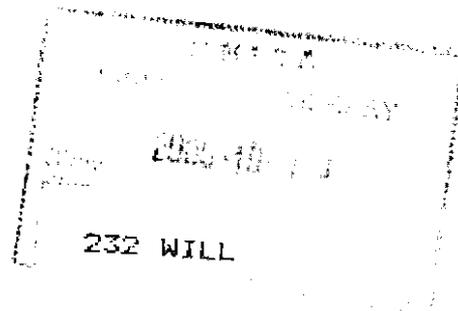


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INTRODUCTION

The question before us is not “Why did God become human?” but “Why did God become male?” Our concern relates to the significance of the maleness of Christ. This thesis attempts to answer questions as to the relevance and meaning of Jesus’ maleness. Is Christ’s maleness revelational of God’s being and character; is it foundational for the gospel; is it reflective of an ongoing created order? Is revelation and salvation impossible apart from a *male* redeemer? Or could Christ have been born a woman in a different time and culture? Is his maleness similar or different to his Jewishness? For many, these questions are quintessential, so that the fundamental division is not “between those who are Christian and those who are not, but between those who believe that Jesus’ male personhood is of the essence of his meaning as the Christ and those who do not” (Wilson-Kastner 1983: 90). Although at the forefront of current theological debate, the question of whether Christ could be born a woman is not entirely new. It was raised in the 12th century by Peter Lombard in his *Sentences*, and later by numerous commentaries on Lombard’s work. Joan Gibson (1992) documents this medieval debate. According to Lombard: “Christ could indeed have chosen to assume human nature as a woman, but it was better not to have done so. It was more appropriate that He was born of a woman and assumed a male body in order to show Christ’s liberation of both sexes from sin. Further, Lombard adds, He ought to take on the male sex since it is the more honorable” (Gibson 1992: 69). Later, Thomas Aquinas made the more radical claim that Jesus’ maleness was an ontological necessity because of Aristotelian biology—women are misbegotten males (*Summa Theologica* I, 92). Today, few would claim that women are inferior by nature, so that Christ had to be male because of the superiority of male nature. Nevertheless, there is a significant division over whether Jesus’ maleness is essential or non-essential to his person and work.

Chapter one of the thesis is an overview of the various positions and arguments. It is divided into four categories: complementarian, biblical egalitarian, Christian feminist, and post-Christian feminist. The use of these terms is dictated by how the various positions describe themselves. The intention is not so much as to categorise but to provide a working framework for the material. Each position is not homogeneous, with ranging views within the position. Furthermore, the categories are fluid as certain scholars are technically found in between categories, and a number of people have substantially moved positions. For instance, Mary Daly who once considered herself a reformist feminist is now post-Christian. Virginia Mollenkott, Letha Scanzoni, and Nancy Hardesty have moved from biblical egalitarianism to Christian feminism. Naomi Goldenberg is more correctly described as post-Jewish, but her arguments fall under post-Christian. There is even debate as to whether some are in the area they claim to be, for example, Daphne Hampson argues that Sallie McFague is not really a theist (Hampson 1990: 158-60). The concern of this chapter is not to develop my own argumentation, but rather describe the position of others. Every effort is made to formulate the positions in a manner acceptable to the representative people, and to emphasise the strengths of each position. In such a controversial topic, it is easy to minimise the arguments of others, miss the various qualifications, and generally fail to listen and understand.

Chapter two raises two topics that relate to our subject: slavery and the Sabbath. This section investigates how the church has decided, regarding other issues, what is revelational or cultural. Part of our concern is to establish whether Jesus' maleness is related to an ongoing created order, where it is argued by complementarians that authority is given to men in church and family. In this area of debate, the relevance of slavery is often raised and disputed. Considering the eventual

acceptance of abolitionism by the church, to what extent does this have relevance for our concern? We analyse the various parallel arguments and draw some conclusions. The Sabbath is seldom addressed in our topic, but it is relevant as many regard it as another “creation ordinance.” It is pertinent because there are parallels between gender and Sabbath. After outlining the major views on the Sabbath, we relate this debate to our concern. Regarding the slavery and Sabbath discussions, we note how both serve to highlight the various strengths, emphases, hermeneutical methods, and perspectives of differing positions.

Part of the difficulty of this topic is the interrelated issues. Proponents of various views move between topics such as innertrinitarian relationships, creation, the relationship between revelation and culture, hermeneutical approaches, exegesis of specific texts, the truth and status of analogy, the role of women in ministry, and inclusive language. To remain focused on our problem while not neglecting important related issues, in a large section of chapter three we use the sonship of Christ as an organising motif for the material. This structure allows us to remain focused on the problem as well as interact with the differing areas affecting our concern, such as trinitarian relationships, the so-called subordination of the Son, the truth and status of analogy, and the implications of Christ as the image of God. Also included is a discussion on the relationship between Jesus and Wisdom, and whether we can refer to Christ as “Daughter.” The final sections of chapter three significantly draw from the material in chapter two. Here we endeavour to answer the question whether Christ’s maleness either relates to an ongoing created order of male headship or allows for the transformation of patriarchy.

This thesis is written from a Reformed and evangelical position. Although written from this view, we are not ultimately committed to all the tenets of a theological position, but to Christ and his

Word, and a confidence that the text can handle difficult questions brought to it. Our approach is biblical-theological rather than systematic, and on several occasions, we critique classic and modern systematic formulations in the light of redemptive-history. An effort is also made to evaluate both complementarian and non-complementarian positions in the light of Scripture. As such, this thesis is not identified with any one of the particular positions described in chapter one.

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“... do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman ...” (Deut 4:16)



CHAPTER ONE: POSITIONS, PROBLEMS, AND ARGUMENTS

1.1 Complementarian Position

1.1.1 Introduction: The Presupposed Theological Significance of Jesus' Maleness

The complementarian position regarding the maleness of Christ can be readily stated, yet with little direct supporting argumentation. The reason is that, generally speaking, there is a silent presupposition among complementarians. There is an underlying assumption that Christ's maleness has some form of revelatory character and is not only cultural. It is a silent presupposition because the position is often just accepted rather than debated—a position that then forms the foundation for other discussions.

Examples of this presupposition have appeared in articles over the last two decades in *Christianity Today*. Vivian Clark asks the question: "Was Jesus Christ a Man's Man?" She writes: "It is helpful to look at the male aspect of Jesus Christ in his humanity, for he portrayed a theology of maleness" (Clark 1983: 16). Clark argues that this "theology of maleness" exemplifies what men and boys should be like. Christ, in his *maleness*, is whom they are to imitate. Likewise, in arguing against women ordination, James I. Packer writes:

Since the Son of God was incarnated as a male, it will always be easier, other things being equal, to realize and remember that Christ is ministering in person if his human agent and representative is also male.

. . . That one male is best represented by another male is a matter of common sense; that Jesus' maleness is basic to his role as our incarnate Savior is a matter of biblical revelation. . . The New Testament presents him as the second man, the last Adam, our prophet, priest, and king (not prophetess, priestess, and queen), and he is all this precisely in his maleness.

To minimize the maleness shows a degree of failure to grasp the space-time reality and redemptive significance of the Incarnation; to argue that gender is irrelevant to ministry shows that one is forgetting the representative role of presbyteral leadership.

(Packer 1991: 20)

These arguments are based on the assumed theological significance of Christ's maleness. The Roman Catholic position on male priesthood and its representation of Christ runs along similar lines and is well known and documented.¹ The basic Catholic contention against women ordination is that since Christ is male, so a priest can only be male. To change to women priests would undermine and eventually destroy this representational priesthood. Of interest to us is that inherent to this position is the presupposed theological significance of Jesus' maleness. Maleness is viewed to be revelational in some aspect, and not merely cultural. Jesus' maleness is consequential for the life of the church, and it is more significant than, for instance, his Jewishness. But as Richard Norris rightly points out: "The mere *fact* that Jesus was a male settles nothing. The question . . . is that of the *significance* of this or that characteristic of Jesus" (Norris 1976).

Arising out of this presupposition of the revelational character of Jesus' maleness is a relative paucity of material. Complementarian responses to various feminist theologies have focussed on women's role in the church and family (for example, Hurley 1981; Knight 1977), while christological issues are neglected. Even the more recent significant response of John Piper and Wayne Grudem (1991c) to evangelical feminism, neglects the difficult issues of christology and theology proper, even though these issues have been raised by evangelical feminists.

¹ For summary argumentation see (Moll 1988), and the *Vatican Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* (1976).

Nevertheless, there are complementarians who, in a limited way, have endeavoured to address the significance of Christ's maleness and give reasons why Christ had to become male. Most notable are Susan T. Foh (1980), Mary A. Kassian (1992), William Oddie (1984), and Donald G. Bloesch (1982, 1985).

1.1.2 Revelation Beyond Culture

Complementarians contend that the reason Christ became male was not merely because of the patriarchal society but was integrally related to God's revelational purpose. Oddie asks: "Why should Christ have come into the world as God's Son, rather than as his daughter? There are, I believe, answers to these questions which have to do not with 'cultural relativity', but with profound religious truths . . ." (Oddie 1984: xiii-xiv). In a similar manner, Foh writes: "We maintain that God had a theological reason for sending Christ as a man and that historical and cultural necessity, though existent, are subservient to God's plan and intention" (Foh 1980: 158). It is argued that there is revelational significance to Jesus coming as male, and the culture, though relevant, does not ultimately determine this mode of revelation. Thus, culture is viewed as secondary to revelation, at least in the beginning when God established a created order of Adam first and Eve second. At creation, God determines certain features of the culture.

Kassian also believes that the maleness of Christ is consequential (Kassian 1992: 146). Although she does not elaborate on this specific point and explain exactly what is important about Jesus' maleness, it is clear that she views Jesus' maleness not as an accommodation to patriarchal culture. Douglas Moo agrees: "What disturbs me is that both the Old Testament and the New Testament use maleness for God, and this is not just a reflection of a patriarchal culture. It is a revelation of

the way things are, in some sense” (quoted by Keylock 1983: 51). And Bruce Waltke writes, “. . . the biographies of Jesus in the New Testament curiously do not mention anything about our Lord’s physical appearance apart from his masculinity, suggesting it has theological relevance” (Waltke 1995: 30). Waltke, however, also does not elaborate on this theological relevance. Finally, an editorial in *Christianity Today* expresses it this way: “To suggest that Jesus might be called ‘daughter’ rather than ‘son’ is to denigrate the revelation of God itself and to refuse to face the fact that God chose to manifest himself as true man” (Editorial 1976). So complementarians believe that the maleness of Jesus is in some way revelational and is not an accommodation to a patriarchal culture. The position maintains that there are elements in Christ’s maleness that are beyond culture, in that they have to do with “profound religious truths,” and the “way things are.” Christ’s maleness is, in some respect, normative for the church, and to say otherwise is to reduce this normative revelation to culture.

This does not imply that the complementarian position ignores culture or is necessarily an ahistorical approach that, by its own nature, downplays socio-political factors. The position argues from culture, to demonstrate that precisely *because* of the culture of the day, the maleness of Christ and masculine portrayal of God *is* revelational. Vernard Eller expresses this point well:

It regularly is argued that, although the masculine and feminine *together* certainly have always constituted the nature of God, the *cultural* biases and limitations of the era made it impossible fully to express that truth in scripture. Yet such a suggestion is just the opposite of the truth. In the religio-cultural world of Bible times, Yahwism . . . was perhaps the only religion that did *not* have both the masculine and the feminine principle represented in deity—and these customarily in explicitly *sexual* pairings. In the chronological sequence of their impact upon biblical thought, the religions that included both male and female deities within their pantheons would be: the Sumerian, the Egyptian, the Canaanite, the Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek (including the mystery cults), and the Roman.

(Eller 1982: 39)

Eller argues that Israel's patriarchalism was not a hindrance to divine feminine attributes since the surrounding cultures tended to have greater degrees of patriarchalism. Nonetheless, it is precisely these cultures that had both masculine and feminine deities. Eller maintains that as Israel's monotheism was not a hindrance in the development of trinitarian doctrine, there is nothing intrinsic to Israel's patriarchalism that prevented a feminine development (Eller 1982: 39-40). Eller concludes: "*Culturally*, at any time in its history, Israel could have come up with the concept which currently is being advanced among us, namely, a God incorporating equally the masculine and feminine in one Person" (Eller 1982: 40). In a similar manner, the Old Testament did not allow women to become priests unlike neighbouring religions (Frye 1988: 451-53; Waltke 1986: 13-1). Although Eller's point is not directly related to the maleness of Christ, it is relevant, and expresses part of the complementarian argument that when considering the broader issue of the masculine portrayal of God as Father and Son, this portrayal is not only cultural because Israelite theology is in marked contrast to Ancient Near East (ANE) culture. According to complementarians, it would have been easy for Israel to adopt the cultural mindset of the day into its theology, which is, male and female attributes. This however did not occur.

Complementarians use the ANE culture to their advantage. The male imagery in Scripture, although given in a patriarchal culture, is not only cultural for it is given in an environment that accepted both male and female deities. While acknowledging that though God cannot be reduced to sexual differentiation, the position holds that God still *revealed* himself in this way (Foh 1980: 153, 163). So in logical progression, complementarians argue that to deny this revelational character of maleness is to deny the authority of Scripture (Foster 1989). Many complementarians contend that any form of feminist theology has departed in some way from the truth of Scripture by adopting "not simply the secular movement's rhetoric and proposals, but some aspects of its

basically non-biblical world view as well” (Litfin 1979: 270). In Scripture God has revealed himself to us as Father and Son. Changing “Son” to “Daughter” moves beyond what God has revealed into agnosticism, since the name “Son” is not culturally relative. Essentially the masculine imagery is beyond culture.

1.1.3 The Abiding Validity of the Language of Canaan

The second argument relates to the first, but particularly pertains to patriarchal language and related discussions concerning analogy, metaphor, and simile. Complementarians argue that the Scriptural language has abiding validity, so for Christianity to remain Christianity it must continue to use “the language of Canaan” (Eller 1982). Concerning patriarchal language Bloesch writes: “It is my position that the revelation of God has been given to us in this language, and we can dismiss it for a new language dictated by current ideology only at the grave peril of losing the content of the faith itself. We cannot tamper with the core symbolism of the faith without ending in a new faith” (Bloesch 1982: 75-76). The complementarian position insists that we cannot modify this language without fundamentally altering Christianity, for God has chosen to reveal himself in this manner (Eller 1982: 43), and to postulate a female incarnation or call the second person of the Trinity a “Daughter” would be, in essence, to establish another religion (Lewis 1979: 90-91).

The discussion on patriarchal language, although broader than our topic, is germane for it indirectly addresses the maleness of Christ. If the divine name “Son” is indicative of God’s character and cannot be altered, then, for complementarians, a male incarnation becomes a necessity. Bloesch makes the connection: “To affirm, as do some feminists, that Jesus should be referred to by the more inclusive symbol “Child of God” rather than “Son of God” is tantamount

to denying his historicity. It is, indeed, to call into question his real incarnation, since he became incarnate in male, not female form” (Bloesch 1982: 73-74). If he *is* “Son” does that mean that Christ *must* be incarnated as male? Bloesch does not explicitly answer the question, but presumably so.

When discussing the names “Father” and “Son,” it is argued that the terminology is not merely a reflection of the culture, but a description of the character of God. Oddie writes: “The Fatherhood of God is the primary reality; it is the very opposite of a Feuerbachian projection *from* human fatherhood” (Oddie 1984: 123). Likewise, according to Bloesch: “The Trinitarian names are ontological symbols based on divine revelation rather than personal metaphors having their origin in cultural experience” (Bloesch 1985: 36; also, Kassian 1992: 145). For complementarians, the names “Father” and “Son” have abiding validity. They are names “from above” and not from culture. If this is the case, it is argued that the Son could only become incarnate man. There could not have been a female incarnation even if there was an original matriarchal society (Kassian 1992: 146), and changing “Son” to “Daughter” would undermine the person of Christ (Kassian 1992: 146).

Complementarians make the connection between the maleness of Christ and the trinitarian name “Son.” If it can be demonstrated that the name “Son” is a revelation of God from above and cannot be substituted with “Daughter,” then it follows that the male incarnation is a necessity, for it reflects this eternal sonship. Thomas F. Torrance outlines the basis for this type of argument:

There is no separation between what God is and what he reveals of himself, so that the form of that revelation is to be understood only out of its substance and dynamic structure. Thus “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” are essential to the informational content of revelation and are not just metaphorical ways of speaking of God derived from Jewish culture; for they are rooted in and determined by what God is inherently in himself, and are thus not detachable or changeable representations or images of God. In Jesus Christ,

God has imaged himself and named himself once and for all over against all our erroneous images and designations of him.

(Torrance 1992: 140)

We are to understand the masculine imagery in Scripture to be the manner in which God has chosen to reveal himself—as Father, Son, king, husband, and ultimately in Jesus Christ. To change this is to fundamentally alter the way God has made himself known. It is to make an impersonal God or another God in our image, and to depart from the trinitarian formula that undermines baptism and the unity of the church (Torrance 1992: 142). According to Bloesch: “The crucial question concerning God-language is whether such language gives a true knowledge or merely a symbolic awareness of the ultimate reality we call God” (Bloesch 1985: 13). The question is rhetorical. Bloesch believes that these names provide true knowledge of God and lay the foundation for Christian belief. Similarly, Roland M. Frye writes:

So understood, the predicating metaphors “God the Father” and “the Son of God” become transparent equivalents to the divine reality, words by which the divine persons are called, addressed, recognized, or known. These expressions function as structural metaphors or foundational symbols and images, thereby forming the basis for the entire organism of belief, the vertebrate anatomy to which different parts of the living body of faith connect and through which they function. To ignore or deny such structural metaphors can cripple the whole body of theological meaning that they articulate.

(Frye 1992: 42)

Complementarians, however, differ on exactly how to argue for the abiding nature of the divine names. For some, the debate rests on a distinction between metaphor and simile, where, for example, “Mother” is a simile but “Father” is a metaphor (Frye 1992: 42). Therefore, God is *like* a mother but he *is* the Father. Others, however, go further to state that the names “Father” and “Son” are not metaphors, and not even analogies in a strict sense, but rather “catalogies.” A distinction is made, at least by Bloesch and Kassian, between “analogy” and “catalogy.” Bloesch argues that names like “Father” and “Son” are more accurately described as “catalogies,” that is, they are not derived from our world but come from above (Bloesch 1985: 35). There are certain

metaphors or analogies taken from culture (from below), and then there are “catalogies” (from above) that are descriptive of who God *is*. These names are to be taken seriously and cannot be changed without recreating God (Kassian 1992: 145).

Apart from these differences, there is agreement that the words “Father” and “Son” are not cultural nametags, but a true expression of God’s character. Torrance writes: “When we say ‘*God is*,’ the ‘is’ is very different from any other kind of ‘is.’ It is an ‘is’ that is appropriate to the nature of God, an ‘is’ that is defined by his nature . . . God is *Father* in an utterly singular and normative way” (Torrance 1992: 137-38). Bloesch also concurs that God “is not simply like a father; He *is* the Father” (Bloesch 1982: 77). To alter this analogy would remove certain univocal elements of “Father” and “Son,” elements that cannot be changed without destroying what is essential to the analogy (Bloesch 1982: 76, 79).

Complementarians argue that to change the trinitarian names is to adopt an Enlightenment rationalism (Torrance 1992: 143) or a dualism between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds; a dualism that removes essential meaning from words by breaking the connection to their referred reality (Anderson 1992: 299-301). Ray S. Anderson writes:

It is this essential core of divine love that the terms *Father* and *Son* are meant to convey beyond male and female gender terms. One might also say that God loves as Mother loves Daughter, but then there would be no ontological and semantical link with these terms to the incarnation of God that took place in Jesus the historical person who called God his Father.

(Anderson 1992: 310)

Furthermore, complementarians expand on their position by arguing that a change of language breaks additional connections by undermining the established pattern of how we are to understand our own relationships, namely the relationship between husband and wife, and

ultimately the relationship between Christ and his church. Bloesch writes: “The motherhood of God is mirrored in the church, which should be viewed not simply as a social institution but as the body of Christ. . . . If we are to follow the biblical way, we will designate God as our Father and the church as our Mother” (Bloesch 1985: 38). It is argued that in the analogy between Christ and the church, the church (in the old and new covenant) is represented as female and Christ as male. This relationship between Christ and the church is the real marriage so to change “Son” to “Daughter” would render meaningless the feminine references to the church. Eller argues that anthropology is “*biased toward the feminine*,” (Eller 1982: 40-41) and so not to speak of God as masculine undermines the relationship between Christ and his church.

Does the retention of the revealed divine names degrade and exclude women, or masculinise God? Complementarians believe that their position does not sexualise God. They repeatedly stress that “the biblical witness is clear that the living God transcends sexuality” (Bloesch 1985: 32) and that “this ‘masculine’ image of God does not have to be thrown out in order for Christianity to exist, for Christians to be truly emancipated” (Foh 1980: 149). It is claimed that this view does not make God male or encourage male supremacy, thus the use of masculine imagery is not necessarily anti-women. Rather, the use of masculine imagery has little to do with current understanding. Anthony C. Thiselton makes the important point:

If the ancient biblical writers did not begin with the gender stereotypes projected back by the modern world, their choice of gender-related images had a different significance from that presupposed in much current popular debate. The use of “Father” in biblical traditions does not necessarily presuppose an anti-feminist social orientation: it is used analogically to designate the relation of care, compassion, authority, and social discipline which both parents, regardless of gender, can exercise towards their children. What makes the term offensive to some is the sociological assumption that it carried for the biblical writers the pre-determined stereotyping of a later stage. On this basis the language is perceived to be exclusive.

(Thiselton 1992: 459)

1.1.4 Biblical References

1.1.4.1 Creation ordinance

The cornerstone of the complementarian argument is the creation account in Genesis 1-2. The creation narrative is used to establish theological significance to the differing sexes, and so undergirds the necessity of Christ's maleness. Complementarian thinking invariably leads back to the creation ordinance, which, they argue, includes at least the following four elements:

1. In Genesis 1:27-28, Adam and Eve are created ontologically equal. There is sexual differentiation, but equality of being.
2. In Genesis 2:7 and 18-22, Adam is created first and subsequently Eve. Eve, as a helper for Adam, is economically subordinate.
3. In Genesis 2:23 and 3:20, Adam twice names Eve indicating his authority over her.
4. Adam, as man, represents the entire human race.

It is argued that points 2 and 4 are specifically addressed and taught by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and Romans 5:12-21 respectively. This creation ordinance is referred to in most complementarian discussions directly or indirectly related to our topic (for example, Bloesch 1982: 85-86; Weinrich 1986: 142; Poythress 1991a: 239; Ortlund 1991: 99-105; Grudem 1994: 461-66; Waltke 1986: 13-I).

As an example, when Bloesch defines his position of "covenantalism," he establishes it in creation:

Whereas feminism stresses the independence of woman from man and patriarchalism the submission of woman, Christian covenantalism stresses the interdependence of man and woman, as well as their mutual subordination. At the same time, it makes a place for a

differentiation of roles, recognizing both the dependency of woman on man and the necessity of woman for man in the orders of creation and redemption.

(Bloesch 1982: 85-86)

Bloesch's covenantalism is grounded in the order of creation, an ordinance that includes a mutual subordination, albeit with redefined male leadership.

Complementarians argue that the creation ordinance of Genesis 2 establishes irreversible roles between male and female before the fall, and possibly, before any cultural "interference."

Therefore, this divinely established order means that any supposed matriarchal society is contrary to the creation structure. These unchangeable roles, which continue in effect after the New Testament, also have a direct bearing on the maleness of Christ because of the theological significance given to the sexes at creation. By virtue of creation there are not only biological differences but also theological. So in reply to the view that sexuality does not belong to the essence of whom Jesus is, D. T. Williams responds: "Sexuality, however, is so much part of a human personality that it must belong to the very innermost being of all. A person cannot lose it without losing a large part of what makes him a person" (Williams 1990: 267). Similarly, Piper and Grudem write:

The natural fitness of man and woman for each other in marriage is rooted in something more than anatomy. There is a profound female or male personhood portrayed in our differing bodies. As Emil Brunner put it: 'Our sexuality penetrates to the deepest metaphysical ground of our personality. As a result, the physical differences between the man and the woman are a parable of psychical and spiritual differences of a more ultimate nature.'

(Piper & Grudem 1991b: 86-87)

Complementarians believe that there is a theological significance to the sexes established in creation. It is a significance that leads to role definitions such as one provided by Piper: "AT THE HEART OF MATURE MASCULINITY IS A SENSE OF BENEVOLENT RESPONSIBILITY TO LEAD, PROVIDE

FOR AND PROTECT WOMEN IN WAYS APPROPRIATE TO A MAN'S DIFFERING RELATIONSHIPS" (Piper 1991: 35).

Thus, it is claimed that the theological significance of the sexes, established at creation, has implication for Jesus' maleness. William Weinrich, basing himself on the created order, applies this theological significance to Jesus' sex. He writes:

The concretion of the incarnation of Christ, that is, His incarnation as male can only be theologically indifferent if maleness and femaleness are themselves devoid of theological meaning. The idea, then, that Jesus could have been incarnated as a female without any change of theological significance and that His incarnation as a male was exclusively a cultural accommodation on God's part contains within it a disparagement of the actual created order and finally allows for no positive theological understanding of the sexual differentiation within humankind.

(Weinrich 1986: 142)

For Weinrich, there is a theological significance to Jesus' maleness, a significance that was originally established by God at creation. He expresses the complementarian position that maleness is an indispensable part of Jesus' character, and to relegate his maleness to mere culture leaves no room for maintaining the theological significance of the different sexes and undermines the created order. Like many complementarians, Weinrich believes that removing this theological significance to the sexes has serious consequences, including opening the door to homosexuality.²

² Weinrich writes: "The disparagement of the sexual differentiation of humankind into male and female as having no theological significance lies at the base of much defense of homosexual behavior" (Weinrich 1986: 143, n.1). Similarly, Piper and Grudem write: "We believe that the feminist minimization of sexual role differentiation contributes to the confusion of sexual identity that, especially in second and third generations, gives rise to more homosexuality in society" (Piper & Grudem 1991b: 82).

1.1.4.2 Other passages

After posing the question: “Must Christians apologize for the maleness of Jesus Christ?” (Foh 1980: 144), Foh gives three reasons why Christ had to be male (Foh 1980: 158-60): (1) 1 Timothy 2:12-14, (2) Romans 5:12-21, and (3) the Old Testament types. We now elaborate on Foh’s arguments (in different order), together with other passages that complementarians will appeal to, in order indirectly to justify the necessity of Jesus’ maleness.

1.1.4.2.a Old Testament types

The Old Testament types such as Adam, Abraham, Moses, and David who prefigure Christ are masculine. Foh argues that there is an Old Testament requirement in typology for the maleness of Christ (Foh 1980: 159-60). This Old Testament typology is established by God and not by human invention. It is a typology that includes the sacrificial system where male sacrifice is required.

Thus, the Mosaic law requires Jesus’ maleness. Margaret Ermarth explains:

Jesus Christ was undoubtedly born as man and not as woman. We have seen that for a genuine incarnation He had to experience from the inside life as a human individual. Therefore He had to be man or woman and He was made man. Again we have to take into account the historical circumstances and consider the purpose of His coming. His earthly life was lived within the circle of the Jewish religious thought of His time. He

had come as Messiah to be offered in sacrifice as the Lamb of God for the taking away of the sins of the world. For this a male without blemish was required by Jewish law.

(Ermarth 1970: 127)

1.1.4.2.b Proverbs 8:22-31

In response to the feminist position Foh also refers to Proverbs 8:22-31. She argues that the feminine personification of Proverbs 8:22-31 is not a representation of Christ but rather an attribute of God, a feminine personification based on the feminine noun חָכְמָה (Foh 1980: 155-58).

Foh writes: “In spite of the feminists’ efforts to provide a feminine element in Jesus, the incontrovertible and outstanding fact remains that he lived on earth as a *man*” (Foh 1980: 158).

Complementarians, however, disagree on the interpretation of this passage; for example, Bloesch believes that the feminine wisdom may be equated with Christ (Bloesch 1985: 47, 50).

Nevertheless, this does not change his basic position. He writes:

The fact that Christ includes masculinity and femininity within himself does not warrant a change in gender language in reference to Christ. Because he has taken to himself the specific humanity of Jesus, the practice of referring to Christ as feminine and Jesus as masculine (encouraged by some feminists) is dangerously misleading and indeed opens the door to the heresy of Nestorianism.

(Bloesch 1982: 73)

1.1.4.2.c Romans 1:4; Acts 2:36

Williams, almost in passing, mentions passages on eternal sonship, such as, Romans 1:4 and Acts 2:36, which he argues speak not of a giving of sonship or divinity but rather a recognition of sonship and divinity (Williams 1990: 266). There is, however, little developed argumentation.

Williams also refers to the birth narratives. He writes: “It hardly needs to be said here that if the birth of Jesus involves one human parent, that one must be female, and therefore God is understood in the story as the male. . . . Maleness was involved, but not *human* maleness”

(Williams 1990: 266). For Williams, it would be illogical to posit a divine mother and human

father. Therefore, “a true incarnation means that the Son of God is just that, a Son, and so God the Father likewise must be in some respects male” (Williams 1990: 266).

1.1.4.2.d Romans 5:12-21

For Foh, this passage teaches that Christ follows the pattern or type of Adam as the second representative of humanity (Foh 1980: 159). Adam was created first and is the head and foundation of the human race. Everyone is derived from him. Therefore, Adam, being male, necessitates the maleness of Christ since Christ follows the pattern of Adam as head and founder of a new humanity. We may ask: does the necessity of Jesus’ maleness impinge on his ability to represent females? “No,” reply complementarians, “representation and substitution need not imply identification” (Williams 1990: 268). There is no obstacle to a masculine Saviour representing females. As Adam represented all humanity, so can Jesus. Christ need not be female in order to represent or redeem female. In a parallel manner, although Jesus redeemed the poor, he was not totally identified with the poor (Williams 1990: 268).

1.1.4.2.e 1 Corinthians 11:3-16

For complementarians, the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 hinges on the interpretation of “head” in verse 3. They maintain that “authority” is the correct meaning, and used by Paul in other passages such as Ephesians 1:22; 5:23 (Schreiner 1991: 127). Wayne Grudem argues that the textual evidence for “head” to mean “source” is very weak, and in a survey of 2336 examples in Greek literature he finds no clear examples of “head” to mean “source” (Grudem 1991a: 426). Whereas the meaning of “authority over” is clearly attested in Greek literature, it is Paul’s meaning

in a number of other New Testament passages, and it is found in “all the major lexicons that specialize in the New Testament period . . . whereas none give the meaning ‘source’” (Grudem 1991a: 426). Furthermore, it is argued that in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 Paul bases his whole discussion in creation and prior to the fall (Schreiner 1991: 133). Therefore, the role differentiation between men and women that Paul expounds is transcultural. There are, however, cultural symbols, like headcoverings, appropriate to these differing roles. These symbols may change, but the principle of headship and differing roles remain (Schreiner 1991: 138).

1.1.4.2.f Ephesians 5: 21-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7

Complementarians argue that passages such as Ephesians 5: 21-33; Colossians 3:18-19, and 1 Peter 3:1-7 teach irreversible complementary roles, where the husband is called to lead and the wife to submit. Commenting on 1 Peter 3:1-7, Grudem argues that the text cannot be reworked to teach an unqualified mutual submission, for the husband is still called to lead (1991b: 199). Similarly, regarding Ephesians 5: 21-33, Knight states that mutual submission is not the only aspect of the passage. “Paul still calls the husband ‘the head’ of the wife and therefore the one to whom she should submit in everything (verses 22-24). Thus this section cannot be teaching only mutual submission rather than the specific submission of wives to husbands in the overall context of mutual submission” (Knight 1991: 168). As the relationship between Christ and the church cannot be reversed, likewise with the relationship between husband and wife (Poythress 1991a: 240). Furthermore, Paul establishes these complementary roles in the essence of marriage (Knight 1991: 176) demonstrating that these roles are transcultural.

1.1.4.2.g 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36

In this passage, Paul commands that women be prohibited from eldership and authority. Foh argues that this passage is grounded in creation and has relevance to the maleness of Christ (Foh 1980: 158-159). Christ had to be male since women are prohibited, by virtue of creation, from the type of ministry Christ engaged in. Complementarians are unified in agreeing that the command in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is permanent, since it is established in creation and the activity which is prohibited (women teaching) is transcultural (Moo 1991: 193). Contrary to non-complementarians who often argue that Paul appeals to creation to *illustrate* deception, complementarians note that Paul also refers to the situation *pre-fall*, that Adam was created first (Moo 1991: 190). Similar to 1 Corinthians 11:3-10, Paul reasons in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 that priority in creation implies headship. There is also a correspondence with 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36. Here it is argued that the injunction that women keep silent applies to the weighing of prophecies. The reason why women are not allowed to weigh such prophecies is because they are not to have authority over men (1 Tim 2:12) (Carson 1991a: 151-52).

1.1.5 Trinitarian Theology

The complementarian argument is based on the creation ordinance, which in turn is grounded in the ontological Trinity. As the biblical material directs complementarians to the creation account, the creation account takes them back to the character of God, so that the headship of Adam is not just a divine preference, but is rooted in the nature of God. Robert Letham writes: “The priority and headship of the man over the woman rests not only on the doctrine of creation but also on the

nature of the God whom man is to image. It is grounded ontologically in the being of God” (Letham 1990: 74; also, Waltke 1986: 13-1). Ultimately, the creation structure is grounded in the character of God and trinitarian hierarchy where there is ontological equality but economic subordination. This creation structure is established in the divine nature, a nature where the Father is head and the Son voluntarily subordinates himself to the Father. So in imaging God, Adam and Eve were equal in being and status, but in terms of roles (in church and family)³ Adam was head.

Using classic theology, some complementarians state that the divine nature is such that the Father and Son have a relationship between them expressed in terms of “eternal generation.” From eternity there has been an eternal generation of the Son, a generation that is part of the ontological Trinity. Thus, Christ’s sonship is one that is eternally ontologically equal to the Father, but also economically subordinate to the Father. Although the persons of the Trinity are equal in being, there is a difference in relationship noted in the names “Father” and “Son.” This divine nature finds expression in the pre-fall creation structure and the incarnation. Creation and incarnation could not be otherwise. Oddie writes: “For at no point does Jesus imply that God is merely *like* a father to him: his message is that in very truth God *actually is his father*. He is begotten, not made. And this understanding is at the heart of the faith of the early Church” (Oddie 1984: 119).

Regarding the first disciples, Oddie continues:

The Father-Son relationship illuminated for them, not the nature of Christ only, but also their own nature, and that of the Church, as well. For Christ’s astonishing teaching to them was that because God was *his* Father, he was also *theirs*. . . . The disciples, men and women, are to show the same congruity with the Father’s nature as does the Son. And this is why

³ Although, some complementarians argue that the role differentiation extends beyond church and family. See Piper (1991).

Christ seen as “Child” only is inadequate to a full Christian understanding, and why “daughter” would be a plain incoherency. . .

(Oddie 1984: 121)

Torrance makes a related connection:

The indissoluble relation between the incarnate Son and God the Father cannot but mean that Fatherhood and Sonship belong to the eternal, unchangeable being of God. There is no Father without the Son, and there is no Son without the Father—Fatherhood and Sonship are equally ultimate in the eternal being of the Godhead. God is Father in himself in his own eternal nature as Father of the eternal Son.

(Torrance 1992: 136; also, Kimel 1992: 198-99, 205)

Complementarians, like Oddie, argue that Jesus is the Son, not only by virtue of the incarnation, but also because of his eternal generation. God is not merely like a father to Jesus, but is his father, not only in time, but also from eternity. Jesus’ relationship with his Father on earth reflects an eternal relationship where the Son is eternally generated from the Father. Therefore, Christ coming as male is neither incidental nor coincidental. It traces its origin back to the creation structure that in turn finds its origin in the ontological Trinity. Jesus’ maleness is indicative of his earthly sonship, which in turn is revelational of his eternal relationship with the Father. So in speaking about the masculine imagery for God, Waltke writes: “His representations and incarnation are inseparable from his being” (Waltke 1995: 37). Essentially, the male incarnation becomes revelational of the eternal divine nature.

1.1.6 Authority

Does the nature of maleness reveal authority? One writer states: “God reveals himself in masculine terms, not because he is male, but because men possess greater authority, for example, in terms of physical strength and voice” (Spanner 1994: 107-08). Although many complementarians would

disagree with this argument, the complementarian position has closely tied maleness with authority. John Frame provides a reason why God is referred to in primarily masculine terms:

Scripture describes God both in male and female terms, though the overwhelming preponderance of imagery is male. The reason, I think, is basically that Scripture wants us to think of God as *Lord* (Exodus 3:14; 6:3, 7; 33:19; 34:5ff.; Deuteronomy 6:4ff; cf. Romans 10:9f; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:11), and lordship, in Scripture, always connotes authority. Since in the Biblical view women are subject to male authority in the home and the church, there is some awkwardness in speaking of God in female terms.

(Frame 1991: 229)

Similarly, Bloesch alludes to the relationship between maleness and authority. He writes:

“Patriarchy preserves the biblical principle of an above and a below, of a first and a second, of headship and servanthood” (Bloesch 1982: 79). So changing “Father” to “Mother” reconstructs our view of God as well as of creation, from a *creatio ex nihilo* to a birthing process or emanation (Bloesch 1982: 80), and expresses a desire to move away from authority (Bloesch 1982: 90).

What is the origin of this link between maleness and authority? As with other aspects of their argument, complementarians say that this is also established in the created order where Adam is given authority over his wife, exemplified in his naming of her. Furthermore, this tie between maleness and authority was not abolished through the gospel. When considering this sexual differentiation and the frequently debated passage of Galatians 3:28, Litfin writes:

Traditionalists do not claim that the truth of Galatians 3:28 is without social ramifications. Quite the opposite, they insist that the fundamental oneness in Christ of all Christians does carry profound implications for how Christians are to relate to one another. Where the traditionalists depart from the feminists, however, is in specifying what those implications should be. The feminists insist that the implication *must be* the elimination of all gender-based roles. Traditionalists ask, simply, why? This conclusion is not logically required at all. Ontological equality and social hierarchy are not mutually exclusive.

(Litfin 1979: 264)

We should note that most non-complementarians do not reject authority structures *per se*, but rather the requirement that authority structures be based on gender. Nevertheless, the

complementarian position contends that the connection between maleness and authority continues in the new covenant church as required by the New Testament.

So part of the complementarian argument is based on the notion of authority. Even though there is an ontological equality in the Trinity, there is also a functional hierarchy. This hierarchy is reflected in the male-female relationship as they image God where man is given authority over woman (Letham 1990). The conclusion may be drawn that one reason for a masculine incarnation was to reveal authority. God reveals himself as Father and Son, and hence the maleness of Christ, to reveal his authority, while incarnating as a woman would negate this authority. For complementarians, because the concept of authority and leadership is so closely tied to maleness, it follows that Christ had to become male to reflect this authority and lordship of God. The argument is such: God gave man and not woman authority at creation, thus God reveals himself in masculine terms and a male incarnation because he desires to reveal himself as Lord.

1.1.7 Conclusion

The common ground in the complementarian position lies in the revelational character and necessity of a male incarnation. The basis for the complementarian argument is that God has revealed himself in Scripture as Father and Son, and Christ became a *man*. As eternal Son, he comes as man. In doing so, he fulfils the Old Testament types and patterns. To move beyond the sonship of Christ to a daughtership is to move beyond what is revealed. In addition, since men and not women are given leadership and authority in church and home—a role established in the created order—so Christ had to become male. To say that Christ could incarnate as female undermines this revelation of God, the created order of role differentiation, and the analogy

between Christ and his church. It leaves us with a sexualised Christ, a confusing and impersonal image.

1.2 Biblical Egalitarian Position

1.2.1 Introduction

Biblical egalitarians place themselves within the bounds of Scripture, biblical authority, and orthodoxy. Their views on Scripture and fundamental doctrines are close to complementarians.⁴ Biblical egalitarians, however, sharply disagree with complementarians and argue that the maleness of Jesus is only culturally and historically relevant. They also differ with feminists who have departed from Christianity because of the perceived unchangeable maleness of God and patriarchal character of Scripture. Egalitarians believe that these feminists have adopted a position that is similar to the complementarian position in that both view the Scripture as unalterably hierarchical.

Egalitarianism claims that it does not minimise the differences between men and women, but states that there are no *established* leadership or headship roles based on gender. The position affirms that people may have different roles, and it does not reject authority structures. They believe, however, that these roles or structures should not be determined by gender. Biblical egalitarians stress that both men and women image God. Both are prophet, priest, and king in the

⁴ Ruth A. Tucker rightly chides Susan Foh for stating that biblical feminists do not believe that the Bible is innerant. For Tucker, it is not a question of innerancy, but rather one of hermeneutics (Tucker 1992: 203).

new covenant, and one in Christ (Groothuis 1997: 100-102). As mediator, Christ's humanity is significant not his sex. So they do not believe that the maleness of Christ is revelational.

Egalitarians maintain that Jesus' incarnation as male was because of the patriarchal culture, and was not a theological necessity. "Jesus was a male. Few people would dispute that. The question is, So what?" (Scanzoni & Hardesty 1992: 267)

1.2.2 Culture

Biblical egalitarians argue that Jesus' maleness is culturally determined. Jesus became male in order to fulfil his mission in a patriarchal world. Paul K. Jewett summarises the egalitarian position. He writes: "There is no ultimate reason, either in the nature of Man the creature or of God the Creator, but only a proximate one in history—and that a history marked by sin and alienation—that God should uniquely reveal himself in a man rather than a woman" (Jewett 1975: 168). Jewett elaborates further:

There is nothing either in the concept of God, or in the concept of Incarnation, that leads by logical entailment to masculinity. Given the patriarchal society of Israel, the revelation of God naturally takes a patriarchal form. (We say "naturally" rather than "necessarily" because even in patriarchal cultures female gods were known and worshipped.) It is not surprising, then, that God reveals himself to Israel as the "Father" of "his" people. Being disclosed as the Father of Israel, it is likewise natural that God should send one called a "son," who naturally assumes male humanity.

(Jewett 1991: 324)

For Jewett, the historical situation in which the incarnation takes place is a sinful world that views male and female relationships in terms of headship and submission (Jewett 1975: 169). He regards the masculine incarnation as "*theologically indifferent*," although not "*historically and culturally indifferent*" (Jewett 1980: 55). Jesus' maleness is due to the specific ANE culture, so there is no theological reason for Jesus coming as male.

Other egalitarians support Jewett. Rebecca M. Groothuis writes: “One of Jesus’ main forums for public preaching and teaching was the synagogue; this too would have been an impossible role for a woman. For historical and cultural reasons, it was necessary that God be incarnated as a male human” (Groothuis 1997: 109). Virginia R. Mollenkott notes that the male incarnation was cultural because “in the patriarchal culture of rabbinic Judaism, no incarnation of God in the flesh of a woman would have received a moment’s serious notice!” (Mollenkott 1977: 68) Letha D. Scanzoni and Nancy A. Hardesty ask the question: “Why did God choose to become flesh in male form?” (Scanzoni & Hardesty 1992: 92) Agreeing with Mollenkott, they write: “Only as a free man could God demonstrate a radically new way of relating in terms of mutual respect and service. Women and slaves were servants by law and custom. Respect was demanded from them” (Scanzoni & Hardesty 1992: 73-74). Scanzoni and Hardesty observe that a female Messiah would have a limited knowledge of the Bible, she would be unable to teach in the synagogue, her testimony would not be believed, and she would be monthly “unclean” (Scanzoni & Hardesty 1992: 74). Simply stated, in the ANE culture, a female Messiah would have no credibility. Stanley J. Grenz and Denise M. Kjesbo also concur. They write:

In the context in which he lived, Jesus’ maleness was an indispensable dimension of his vocation. Only a male could have offered the radical critique of the power systems of his day, which is so prevalent in Jesus’ message.

To see this, we need only look at the alternative. Had the Savior of humankind come as a woman, she would have been immediately dismissed solely on the basis of her sex. Nor could her actions have been interpreted as defying and correcting the social norms of the day, for her self-sacrificial ministry would have been interpreted as merely the outworking of her socialized ideal role as a woman. Thus to be the liberator of both male and female, Jesus needed to be male.

(Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 209)

Given the hierarchical culture, Jesus could not have carried out his ministry as a woman.

Therefore, regarding Jesus’ maleness, most biblical egalitarians place “maleness” on a similar level

to “Jewishness.” Speaking of Jesus’ maleness, Ruth A. Tucker states: “It was his *gender* identity, just as being a Jew was his *cultural* identity, and being a carpenter’s son from Nazareth was part of his *social* identity” (Tucker 1992: 26). Likewise, for Groothuis, Jesus’ maleness is insignificant. She writes:

There is no biblical warrant to impute theologically weighty implications to Jesus’ maleness. Neither in his instructions concerning women’s ministry, nor in any of his Christological discussions, does Paul ever derive any theological significance from the maleness of either Jesus or his twelve disciples.

. . . Scripture has much to say about Jesus, but of his maleness there is no commentary. It simply is not significant.

(Groothuis 1997: 111; also, Scanzoni & Hardesty 1992: 19)

Egalitarians stress the importance of taking into serious consideration the culture or situation of the day. In doing so, they argue that the ANE culture gives sufficient reason for Jesus’ maleness. In addition, they find no New Testament passage that draws theological implications from Jesus’ sex. His maleness is a proximate necessity based on culture, and not an ultimate necessity rooted in divine being.

1.2.3 Biblical References

1.2.3.1 Creation and fall

Most complementarians argue that the creation account establishes a theological significance to the differing sexes, which undergirds the necessity of Christ’s maleness. Biblical egalitarians come to a different conclusion. Commenting on the Genesis 1 narrative, Gilbert Bilezikian writes:

It is inconceivable that the very statement that delineates the organizational structure of creation would omit a reference to lines of authority between man and woman, had such a

thing existed. . . . the definition of authority structures between man and woman would be at least as important as the definition of their authority over birds, fish, and cattle.

(Bilezikian 1985: 25)

B. Van der Walt agrees that what is notable in the Genesis 1-2 passage is the absence of any command from God regarding male authority (Van der Walt 1988: 10). Egalitarians ask: "If there is such God-given authority, surely it would have been clearly stated?" They claim that nowhere in the creation account is there an injunction concerning the rule of man over woman (Tucker 1992: 33-34). Instead, they underscore that the creation account teaches a mutual equality of being, with both male and female created in the image of God (Mollenkott 1977: 55-56). In contrast to complementarians, egalitarians maintain that subordination came because of the fall and not creation (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 165). They advance several arguments from the creation narrative to justify their position. For instance, they argue that Eve's creation from man does not place her under him, just as Adam's creation from dust does not place him under the dust. Egalitarians note that as God created animals before Adam, so Eve's subsequent creation does not imply her inferiority in any way (Jewett 1975: 125-26). Moreover, they observe that contrary to a patriarchal society God commanded the husband to leave his family, cleave to his wife, and not vice versa. Egalitarians ask: "What about Eve's role as 'helper'?" They believe that solely based on the word "helper," it may be exegetically argued that the one who helps has greater authority. Instead, egalitarians hold that the word "helper" in context refers to Eve coming alongside Adam, joining him as a partner, and rescuing "him from his solitude" (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 165). Egalitarians observe that in the Old Testament the word is never used of a subordinate (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 164). Answering complementarians who say that God, in being a helper to us, subordinates himself, Groothuis responds:

To say that God, who is always helping us, is thereby subordinate to us, is to use "subordinate" in a sense that is radically different from what traditionalists have in mind when they advocate the subordination of women to male authority. It thereby fails to serve

as a vindication of female subordination. Humans, after all, have no authority over God, as men purportedly have over their female “helpers.”

(Groothuis 1997: 134-35)

If there is no expressed divine command in the creation narrative regarding male authority, are there any inferences that may be drawn, such as Adam’s naming of his wife? Egalitarians do not believe that Adam’s naming of his wife “woman” implies his authority and rule over her. They argue that it is not an authoritative naming at all, rather a recognition of Eve’s identity and equality. (Van Leeuwen 1990: 41; Groothuis 1997: 127-28; Van der Walt 1988: 8-9). What about Adam naming his wife “Eve” in Genesis 3:20? Egalitarians note that this occurred after the fall and the disruption of their relationship. The position affirms that the rule of man only came because of the fall. The fall is the beginning of male rule, not a change in the type or manner of rule (Groothuis 1997: 139-40; Mollenkott 1977: 132; Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 165-69). Groothuis observes that the text “does not say that the man would *continue* to rule but would now do so in a cruel and domineering fashion. The news to the woman was simply that the man would rule, not that he would rule differently” (Groothuis 1997: 140).

Biblical egalitarians conclude that the creation account teaches an equality of being and function. Countering the claim of complementarians that egalitarianism fosters homosexuality because it downplays or irradicates certain creation structures, egalitarians argue that just the opposite occurs. Groothuis says that a “biblical egalitarian perspective can prove helpful in leading a woman *out* of homosexuality; for it clearly establishes without equivocation or qualification the equal value and status of womanhood in God’s loving plan for human sexual relationships” (Groothuis 1997: 68-69). Also responding to the statement that biblical egalitarianism opens the door for homosexuality, Tucker argues that this is like saying that traditionalism opens the door

for wife beating. Both are separate issues without the one necessarily leading to the other (Tucker 1992: 240)⁵.

Biblical egalitarians, contrary to complementarians, conclude that the creation account gives no warrant for male leadership and authority. This conclusion directly relates to their position on the cultural nature of Jesus' maleness. They find no established order in creation that necessitated Christ becoming male. Furthermore, from the creation account, egalitarians conclude that there are several irreconcilable tensions within the complementarian position. Considering the complementarian view that masculinity inherently implies "authority" and femininity implies "submission," egalitarians wonder how complementarians maintain equality of being. Somehow, as Groothuis argues, women are able to lead; yet, it is also against their nature to lead. It is a "natural ability to do so, yet it is somehow unnatural for her to do so" (Groothuis 1997: 76). Groothuis reasons that if by nature women are not fit to lead, then they are by nature "indecisive, irrational, lacking in wisdom and moral discernment, perpetually childlike in the need for guidance and governance" (Groothuis 1997: 77). She argues that if male authority is not arbitrary, there must be something inherent to maleness that makes men better equipped for leadership, implying superior ontology. If it is arbitrary, why then is half of humanity subordinate to another? (Groothuis 1997: 86) Therefore, egalitarians view the complementarian position, "equal in being, subordinate in function" as a position beyond the bounds of Scripture, if "subordinate" means something that is inherent to femininity. Groothuis believes that the complementarian argument is fallacious, for it claims that women are equal in being (thus able to lead), but are commanded not to lead (thus subordinate), yet again it is against their nature to lead (since to be "feminine"

⁵ Tucker rightly balances the implications of Van Leeuwen's statement that the second highest predictor of wife abuse is conservative religiosity (See, Van Leeuwen 1990: 244-45).

means to be submissive, hence not equal in being). If women are *always* subordinate to men (functionally) then it means that they are by necessity subordinate (ontologically).

1.2.3.2 Other passages

1.2.3.2.a Introduction

There is no uniformity among biblical egalitarians regarding New Testament teaching. Some deny that the New Testament teaches anywhere a hierarchical or traditional model. Some believe that the New Testament teaches in some places a traditional model; nevertheless, this model was only applicable to the first century church living in a patriarchal society. A few argue that there is a contradiction within Paul's teaching. All agree, however, that the modern church should teach and practise egalitarianism. Some of the discussion is not directly related to the maleness of Christ, but it is relevant to our topic. The egalitarian position that Jesus' maleness is theological indifferent is integrally related to their view that there is no theological difference between male and female—that the New Testament does not teach male rule as normative.

1.2.3.2.b Proverbs 8: 22-31

Some egalitarians argue that Jesus should be identified with the figure of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8 (Mollenkott 1977: 62-63; König 1992: 86-88; König 1993: 112-13). Mollenkott argues that this identification of Jesus with Lady Wisdom precludes traditionalists from concluding that the male incarnation establishes that God is more masculine than feminine (Mollenkott 1977: 52). This identification leads Mollenkott to conclude that “the earthly Jesus embodied—not only deity

and humanity, not only time and eternity, but also masculine and feminine” (Mollenkott 1983a: 101). This identification of Jesus with Wisdom reaches its nadir in John 1:1-18 where all the attributes ascribed to Wisdom are applied to Jesus (König 1993: 115). König writes: “Maar die feit dat Hy ook met ’n vroulike wese geïdentifiseer kan word, beteken dat Jesus se manlikheid nie ’n wesenlike saak is wat met sy heilsbetekenis in verband staan nie. Hy sou ook ’n vrou kon gewees het en ons nog op dieselfde wyse kon verlos” (König 1993: 116).

1.2.3.2.c Gospels

Egalitarians note that the Gospels portray Jesus along egalitarian lines. Rather than assume the traditional male role, Jesus’ life, as male, was one of submission and service. Elaine Storkey writes:

Many feminists who have found it difficult to identify with the maleness of God as so often portrayed by the Church, discover in the Jesus of the Gospels a person whom they love and appreciate. For what is so striking about Christ is that he *does not* uphold the male establishment. In all his attitudes and concern he rejects the patriarchal power structure of his day.

(Storkey 1985: 156)

1.2.3.2.d Acts 2:15-21

On the day of Pentecost, Peter repeats Joel’s prophecy declaring that in the new covenant community the Spirit will come to all flesh, male and female. This is the time when sons and daughters will prophesy, when the Spirit’s work will remove differences of rank, class, and sex. Bilezikian concludes from Acts 2:15-21 that the “sex difference is irrelevant in the church” (Bilezikian 1985: 124). He finds similar teaching in Galatians 3:26-29, where Paul teaches that racial, social, or sexual distinctions are immaterial in the new covenant (Bilezikian 1985: 126-28).

1.2.3.2.e Galatians 3:28

Galatians 3:28 is the foundational verse for the egalitarian position (Van der Walt 1988: 31). Jewett speaks of this verse as the “*Magna Carta of Humanity*” (Jewett 1975: 142). Similarly, Grenz writes: “Egalitarians, in contrast [to complementarians], see Galatians 3:28 as the foundation for a new social order in the church. In their view this verse looms as the clearest statement of the apostle’s own understanding of the role of women” (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 101). Egalitarians argue that Galatians 3:28 must receive hermeneutical priority because of its overarching nature and its position within the Pauline corpus (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 106-07). They assert that this verse establishes the basis for the theological indifference of the sexes, as it lists male-female relationships in conjunction with slave-free and Jew-Gentile relationships. They argue that this verse is not only descriptive of our soteriological position but also descriptive of our soteriological function (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 100-07). Their position, however, does not eliminate any distinction of the sexes, but, as Grenz affirms: “These human distinctions are not obliterated in Christ. Rather, because they have no significance for a person’s position *coram Deo*, they no longer provide the basis for functional differences within Christ’s fellowship” (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 106).

1.2.3.2.f 1 Corinthians 7:4; 11:3-16; 14:33b-36

Egalitarians appeal to 1 Corinthians 7:4 where Paul states that a wife has authority over her husband’s body (Van der Walt 1988: 3). Van der Walt notes that the only time Scripture uses the word “authority” in the marriage relationship, it is in the context of a mutual marriage

relationship (Van der Walt 1988: 38). Thus, it is argued that God gave both husband and wife authority in their relationship. Similarly, Bilezikian says that 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 teaches a marriage relationship of mutual authority and equal rights within marriage (Bilezikian 1985: 129-32).

Concerning 1 Corinthians 11:3-6, Longenecker advances a novel approach. He writes:

Yet it is important to note that while he [Paul] argues for order and decorum in the congregation on the basis of the order within the Godhead and in creation, he also insists on the basis of eschatological redemption that 'in the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of women,' and that both together find their source in God (vv. 11-12). What Paul appears to be saying, in effect, is that though he has argued on the basis of creation for the subordination of women in worship, on the basis of redemption he must also assert their equality.

(Longenecker 1984: 80-81)

Most egalitarians, however, argue that Paul does appeal to creation, but the principle invoked from creation is one of "source" and not "headship" (Groothuis 1997: 159). In other words, Paul is not arguing from creation for the subordination of women, but basing his point in creation, namely that woman came from man.

Egalitarians also note a dilemma in complementarian interpretation that views Paul's directive concerning woman's silence in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 as normative. This apparently contradicts 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 where Paul allows women to speak (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 121). Like Paul's command in 1 Timothy 2:12-14, egalitarians view 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 as a prohibition for a particular situation and not a transcultural norm.

1.2.3.2.g Ephesians 5:21-33

What does “headship” mean in Ephesians 5:23? Adrio König argues that Paul describes exactly what he means, and what type of role he has for the husband (König 1987: 147-48; 1993: 147). He writes: “Paulus ontwikkel duidelik twee sake as hy oor Christus as hoof praat: dat Christus ons Verlosser is (v.23) en dat Christus in liefde sy lewe vir ons opgeoffer het (v.25 e.v.)” (König 1987: 147). Egalitarians argue that headship is a role where the husband, like Christ, is to give up his life, that is, to submit himself. God is calling the husband to take the lead in self-denying love and service (Van der Walt 1988: 33). Consequently, they believe that this passage, like 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, teaches a mutual submission to one another (Eph 5:21), where one partner does not *necessarily* lead. A similar concept is found in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 where we have noted that egalitarians argue that “head” serves as a metaphor for “source” or “origin” rather than “authority” (Groothuis 1997: 159; Mollenkott 1977: 111-12; Bilezikian 1986). Here, Paul is again describing a mutual relationship, since he argues in 1 Corinthians 11:12 that every man has come from a woman (Groothuis 1997: 127).

Egalitarians observe that Scripture never commands husbands to “rule” or wives to “obey.” They believe that this gives further credence to their view that headship does not mean authority, and that submissiveness does not mean obedience; rather both are a self-giving love. Therefore, the biblical marriage relationship is equality through mutual submission (Mollenkott 1977: 33) versus the dominance-submission model or the “carnal way of relating” (Mollenkott 1977: 34-50). Questioning complementarians who state that Scripture never commands a husband to submit, egalitarians ask, “What then does it mean for a husband to give up his life?” Surely, they argue, does not submission mean to give up one’s own life and rights for another?

Why then does Paul express the marriage relationship in this way? It is because this submission fitted well with the culture of the day where women were commanded by Jewish and Roman law to obey their husbands (Groothuis 1997: 169-70), and women were not highly regarded (Van der Walt 1988: 21-22). Paul's commands regarding submission are to keep the peace in a culture where women were more ignorant and generally prohibited from speaking in public. Paul preached a "mutual submission for the sake of Christ, and that his application of this principle was colored by his culture, both pagan and Jewish" (Boldrey & Boldrey 1976: 70).

1.2.3.2.h 1 Timothy 2:11-15

Many egalitarians teach that 1 Timothy 2:12 (like 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36) is a specific prohibition for a particular situation. They argue that we are to view Paul's command for women not to teach in the same manner as the command to wear certain types of clothes. The commands are essentially only normative for that culture. Commenting on 1 Timothy 2:12, Grenz writes: "On the basis of his [Paul's] choice of the present active indicative (*epitrepō*) rather than the imperative, egalitarians conclude that Paul is not voicing a timeless command, but a temporary directive applicable to a specific situation: 'I am not presently allowing'" (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 130). The reason given for Paul's prohibition is that most women were unlearned. Richard and Joyce Boldrey provide an explanation for Paul's teaching:

Paul's statements about woman's subordination were made within the cultural context of his day. As for Phoebe, Prisca, and the others, Paul's all-encompassing commitment to the gospel forced him to give responsibility to the most qualified person, regardless of sex. On the other hand, he acknowledged as a cultural fact that the average woman of his day was inferior to her male counterpart and was, therefore, often incapable of acting without supervision.

(Boldrey & Boldrey 1976: 23-24)

In the ANE culture, it was expedient for women to submit to their husbands, hence the rationale for Paul's commands. The Boldreys continue their argument: "Paul's experience led him to distrust weak people to teach or to be in authority, and, given women's undeveloped intellect—undeveloped because of their low social status—it is understandable that he issued a general statement forbidding them to teach" (Boldrey & Boldrey 1976: 64). Expressing a similar view, Peter DeJong and Donald R. Wilson say that Paul is "addressing the threats to unity that are inherent in any dominant-subordinate relationship, whether political, economic, or familial" (DeJong & Wilson 1979: 147; also, 144-47, 160). Patricia Gundry favours two possible positions: women are not allowed to teach at this time (until they are better learned), or not allowed to teach because it was not in accord with the culture (Gundry 1977: 75-77). The commands are given so as not to unnecessarily offend the culture.

Egalitarians argue that the New Testament fundamentally handles this issue like slavery. As Paul commanded slaves to submit, likewise he also taught hierarchy in marriage and church, but only because of the current social order. The command of submission is there, but the New Testament also contains the seeds of transformation. Why then does Paul appeal to creation to support his statements? Contrary to complementarians, egalitarians argue that Paul in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 refers to creation, not to immovably ground his command in creation, but to use it as an illustration of deception. Grenz writes: "The point of his appeal to the narrative is not that Eve sinned but that the transgression came through deception" (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 137). Paul prohibits women from teaching because of the strong possibility of ignorant women deceiving the church. In presenting this temporary prohibition, Paul appeals to creation as an illustration of the deception that he is seeking to prevent.

Other egalitarians like Van der Walt interpret Paul teaching in 1 Timothy 2:12 that he does not permit a woman to *dominate* her husband. Instead of the verse being a command limited to ANE culture, Van der Walt views it as a timeless prohibition—women are not to control in a domineering manner. Accordingly, this does not allow men to dominate their wives (Van der Walt 1988: 37). Providing another interpretation, Catherine and Richard Kroeger translate ἀὐθεντεῖν so that 1 Timothy 2:12 reads: “I do not permit woman to teach nor to represent herself as originator of man but she is to be in conformity [with the Scriptures] [or that she keeps a secret.] For Adam was created first, then Eve” (Kroeger & Kroeger 1992: 103). In this view, what women are not allowed to teach is explained by the phrase “represent herself as originator of man” (Kroeger & Kroeger 1992: 82-84).

Jewett adopts a different approach. Concerning passages that appear to teach subordination, Jewett writes that Paul’s insight had “historical limitations” (Jewett 1975: 138-39). He implies a contraction within Paul himself by saying:

So far as he [Paul] thought in terms of his Jewish background, he thought of the woman as subordinate to the man for whose sake she was created (I Cor. 11:9). But so far as he thought in terms of the new insight he had gained through the revelation of God in Christ, he thought of the woman as equal to the man in all things, the two having been made one in Christ, in whom there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28).

(Jewett 1975: 112)

Jewett argues that Paul does prohibit women from the teaching office, but this prohibition is counter to the plain teaching of the rest of the New Testament (Jewett 1980: 65, 67-68). For Jewett, there is no way to harmonise Paul’s thinking on this subject (Jewett 1975: 112-13). Mollenkott agrees with Jewett by stating: “Paul’s arguments reflect his personal struggles over female subordination and show vestiges both of Greek philosophy (particularly Stoicism) and of the rabbinical training he had received from his own socialization and especially from Rabbi

Gamaliel" (Mollenkott 1977: 95; also, Mollenkott 1976: 22). Mollenkott maintains that there is an inherent contradiction between parts of Paul's teaching, between his subordinationist teaching and his good relationships with other women leaders in the church (Mollenkott 1977: 96-97). She does not believe, however, that this denigrates the authority of Scripture. She illustrates her point by appealing to the imprecatory psalms that call for punishment upon enemies; yet violate the spirit of the Old Testament (Mollenkott 1977: 104).

1.2.4 Trinitarian Theology

Egalitarians make a distinction between subordination because of nature and a temporary or voluntary subordination. As they have denied any rule-submission ordinance in Genesis 2, they do not believe that the eternal persons of the Trinity relate to each other based on rule and submission. They agree that in the incarnation Christ submitted himself to the Father, yet stress that his submission was voluntary. Egalitarians hold that the complementarian comparison between the Son submitting himself to the Father and the so called wife's submission is invalid, since the Son voluntarily submitted himself, whereas the wife's submission is required (Mollenkott 1977: 63, 122-24). To base female submission on the example of Christ is indefensible since his submission was temporary and voluntary (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 152; Mollenkott 1976: 25). Furthermore, Grenz argues that Christ's voluntary submission is balanced by the Father's dependence on the Son (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 154). He writes:

Rather than providing us with a model for a male-dominated hierarchy, the mutual dependence of the Father and the Son suggests the mutual subordination of men and women to each other. When we look more closely, we discover that the central Christian conception of God—the doctrine of the Trinity—leads us to affirm the importance of the inclusion of women in all aspects of the church's ministry.

(Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 154-55)

Egalitarians also deny any relation between maleness and God's being. Jewett states that "*an affinity between maleness and divineness remains the basic assumption behind every argument from the nature of God for the exclusion of women from the office of the ministry*" (Jewett 1980: 35). Accordingly, Groothuis asks the question: "What does the imputation of theological significance to Christ's maleness necessarily assume about the nature of God? Or about the creation of woman in the image of God and her re-creation in the image of Christ?" (Groothuis 1997: 111) She continues: "If Christ had to be male in order to represent the Father, then God the Father must also be male or male-like. The 'Christ as male' argument necessarily assumes that God's nature is more like that of a male than a female" (Groothuis 1997: 112). Egalitarians state that complementarians have created an insuperable dilemma by holding to the trinitarian God who is beyond sexuality, and yet maintaining a necessary masculine incarnation. Groothuis argues that to claim that maleness is essential to Jesus creates insurmountable problems by making men superior representatives of God and women inferior in their being (Groothuis 1997: 113). So egalitarians believe that to argue for the theological significance of Jesus' maleness necessarily brings "maleness" into God's being and denigrates woman. It also creates christological problems, for Jesus alone is the true and expressed image of God, yet he is male. Thus, they see only two options: either male reveals God more than female, or maleness is theologically insignificant (Groothuis 1997: 98, 112). Egalitarians conclude that Jesus' maleness does not reveal being; rather it is culturally defined (König 1992: 91). König argues that if Jesus' maleness means that God is male, it follows that man is created in God's image and not woman. It means that Christ had to become a male in order to reveal God. It means that the leaders of the church must be male because they represent God (König 1992: 81).

Jewett presents another argument by using the classic formulation of the Trinity. To support the view that the masculine incarnation is not a theological necessity, Jewett argues for the legitimacy of speaking of a “Daughter” as well as “Son.” As classic theology spoke of the Father generating the Son, so we may speak of a Mother generating a Daughter. Jewett writes:

Analogical language, to be meaningful, must of course rest upon some univocal element between the human reality from which it is taken and the divine reality to which it refers. In our exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity, so far as God’s name—Father, Son, and Spirit—is concerned, we have identified the univocal element in the concept of origins. The second and third persons in the Godhead originate, as persons, with the first person, who is therefore called “Father.” The Father “begets” the Son and “breathes” (“spirates”) the Spirit. But obviously in using such terms as “begetting” and “breathing” to describe how the second and third persons of the Godhead have their origin in the first, we speak analogically, not univocally. And since this is so, feminine figures could as well be used without altering the substance of our thought about God.

(Jewett 1991: 323-24)

Jewett uses his view on analogy to posit a Mother-Daughter construction. He asserts that the only univocal element in the trinitarian name—Father, Son, and Spirit—is that the second and third persons originate, as persons, from the Father. Therefore, it is legitimate to substitute a Mother-Daughter analogy, for it retains the univocal element of the original analogy, namely causation. Thus, for Jewett, we have left our conception of God unaltered since we have not changed what is true of the metaphor. He writes: “Since God is like a woman as well as a man, may God not be likened to a mother who eternally bears a daughter as well as to a father who eternally begets a son?” (Jewett 1991: 324) This is legitimate for Jewett because there are no sexual distinctions in the Trinity, only personal, (Jewett 1980: 36) for “God’s mode of personal existence transcends sexual distinctions” (Jewett 1980: 43). Therefore, if we can speak of a Mother-Daughter relationship, then the maleness of Jesus is not revelational; it is only cultural, like his Jewishness. Jewett concludes:

Since the trinitarian fellowship of the Godhead knows no distinction of male and female and since the human fellowship of male and female knows no distinction against the female as less in the divine image than the male, therefore the Incarnation in the form of

male humanity, though historically and culturally necessary, was not *theologically* necessary.

(Jewett 1975: 168; also, Groothuis 1997: 109)

1.2.5 Analogy and Metaphor

Closely associated with the egalitarian view on the Trinity is their understanding of analogy and metaphor. In her book, *The Divine Feminine*, Mollenkott addresses some of the arguments of complementarians, particularly Vernard Eller. Mollenkott argues, contrary to Eller's claims, that the Scriptures do bring the "feminine principle into the Godhead" (Mollenkott 1983a: 4). Her book provides numerous different feminine pictures of God, such as a woman giving birth, nursing mother, midwife, mother bear, mother eagle, mother hen, and Lady Wisdom (also, Mollenkott 1983b). Mollenkott also mentions that Jesus compared God with a female in Luke 15 (Mollenkott 1977: 58) and referred to himself in female terms as he wept over Jerusalem (Mollenkott 1977: 60). These feminine metaphors are important for Mollenkott, because they teach that God is not masculine.

Like Mollenkott, Jewett argues that the feminine metaphors for God in the Scripture are relevant to the discussion. He writes:

God can be both a Father and a Mother to his people; he is not subject to the either/or of fatherhood or motherhood as we are. That is to say, God is like a human father, *not* in his sexuality as a male, but in the pity which he shows for his children; and God is like a human mother, *not* in her sexuality as a female, but in the solicitude which she shows for the well-being of her infant offspring.

(Jewett 1980: 43)

Jewett claims that God has revealed himself as Mother as well as Father, (Jewett 1975: 167) and when using female and male imagery for God, the Scriptures (in both cases) are speaking

analogically (Jewett 1980: 41). He argues that in the Scripture, “to speak grammatically, ‘he’ is used of God as a *personal* pronoun, not a *masculine personal* pronoun” (Jewett 1980: 45). Hence, in the created order, male does not image God more than female. Not all egalitarians agree with Mollenkott and Jewett regarding their search for feminine metaphors. Groothuis believes this solves nothing, falls into the same difficulty as the complementarian position in that it sexualises God, and in the end, there are far more masculine references in Scripture (Groothuis 1997: 97-98).

How do egalitarians address the imbalance between male and female metaphors for God in the Scripture? Mollenkott says “that it is perfectly natural for the Bible to contain a vast predominance of masculine God-language, springing as it does out of a deeply patriarchal culture” (Mollenkott 1983a: 110). Grenz, however, claims that mere culture is not a sufficient answer for the masculine imagery in Scripture (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 146). He suggests an answer: “The widespread use of male images indicates that God relates to the world primarily in a manner analogous to the human male. God is ultimately transcendent, creating the world as a reality outside of himself” (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 148). Grenz, however, is not expressing the general consensus. Most egalitarians argue that the reason why Scripture refers to God as “Father” is because a father in that culture had power and authority. God as “Father” also presented a sharp contrast with other ANE religions. Egalitarians use this preponderance of masculine imagery to their advantage. They claim that given the patriarchal society, it is very surprising that there are any feminine references to God. This leads us to an argument from exceptions.

1.2.6 Exceptions

Considering the patriarchal society in which the Bible was written, and the preponderance of masculine images, it is significant that there are exceptions. Mary Evans writes: “In a patriarchal society, the characteristics which are assigned to God are generally those which males assign to themselves as ideal. Therefore in such a society it is significant that feminine imagery, though not common, does occur” (Evans 1983: 22). Mollenkott also uses this argument from exceptions. She writes:

The biblical authors, who were socialized in such a culture, wanted to honor God and therefore spoke of God as masculine in order to show their honor and reverence. . . . So it certainly should not surprise us that the Bible uses predominately masculine imagery for God.

What is surprising is the large number of feminine or female images of God. The fact is that the Bible was written by patriarchs and, as far as its primary audience was concerned, for patriarchs, and in a patriarchal society.

(Mollenkott 1983b: 12)

Apart from feminine imagery for God, egalitarians also find exceptions to male hierarchy. From the Old Testament, for example, they refer to the leadership of Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah. Evans notes that in the Song of Songs, a book written in a patriarchal society, there is a portrayal of a mutual marriage relationship. Regarding this book, she finds that “there is no male dominance, no female subordination, and no stereotyping of either sex” (Evans 1983: 23-24). Egalitarians also note a number of exceptions in the New Testament. Jesus had remarkable relationships with women, (Jewett 1975: 94-103) and had women disciples (Groothuis 1997: 110). Women were the first witnesses to the resurrection, and women shared in the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:17). The daughters of Philip were prophets (Acts 21:9), and other women prophesied in the churches (1 Cor 11:5)—combining this with Paul’s statement that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20). Women also laboured together with Paul

(Phil 4:3) and some were his fellow workers (Rom 16:3). Others women were deacons (Rom 16:1), and in Romans 16:7, many egalitarians read the feminine form “Junia” not the masculine “Junias,” that is, a woman apostle, a woman with authority in the church. (For such examples see, Jewett 1975: 170 ; Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 63-97). Passages already examined, such as Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 7:1-6, are also regarded as exceptional to the patriarchal milieu. These exceptions demonstrate to egalitarians that the seeds of transformation are already present in the Scriptures. Since we find these exceptions in a patriarchal society, *how much more* should these exceptions now become the norm?

1.2.7 Authority

Biblical egalitarians uphold the importance and relevance of authority structures (Jewett 1975: 130-31). They are convinced, however, that the church may not exclude women from positions of authority solely because they are women. The position states that there is nothing intrinsic to maleness that makes men better equipped to have authority. To support this claim, egalitarians refer to instances in Scripture where women have had authority. Bilezikian asserts that in the New Testament there were women converts, women apostles, women prophets, women teachers, women helpers, and women administrators (Bilezikian 1985: 195-206). He concludes:

The lofty ideals for male/female integration among Christians as enunciated in the church’s inaugural statements and in its teaching were also practiced in the life of the church. The evidence indicates that women participated in roles of leadership at the highest levels. Such continuity between faith and practice was achieved against pressures to conform to patriarchal norms in ambient [sic] culture.

(Bilezikian 1985: 206)

Egalitarians appeal to female prophets and leaders in the Old and New Testament. Mention is made of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Abigail, the wife of Proverbs 31, and the Song of Songs. In

addition, in the New Testament, they find the daughters of Philip, Priscilla, Junia, and Phoebe in positions of authority (Groothuis 1997: 190-98; Van der Walt 1988: 19-20; Scanzoni & Hardesty 1992: 83-87; Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 94). Egalitarians claim that these women were clearly in positions of authority, which needs to influence our interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36. Grenz writes:

Women did engage in prophecy. . . . In enumerating the gifts and offices in the church Paul lists prophecy ahead of teaching (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). From considerations such as these, egalitarians conclude that the prophetic office encompasses authoritative teaching and that it may even surpass the teaching office, at least within the early church. If this is so, they wonder, how is it that women can serve as prophets but not as teachers?

(Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 220)

Egalitarians also observe that concerning this issue of feminine authority, complementarians find themselves in practical difficulty. Van Leeuwen argues that complementarians, because of their unbiblical views on authority, get into the dilemma of “where to draw the line” regarding what is permissible for women to do in church. She observes that they do not allow women to teach adult men but permit them to teach children. Complementarians allow women to teach certain subjects at Seminary but not others. They do not allow women to preach but let them go to foreign missions (Van Leeuwen 1990: 241-42). Egalitarians have other practical concerns, which brings us to their next major argument.

1.2.8 Pragmatic Argument

Mollenkott addresses what she views as an inherent conflict in the complementarian position. She writes:

Many of the books urging female submission to male headship are written by people whose common sense tells them that human beings who love each other ought to relate as

friends and equals. Yet they feel torn because they think the Bible insists on a hierarchy in which the male is closer to God than the female and, therefore, must rule the relationship.

(Mollenkott 1977: 46)

One of the egalitarian arguments is a valid pragmatic observation, although difficult to demonstrate: that many complementarians are “closet” egalitarians. Van Leeuwen says:

Those who adhere in theory to the traditional model have great difficulty practicing it consistently. And their very inconsistency suggests that despite the lip service they pay to the male-headship principle, they are on their way to an affirmation of gender-status equality which is more in keeping with the redemptive/historical line of biblical revelation.

(Van Leeuwen 1990: 239-40)

Egalitarians observe that many complementarians, although they argue for headship, cannot practice it in a traditional manner. This becomes increasingly demonstrable because the more the gospel influences Christians, the more they are giving up their lives and submitting to others. Egalitarians argue that complementarians increasingly find themselves in practical difficulty, for our Christian lives are a struggle “between the impulse to be first among all and the call to become the servant of many” (Van Leeuwen 1990: 250). From a historical perspective, Hardesty presents a similar line of thought. The thesis of Hardesty’s book is that:

Nineteenth-century American feminism was deeply rooted in evangelical revivalism. Its theology and practice motivated and equipped women and men to adopt a feminist ideology, to reject stereotyped sex roles, and to work for positive changes in marriage, church, society, and politics. Most woman’s rights leaders—whether in the church, education, reform organizations, or the media—were products of evangelical backgrounds or were deeply influenced by evangelical culture, whether or not they acknowledged that debt or maintained any allegiance to it in later life.

(Hardesty 1984: 9)

Hardesty’s argument is relevant, for it recognises cases where gospel transformation has produced egalitarianism. Grenz also points out that renewal movements, like the Wesleyan revival, have tended towards shared leadership (Grenz & Kjesbo 1995: 42), and Tucker and Liefeld note that Wesley did allow women to preach (Tucker & Liefeld 1987: 239-41).

Egalitarians argue that their theological position has important practical implications. They believe that these implications coincide well with the gospel message of serving others and becoming the least of all. They maintain that their theoretical position becomes a practical position wherever there is genuine gospel transformation. Thus, a Christ-like husband would demonstrate “respect, deference, and humility toward his wife” (Groothuis 1997: 183).

1.2.9 Conclusion

Common to the biblical egalitarian position is that Jesus’ maleness is only culturally and historically relevant. Jesus is the expressed image of God, and this cannot include his maleness, for it would imply that women are not in God’s image. Men and women, however, equally reveal God, are equal in being and equally capable. Egalitarians argue that to extrapolate beyond cultural relevancy to a theological necessity is to apply maleness to God’s being. They believe that passages that are exceptional to the normal patriarchal model demonstrate that Scripture contains the seeds of transformation. The issue is similar to the New Testament’s handling of slavery. Instead of explicit commands to abolish slavery, Paul mandated the submission of slaves to preserve the peace. Exceptions like the book of Philemon and Galatians 3:28, however, persuaded the church to view slavery as contrary to God’s purposes. Similarly, there are no commands to abolish headship-submission relationships, but Scripture includes sufficient exceptions to demonstrate that these gender-based roles are cultural. This being the case, we cannot derive any theological implications from a masculine incarnation.

1.3 Christian Feminist Position

1.3.1 Introduction

Christian feminists work for liberation within a Christian context. They do not renounce Christianity as irredeemably patriarchal. Their starting point is the negative experiences of women—discrimination, oppression, abuse, marginalisation, and invisibility. Christian feminism “begins from experiences and not from the revelation event” (Moltmann-Wendel & Moltmann 1991: 78; also, Ruether 1983: 12-13), and in their approach, they reject “any christology that smirks of sexism, or that functions to entrench lopsided gender relations” (Hinga 1992: 192).

Contrary to post-Christian feminism, they do not view the maleness of Jesus as an insuperable problem. For most Christian feminists, the masculine incarnation, correctly interpreted, reflects their concerns. They depart from biblical egalitarianism in that they hold that in many places the New Testament does actually teach and *require* patriarchy. They also disagree with complementarians, whom they believe teach the subordination of women, minimise the significance of experience and culture, and do not take seriously enough the human authorship of Scripture. Christian feminists see “complementarianism” as a “romantic term which bears the suspicion of another rationalization for subordination” (Carr 1982: 288).

Christian feminism observes how the church has changed its argumentation as Aristotelian biology was proven false—a biology that was used to hold that man is normative and woman inferior. They note that the church now generally affirms that women equally image God, but it still maintains hierarchy. In making this observation, Christian feminists argue that the church

cannot hold to the principle of mutual equality while, at the same time, enforce certain “inequalities” where “one partner is always inferior to, dependent upon, [and] instrumental to the role of the other” (Farley 1985: 46).

Christian feminism denies that male is normative or generic humanity.⁶ They see no revelational significance to Jesus’ maleness. Patricia Wilson-Kastner writes: “The maleness of Jesus is quite accidental to his meaning as Christ” (Wilson-Kastner 1983: 104). She continues: “No one can deny that Jesus the Christ was a male person, but the significance of the incarnation has to do with his humanity, not his maleness” (Wilson-Kastner 1983: 115). Other Christian feminists like Marjorie Suchocki agree that to elevate Jesus maleness to the revelation of God distorts the gospel (Suchocki 1980: 312). Yet, it is precisely this elevation of maleness that Christian feminism sees in the church at large—an elevation that has not gone unnoticed by others. For example, Jacquelyn Grant, a womanist theologian writes:

Women have been denied humanity, personhood, leadership, and equality in the church and in society because of the church’s history of negative Christology. This negative Christology has resulted primarily from an over-emphasis on the maleness of Jesus. The maleness, in actuality, has become idolatrous. In fact, the maleness of Jesus has been so central to our understanding of Jesus Christ that even the personality of Jesus and interpretations of Christ have been consistently distorted. In effect, Jesus has been imprisoned by patriarchy’s obsession with the supremacy of maleness.

(Grant 1993: 58)

Christian feminists insist that to claim that Jesus’ maleness is revelational diminishes the humanity of women and places the salvation of women into question. Rosemary Radford Ruether states a basic concern: “The critical principle of feminist theology is the promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore,

⁶ Somewhat tongue in cheek, Susan Dowell and Linda Hurcombe note the entry in the New Hutchinson’s Twentieth Century Encyclopedia: ‘Eve’, see ‘Adam’ (Dowell & Hurcombe 1987: 1).

appraised as not redemptive” (Ruether 1983: 18). In keeping with this principle, Christian feminists advance a number of arguments for maintaining the maleness of Christ as only cultural, a particular of the incarnation that has no revelational significance.

1.3.2 Kenosis of Patriarchy

Christian feminists, in contrast to complementarianism and post-Christian feminism, do not believe that patriarchy is an essential part of Christianity (Suchocki 1980: 307). They see in Jesus a person who repudiates patriarchy (Ruether 1990: 393-94), one who “rejects kingly and chauvinist understandings of the Messiah” (Ruether 1982: 63). Christian feminism does not reject the male Christ, for the Jesus in the Gospels is a “figure remarkably compatible with feminism” (Ruether 1983: 135). So although Jesus’ maleness has been used to oppress women, Christian feminism emphasises that in Jesus *as male* we see the destruction of this oppression. Ruether writes:

Theologically speaking, then, we might say that the maleness of Jesus has no ultimate significance. It has social symbolic significance in the framework of societies of patriarchal privilege. In this sense Jesus as the Christ, the representative of liberated humanity and the liberating Word of God, manifests the *kenosis of patriarchy*, the announcement of the new humanity through a lifestyle that discards hierarchical caste privilege and speaks on behalf of the lowly.

(Ruether 1983: 137)

Ruether expresses what many Christian feminists argue, that rather than identifying with the male religious hierarchy, Jesus was found identifying with women who were among the despised groups of society. Jesus did not assume the place of the male in that society. His relationships were not patriarchal. His “self-identification and self-expression are in no way grounded in assumptions of male priority” (Cooke 1983: 28). So in response to Ruether’s well-known question, “Can a male saviour save women?” (Ruether 1981: 45; Ruether 1983: 116), Ruether answers by making clear

that Jesus became a certain type of male. Jesus manifests a different maleness that overthrows traditional patriarchal maleness. Commenting on Ruether's "kenosis of patriarchy," Rowan

Williams writes:

If this is a viable theological idea, its force is that Jesus' maleness is important because, as a *crucified or marginal or powerless* maleness, it represents as dramatically as possible the 'otherness' and the judgement of God's Word upon the world's patterns of dominance. It does not manifest but subverts the 'maleness' of God. Its symbolic importance is not in being a timeless image but in its pertinence to specific social forms.

(Williams 1984: 22)

Some Christian feminists have criticised Ruether's kenosis of patriarchy. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza makes the relevant point that "Radford Ruether's argument reveals that she still codes Jesus' humanness in culturally masculine terms when she claims that his lifestyle discards hierarchical caste privilege. One can discard only what one has!" (Schüssler Fiorenza 1995: 47) Schüssler Fiorenza believes that such feminist discourse may "perpetrate kyriarchal mind-sets" (Schüssler Fiorenza 1995: 188).

Most Christian feminists, however, see Jesus as one who challenges society's view of established gender categories (McLaughlin 1993: 329-34), and who proclaims a reversal of status systems (Stevens 1993: 1). Denise Carmody agrees: "The Jesus confessed by the Christian creed is no chauvinistic champion of male supremacy. He is meek, humble of heart, an iconoclast bent on shattering all the idols that keep people from realizing their truest fulfillment" (Carmody 1994: 32). Finding these qualities in Jesus is essential for Christian feminism. It is insufficient for Christian feminism to make Christ into a female, or to merely attribute feminine characteristics to him. It must find in Jesus "values and ideals which also are sought for and valued by feminists" (Wilson-Kastner 1983: 92). Finding such qualities ironically leads some to argue that it is more significant that Jesus came as male. Karen Bloomquist writes:

The christological symbol of receptivity to God's will and to self-sacrifice, if it had been historically embodied in a woman, would have only reinforced a not too helpful stereotype—that of the self-sacrificing female. If he had been a woman, he would have gotten even less of a hearing in his day than he did! Instead, Jesus, a male, through his interactions with others, helped to break the stereotype of who males are. He challenged the social definitions of power and hence of the power relationship between men and women. Mutual relationships rather than hierarchical relationships are what he lived out and to what he calls us today.

(Bloomquist 1989: 59)

Jesus as incarnate man refused to adopt the typical masculine role. “He refused to lord himself over others, particularly over women” (Bloomquist 1989: 57). David Shields mentions three examples where Jesus overturns the patriarchal culture (Shields 1984: 227). (1) The synoptics record the interaction of Jesus with the *unclean* haemorrhaging woman. (2) The *outcast* Syrophoenician woman whom Jesus engages in a verbal exchange. (3) The example of Mary who takes a traditional male place of learning at Jesus' feet, and is commended for listening like any other male disciple (also, Wilson-Kastner 1983: 72). It is argued that especially in his relationships with women, Jesus challenges the hierarchical culture. Thus, Christian feminism does not abandon the masculine incarnation, for it is precisely this male incarnation that reflects many of their concerns.

Christian feminists point to one further aspect of Jesus' life that undermines patriarchy. It is his use of “Abba” to address God. Martina Blasberg-Kuhnke writes: “Jesus' experience of Abba is connected with human-male domination: ‘And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven’ (Mt 23:9)” (Blasberg-Kuhnke 1992: 207). It is argued that Jesus confronted the culture's patriarchy and hierarchical structures by disparaging the titles “Rabbi” and “father,” and by reinforcing the unique authority of God in heaven. Instead of further establishing patriarchy, a number of Christian feminists argue that Jesus' use of “Abba” undermined the patriarchal system by transferring authority away from the established patriarchal

system, thus releasing people from domination. Moreover, Jesus' use of the term "Abba" is informal, stressing a loving relationship. The term cannot be used to justify forms of domination.

1.3.3 Assumption and Redemption

In arguing against a necessary masculine incarnation, Christian feminism draws upon the patristic dictum: "What is not assumed is not redeemed." They affirm that Christ was male, but deny that his masculinity is revelational or necessary. Wilson-Kastner believes that "to identify Jesus with maleness (or Jewishness, or living in the first century, and so forth) is to miss the point of Jesus' significance and mission. Jesus became flesh so as to show forth the love of God among us" (Wilson-Kastner 1983: 90). Christian feminism claims that Christ's masculinity is to be viewed like other particulars of the incarnation, such as skin colour, social class, or birthplace. What is revelational is Christ's message, life, and humanity, not his maleness. They emphasise that if the maleness of Christ is necessary due to divine nature or salvation, then women are excluded from this salvation. Elizabeth Johnson notes the practice of sexist theology to lift up Jesus' maleness and make it "essential for his christic function and identity, thus blocking women precisely because of their female sex from participating in the fullness of their Christian identity as images of Christ" (Johnson 1993a: 118-19). Johnson argues that because this theology makes an ontological connection between Jesus' maleness and the divine, it places men in a superior position to women, and in theory puts women's salvation into question (Johnson 1993a: 119). She continues: "If maleness is constitutive for the incarnation and redemption, female humanity is not assumed and therefore not saved" (Johnson 1993a: 120). Johnson recognises that complementarianism solves this apparent dilemma by placing man as representative head over women. Nevertheless, she concludes: "If women are not a lower order of creature subsumed in male humanity but equal

partners in essential humanity along with men, then, according to the logic of male-centered Christology, they are not connected to what is most vital for salvation” (Johnson 1993a: 120; also, McLaughlin 1993: 311; Børresen 1995: 248).

Christian feminism stresses that Christ’s salvation redeems generic humanity—male and female. Christ’s work of redemption is not restricted to certain groups: males, Jews, or the poor. It is universal in that it applies to all humanity and not to just one particular of humanity. Richard Norris writes: “What is important *christologically* about the humanity of Jesus is not its Jewishness, its maleness, or any other such characteristic, but simply the fact that he was “like his brethren in every respect” (Norris 1976: 73; also, Johnson 1985: 294; Wilson-Kastner 1983: 90; Avis 1989: 44; Immanuel David 1991: 214-15). This being true, Christian feminists argue that a normative or necessary masculinity denies the universality of the incarnation, and thus undermines the redemption of women. Ruether explains:

Christians have, falsely, used Jesus’ gender to suggest that maleness is more appropriate to God than femaleness, and so, in some way, the male better represents Christ than the female. It is impossible, theologically, to vindicate this view without rejecting the universality of the incarnation and making it an exclusive doctrine that redeems only those like Jesus in these particularities, rather than those unlike him.

(Ruether 1984: 21)

Nearly a decade later, Ruether affirms the same point: “Today a Christology which elevates Jesus’ human maleness to ontologically necessary significance makes the Christ symbol non-inclusive of women” (Ruether 1993: 12). So if women are to be included in salvation, there are at least two necessary elements: (1) the full humanity of Jesus needs to be affirmed (Hopkins 1994: 90-91), and (2) a denial of the incarnation as a masculine ontological necessity (Avis 1989: 42). Julie M.

Hopkins writes:

In my opinion it is only possible to bring women into the centre of an incarnational christology if the traditional categories are gender reversible; if, in other words, we may

speak of the Divine incarnated in a female body, 'truly God and truly female' or as the Dutch feminist theologian Anne-Claire Mulder argues, we may speak of the female flesh becoming Word/Logos.

(Hopkins 1994: 85)

Similarly, Denise Carmody argues: "I believe that a theologian who denies that the Incarnation could have occurred in female flesh sins intellectually against the equality of women and men. But, granted the patriarchal character of history in the time of Jesus, I find the reality that *de facto* the Incarnation occurred in male flesh fully understandable" (Carmody 1995: 186-87). For Christian feminists, a masculine incarnation does not grant special privilege to men whether it is authority, holiness, or a closer identity with God. There is no ultimate reason why the incarnation could not be in female form. Thus, Christian feminists have few objections to the visible portrayal of a female Christ, even if it is only an attempt at consciousness raising (Berger 1996: 43).

1.3.4 Trinitarian Theology

1.3.4.1 Analogy, idolatry, and the mystery of God

Closely related to the discussion about the maleness of Jesus is the debate concerning masculine metaphors for God. Christian feminists claim that behind the complementarian insistence on a male incarnation lies a masculine view of God, that their distinct position on a necessary masculine incarnation is related to and dependent upon a particular view of analogy. Ruether elaborates:

Behind this christological argument of the necessary maleness of Christ and his representative, the priest, lies, it seems to me, a theological assumption; namely, the maleness of God. Not just Jesus' historical humanity, but the divine Logos, the disclosure of the 'Father', is necessarily male. In a remarkable forgetfulness of their own traditions of analogy and the *via negativa*, images such as 'Father' and 'Son' for God are not regarded as

partial images drawn from limited (male) human experience, but are taken literally. 'Daughter' or 'mother' are not regarded as equally appropriate analogies.

(Ruether 1981: 46)

Christian feminists believe that complementarians have adopted an erroneous view of analogy. Furthermore, by insisting on certain exclusive analogies, such as "Father" and "Son," complementarians have engaged in idolatry, producing a distorted picture of God. It is idolatry because it has elevated male, at the expense of female, to the level of the divine. It distorts God for it exclusively uses a limited metaphor. So Catherine Mowry LaCugna states: "The general feminist critique of religion and theology is that its insistence on masculine images of God borders on the idolatrous" (LaCugna 1991: 311). Likewise, Anne Carr writes that "in criticising the functions of the symbols of God and Christ, feminist theology exposes the idolatry which occurs when preliminary or conditional concerns are elevated to unconditional significance; something finite (maleness, sexuality) is lifted to the level of the infinite" (Carr 1982: 285). In response to the complementarian objection that the use of masculine images does not imply that God is male, Johnson notes this connection: "If it is not meant that God is male when masculine imagery is used, why the objection when female images are used?" Therefore, an intrinsic connection between God and maleness is usually intended, however implicitly (Johnson 1984: 443).

In developing their position further, Christian feminism argues that God is ultimately beyond images. LaCugna writes: "The feminist critique of one-sided language for God rests on the cardinal theological axiom that God transcends all images, words, and concepts. If we call God Father, we must remember that no aspects of human fatherhood literally pertain to God" (LaCugna 1991: 311). In transcending all images, God is ultimately incomprehensible and mysterious—more unlike the image than like. To insist on one particular image is to deny this incomprehensibility and the ultimate inadequacy of these images (Carmody 1994: 29; Edwards

1984: 54). Therefore, Christian feminists do not take one metaphor as normative for God. The use of “Father” and “Son” is one legitimate way to speak about God, but these metaphors cannot be used exclusively. Our language about God should be gender inclusive (Ruether 1984: 16).

Carmody agrees:

God is not limited by sex. In calling God our Father, we employ a metaphor (bound to be privileged, because used by Jesus) that compounds unlikeness to what divinity is in itself with (lesser) likeness. If we call God our Mother, we gain no greater likeness, but also no greater unlikeness. We speak less as Jesus did, but perhaps more as the religious needs of present-day women require.

(Carmody 1995: 198; also, Sölle 1984: 113)

Is this sufficient reason to change these biblical metaphors? Tribble gives another reason: the example of the post-exilic change of YHWH to *Adonai*, provides warrant for changing the text (Tribble 1985: 148). Furthermore, Christian feminists argue that the interchangeable use of “Father” and “Mother” is legitimate “since the *imago dei* is twofold, female as well as male, both kinds of metaphors ought to be used” (McFague 1987: 98). Christian feminists also appeal to the medieval mysticism of Julian of Norwich who argued for the metaphor of Jesus as our Mother (Børresen 1995: 251-52; Ruether 1977: 45-46; Ruether 1981: 49-50; Ruether 1983: 128-29; Wilson-Kastner 1983: 96, 101-04). God is not more male than female (Carmody 1994: 28) so “male has no special priority in imaging God” (Ruether 1984: 16).

Christian feminists affirm that the traditional metaphors may be changed. Without denying that “Father” and “Son” are relevant analogies, they argue for an inclusion of feminine metaphors. They hold that although we speak of God in images and metaphors, it does not mean that God is identified with one of them. These images are all limited, and God is not restrained to any particular one. Furthermore, it is necessary to interchange these analogies because of the social effects of the predominant masculine metaphors. Denise Ackermann writes: “Even if the maleness

of God is not taken literally, maleness as power over, as special, as more truly representative, is communicated by patriarchal images and symbols” (Ackermann 1991: 98; also, Suchocki 1983: 35; Thistlethwaite 1991: 112; Bloomquist 1989: 48). It is argued that patriarchy is further entrenched by the continued use of exclusive male metaphors. This selective use is nothing less than idolatry, so many Christian feminists, like Bloomquist, view themselves as engaged in the task of “reworking’ the symbols and understandings of the faith so that they no longer are captive to patriarchal interests” (Bloomquist 1989: 51). Along similar lines, Sallie McFague sees the metaphor of God the Father as an example of a “good model gone astray” (McFague 1982: 145). For McFague, it is a metaphor that has been made all encompassing, and thus has served to institute patriarchy by going beyond the intention of the metaphor. Moreover, many Christian feminists argue that this metaphor was instituted by the dominant masculine culture that made God in its own image (Halkes 1989: 97; Oduyoye 1995: 178). Ruether argues that “religious imagery is an ideological projection of the patriarchal social order” (Ruether 1982: 58-59). For Ruether, the patriarchal culture used language in this way to entrench its position, define reality, and oppress women (Ruether 1975: xiii).

1.3.4.2 Trinitarian relationships

Concerning the question about the maleness of Jesus, Christian feminists base part of their argument on trinitarian relationships. Their discussion concerning the Trinity falls into two main categories: (1) the use of analogy and metaphor, and (2) the classical doctrine of generation and interrelationship of persons in the Trinity. We examined the first category in section 1.3.4.1, and now consider the second.

Many Christian feminists see traditional trinitarian doctrine as supporting hierarchy—a pyramid structure with God imaged as male at the apex. Under God are males who rule over those beneath them, including females (Sölle 1990: 182). They view the position of traditional theology as claiming a hierarchy within the Trinity where the Son is subordinate to the Father. This hierarchy, combined with the exclusive use of male images, establishes and reinforces male as normative and male hierarchy (LaCugna 1993: 84-85). In addition, combining this particular view of the Trinity with the doctrine of immutability further entrenches patriarchy. As such, some regard the doctrine of God's immutability as “anachronistic and dangerous” (Suchocki 1994: 38).

In contrast, Christian feminism stresses the relationships in the Trinity. They see no hierarchy in the Trinity, only a mutual, loving, interrelationship of persons (Highby 1992: 241). This interrelationship, traditionally expressed in terms of Father-Son generation, may be modified without essentially changing our view of God. Johnson writes: “The first person generates the second, self-expressing the fulness of divine life in the eternal Word. The Father-Son imagery traditionally used to express this relation within God can be shifted to Mother-Daughter without proportionally changing the relation” (Johnson 1984: 462). Arguing along similar lines, Norris poses the question: “Might it not be argued that in the last resort the divine Son *could* only be incarnate as a boy?” (Norris 1976: 75) He refutes this on two grounds. First, the orthodox tradition has never stretched the metaphor “Son” to include sexual characteristics. Secondly, this tradition has asserted that “what sets the Son apart from the Father and the Spirit is the fact that he is directly generated from the Father, *and nothing else*. Indeed it is his absolute likeness to the Father in every respect save that of his “generation” which the use of *homoousios* by upholders of the Nicene faith was calculated to affirm. There is, then, no sexual differentiation among the persons of the Trinity” (Norris 1976: 75). So Norris concludes that a masculine incarnation was

unnecessary (Norris 1976: 76). Similarly, agreeing with Margaret Farley, LaCugna argues that the trinitarian metaphors may be changed. She writes: “Daughter as well as Son could be used to name the one Begotten, if we are trying to express that what is begotten is of the same nature as the Begetter” (LaCugna 1991: 280; also Carmody 1995: 196). Many Christian feminists concur that if generation is what distinguishes “Father” from “Son,” then it is legitimate to change to feminine metaphors. In doing so, what is essential to our view of God is unchanged. There still remains the attribute of generation so the classical statement of Father-Son generation does not require a masculine incarnation. Thus, there is general agreement among Christian feminists that “ontological sonship is not required” (Suchocki 1983: 40).

1.3.5 Two Opposing Biblical Traditions: Liberation and Patriarchy

1.3.5.1 Introduction

Christian feminism divides the biblical material into two basic traditions: patriarchy and liberation. They argue for two traditions in Scripture: one is only cultural (patriarchal), the other is essential. One part upholds and teaches patriarchy, the other speaks of liberation from oppression. Because of these opposing views, Schüssler Fiorenza states: “At the same time the Bible has not served only to legitimate the oppression of white women, slaves, native Americans, Jews, and the poor. It has also provided authorization for women who rejected slavery, colonial exploitation, anti-Semitism, and misogyny as unbiblical and against God’s will” (Schüssler Fiorenza 1985: 129). She makes a similar point regarding Pauline literature:

Paul’s impact on women’s leadership in the Christian missionary movement is double-edged. On the one hand he affirms Christian equality and freedom. . . . On the other hand, he subordinates women’s behavior in marriage and in the worship assembly to the interests of Christian mission, and restricts their rights not only as “pneumatics” but also

as “women,” for we do not find such explicit restrictions on the behavior of men *qua* men in the worship assembly [sic]. The post-Pauline and pseudo-Pauline tradition will draw out these restrictions in order to change the equality in Christ between women and men, slaves and free, into a relationship of subordination in the household which, on the one hand, eliminates women from the leadership of worship and community and, on the other, restricts their ministry to women.

(Schüssler Fiorenza 1983: 236)

Other Christian feminists agree. Rebecca Chopp writes: “God is a God of freedom. From creation to exodus to exile to Christ to church, the Bible explores this fact: the call of freedom, the claim of freedom, the lusty desire of freedom. The Bible narrates, in spite of its own hierarchical madness, despite any attempts to tame it, that freedom is the gift of both creation and redemption” (Chopp 1989: 71). Similarly, Dorothee Sölle affirms that the “Bible is an androcentric and patriarchal document, but at the same time we discover in it a fundamental opposition to these traditions; we read it as a book of justice, aimed at liberation from all the bonds that enslave us” (Sölle 1990: 74).

Thus, Christian feminists approach the biblical material in different ways. Ruether and Letty Russell, for example, look at the issue of liberation while adopting a more general approach rather than concentrating on individual texts. Others, like Phyllis Trible, draw attention to passages about women—patriarchal or liberational—texts that have been erroneously used to support patriarchy,⁷ or texts that show the terror of patriarchy (Trible 1984). Despite different approaches there is, however, basic agreement among Christian feminists that there remain two streams within Scripture, one normative the other cultural. One perspective is the expression of biblical faith, the other an expression of the patriarchal culture. Ruether writes:

Recent feminist scholarship has pointed to the existence of an alternative tradition in the Jesus movement and early Christianity. This alternative Christianity could have suggested

⁷ For example, Schüssler Fiorenza notes the “androcentric interpretation” which downplays Romans 16:1-3, or which views Junia to be a man (Rom 16:7) although most patristic interpretations viewed her as a woman (Schüssler Fiorenza 1993: 156-57).

a very different construction of Christian theology: women as equal with men in the divine mandate of creation, restored to this equality in Christ; the gifts of the Spirit poured out on men and women alike; the Church as the messianic society, not over against creation but over against the systems of domination. We see hints of this vision in the New Testament. But the Deutero-Pauline recasting of Christianity in patriarchal terms made this inclusive theology nonnormative.

(Ruether 1983: 195-96)

Ruether, however, does call attention where she sees Scripture go beyond patriarchy in a number of areas (Ruether 1983: 61-68). For Ruether, there is the prophetic tradition that impacts and transforms patriarchy. There is the hope of a time when “the woman will protect the male (Jer 31:22)” (Ruether 1982: 61). So although Christian feminists differ on exactly what constitutes the authoritative core, they hold that there is a canon within a canon (Trible 1985: 149). It is because of this two-fold structure that Christian feminists believe they can work within a Christian framework (McFague 1982: 164).

1.3.5.2 Patriarchy

Most Christian feminists argue that the New Testament in certain places does teach patriarchy. Susan Heine, in a book critical of some feminist arguments, argues that the Pastoral Epistles and Ephesians 5:23 teach hierarchicalism (Heine 1987: 134-41). Trible, likewise, considers that in certain places the New Testament does teach subordination (Trible 1973: 30). Other Christian feminists agree that passages like 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8; 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 are patriarchal (Dowell & Hurcombe 1987: 34; Sölle 1990: 75; Corrington 1992: 30-31; Zikmund 1985: 22-23; Ruether 1983: 53). It is argued that these texts teach a hierarchical order and the secondary status of women. Similarly, it is claimed that sections such as Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter also teach hierarchical relationships (Schüssler Fiorenza 1993: 170-71; Ruether 1983: 141). Somewhat exceptional to the general Christian feminist position is Ruether’s view that the Genesis narrative

also teaches patriarchy in describing man as the “original human model” (Ruether 1983: 260) and Eve as second and helper.

There is, however, acknowledgement among Christian feminists that what is crucial is not these patriarchal texts but “the overall liberating perspective of our classic text” (McFague 1982: 166). Most Christian feminists do not attempt to rework or adjust the patriarchal message of these texts. Hierarchical passages are usually just noted as part of the patriarchal tradition of Scripture, a tradition that is not normative. It is also argued that even Paul did not regard these statements to remain in effect for all time. Yet, “these statements of Paul are still being used today to reinforce the subjugation of women and were used by American theologians until the Emancipation Proclamation to justify slavery” (Ruether 1975: 69). Interestingly, Jane Douglass argues that Calvin adopted a position where, “among his examples of matters in which the church is free to change its mode of life, Calvin includes the admonition of Paul for women to keep silence in the church” (Douglass 1985: 42). She argues that Calvin viewed women’s silence as a “humanly decreed order in the church, subject to changing circumstances . . .” (Douglass 1985: 82). So for Christian feminists, the hierarchical tradition represents a changeable tradition, one that is not normative for all times and cultures.

1.3.5.3 Creation and liberation (Galatians 3:28)

In contrast to the patriarchal texts, Christian feminists find a significant anti-patriarchal message in the Scripture. It is a message that speaks of equality, liberation, and the full humanity of women. This liberation tradition is established in creation and reiterated in the New Testament,

particularly Galatians 3:28. This tradition, although not directly addressing our topic, forms a foundation for the Christian feminist argument against a necessary masculine incarnation. Christian feminists, like Tribble, argue that Genesis 1-2 clearly portrays the equality of the sexes (Tribble 1973: 35-38; 1989: 291; 1992: 47, 55). She argues that the original relationship between male and female was not hierarchical. In addition, commenting on the Genesis 2 narrative, Tribble notes that God does not give Adam authority or power over the woman (Tribble 1978: 97). Thus, she concludes that “theologically, the rule of male over female constitutes sin. This hierarchy violates the integrity of creation ‘in the image of God male and female’ by denying full humanity to women and distorting the humanity of men” (Tribble 1989: 281). For Tribble, this “creation theology undercuts patriarchy” (Tribble 1989: 293).

For many Christian feminists, it is only after the fall when patriarchy is established, thus making patriarchy part of the fall into sin and destruction. This divisive situation, however, is redeemed by Christ and has no place in the new community of the church. Christian feminism emphasises that the full humanity and dignity of women, established in creation, is applied by Paul in Galatians 3:28 where he completely undermines sexual, class, and racial forms of domination. Paul denies the distinctions of patriarchy and hierarchy that began at the fall. For Paul, there is neither male nor female, so complementarians are dividing what God has joined together (Dinter 1994: 398-99). Schüssler Fiorenza concludes: “Feminist theology as critical theology is driven by the impetus to make the vision of Galatians 3:28 real within the Christian community. It is based on the conviction that Christian theology and Christian faith are capable of transcending their own ideological sexist forms” (Schüssler Fiorenza 1993: 70).

In commenting on Genesis 1:26-27 and Galatians 3:28, Johnson writes that these passages “are taken as clues that male and female are identical in their capacity to be images of God. Hence God, who is beyond all imaging, is well presented by analogy with both, and not well conceived on the pattern of merely one” (Johnson 1984: 444). That women fully and equally image God forms a significant foundation of the Christian feminist position and critique. For example, they note the apparent contradiction in Catholic theology that “God-like women are deemed unfit to be Christ-like priests” (Børresen 1995: 248). Or, concerning marriage Carmody writes: “Any marriage that feminists are going to approve operates on the basic principles that women and men are equally human. Further, it depends on an honest recognition of the talents and needs of the given people involved” (Carmody 1994: 53). Christian feminists believe that although complementarians speak of the equality and dignity of women, they have not matched their statements “with actions reflecting that equality and dignity” (Immanuel David 1991: 219).

1.3.5.4 Feminine images for God

Another aspect of the liberation tradition is the feminine images used for God. Such examples include God imaged as a woman with ten coins (Luke 15:1-10) or a woman making bread (Luke 13:18-21). While some Christian feminists believe that finding additional feminine images merely enhances sexual stereotypes, a male-female dichotomy that all feminists are trying to avoid, others like Tribble draw attention to neglected passages like the descriptions of God as midwife and mother. For example, Tribble refers to Hosea 11 where God is described as helping Ephraim to walk. For Tribble this chapter includes an often mistranslated verse. Tribble translates Hosea 11:9: “I am God and not a *male*” (Tribble 1989: 290). She argues that Hosea is gender specific. God shows compassion because he is God and not a *male*. Tribble writes: “This translation makes explicit a

basic affirmation needed in ancient Israel and the contemporary world. By repeatedly using male language for God, Israel risked theological misunderstanding. God is not male, and male is not God. That a patriarchal society employed such images for God is hardly surprising. That it also countenanced female images *is* surprising” (Trible 1989: 290).

One significant image Trible uncovers is the biblical use of רהמ. This employment of רהמ “provides an exclusively female metaphor for the divine that runs throughout the canon” (Trible 1989: 289). Summarising her book *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Trible notes that it went:

[T]hrough scripture to investigate the partial metaphor symbolized by the Hebrew root *rh*m. This semantic journey from the wombs of women to the compassion of God is not a minor theme on the fringes of faith. To the contrary, with persistence and power it saturates scripture. Moreover, along the way, other passages joined this journey to depict Yahweh poetically as a deity who conceived, was pregnant, writhed in labor pains, brought forth a child and nursed it. These many female portrayals expanded, broadened, and deepened our understanding of the biblical God.

(Trible 1978: 201)

At least for Trible, the biblical use of feminine images is significant, especially considering that the use occurred in a patriarchal society.

1.3.5.5 Song of Songs

Christian feminists have observed the conspicuous lack of a patriarchal relationship in the Song of Songs. This Song is indicative of the liberation message contained in Scripture. Ruether speaks of the Song of Songs as representing “the love of a maiden and the king, with the mutuality and equality of the lovers retained. The Song speaks sometimes from the male point of view seeking his beloved and sometimes from the female side” (Ruether 1983: 140; also, Ruether 1977: 22-23, 46-47). Trible agrees and writes: “In this setting, there is no male dominance, no female

subordination, and no stereotyping of either sex. Specifically, the portrayal of the woman defies the connotations of 'second sex.' She works, keeping the vineyards and pasturing flocks.

Throughout the Song she is independent, fully equal of the man" (Trible 1978: 161; also, Trible 1973: 45). Christian feminists view the Song of Songs as similar to Genesis 1-2 in that it affirms the equality and mutuality of the sexes. In both cases, they find no inferiority, subordination, or oppression.

1.3.5.6 Sophia christology

Christian feminists have proposed and argue for a Sophia christology as an alternative metaphor⁸ (for example, Russell 1987: 54-56; Ruether 1983: 117; Schüssler Fiorenza 1995: 131-62; Engelsman 1979: 119). In doing so they seek to identify Jesus and Lady Wisdom (Carmody 1995: 182-87; Johnson 1993b: 107-08). Elizabeth Johnson has particularly developed this Sophia christology. She notes the relationship between Logos and Sophia, not only in the Old Testament, but also in intertestamental literature, such as the Book of Wisdom, Ben Sirach, and Baruch with their identification of Logos with Sophia (Johnson 1985: 263-67). In Jewish wisdom literature, the Logos is identified with Sophia, whereas in the Old Testament the two were seen as separate categories. It is argued that there was a development from the Old Testament, through Jewish sapiential literature, to Christ. This development reaches its fulfilment in the New Testament description of Christ, who is identified as the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:30). Moreover, in the New Testament, Jesus equates himself with the feminine personification of wisdom (Matt 11:19, Luke 7:35). The identification of Logos and Sophia, however, is particularly manifest in John's

⁸ Schüssler Fiorenza argues in *In Memory of Her* (1983) that the first Christian theology is Sophialogy.

prologue, where Johnson argues that Logos and Sophia are interchangeable, and that “the figure of divine Sophia shines through the Logos terminology” (Johnson 1985: 288). Johnson, like many, claims that the closet parallels with the prologue are found in wisdom literature, that the Logos in John’s prologue is directly related to and based upon the figure of Sophia (Johnson 1985: 293). It is argued that the New Testament portrays Jesus as the Logos of God who has the same function as Hokmah in the Old Testament. Therefore, by including Sophia with Logos “opens up a possibility of a christology which is not intrinsically androcentric” (Johnson 1985: 293). It is a non-androcentric position based on the significance of the gender of Sophia and Hokmah.

Johnson outlines the importance of this Sophia christology:

This foundational metaphor relieves the monopoly of the male metaphors of Logos and Son and destabilizes the patriarchal imagination. . . . Such a way of speaking breaks through the assumption that there is a “necessary ontological connection” between the male human being Jesus and a male God, leading to the realization instead that even as a human man, Jesus can be thought to be revelatory of the graciousness of God imaged as female.

(Johnson 1993a: 127-28)

Jesus as Sophia provides an alternate image of God. This christology has potential to break the hold of masculine metaphors for God and the insistence on the necessity for Jesus’ maleness (Johnson 1993b: 108; Johnson 1985: 288-89). Johnson believes it does break the ontological connection because Sophia was incarnate as Jesus. So Johnson concludes: “If Jesus Christ is depicted as divine Sophia, then it is not unthinkable—it is not even unbiblical—to confess Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God imaged as female. Whoever espouses a wisdom christology is asserting that Jesus is the human being Sophia become . . .” (Johnson 1985: 280).

1.3.6 Critique of Dualism

Part of the Christian feminist critique of a necessary male incarnation is closely related to their general critique of dualistic thinking. Christian feminists are generally opposed to dualistic paradigms whether it is spirit-body, nature-culture, nature-grace, male-female, home-work, life-death, spirituality-carnality, or dominance-submission. They reject most dualistic forms, whether between superiority and inferiority (Ruether 1983: 165), or between the public and private sphere where men are in the public, women in private (Moltmann-Wendel 1986: 39), or where women are inferior and men superior (Wilson-Kastner 1983: 90), or dualisms of spirit over flesh so as to downplay or ignore the body (McFague 1994: 141), or even the dualism of old and new Adam (Ruether 1983: 167). Their critique is that patriarchy is essentially dualistic (Bloomquist 1989: 47) with male presiding over mind, culture, and spirit, while women are assigned to body, nature, and submission. Men may therefore define culture, and are considered to have superior reason.

Suchocki writes: "The patriarchal God presided over dualisms hierarchically valued in terms of superior/inferior. This included the primal split between male and female, which then implied further dualisms of spirit and body, mind and matter, civilization and nature" (Suchocki 1994: 45). Kastner agrees and states: "When feminists speak of dualism, among other realities they mean this estrangement in which competition and control characterize the interrelationship of male-female, matter-spirit, intuition-reason, human-animal, and so forth" (Wilson-Kastner 1983: 99).

Edwards, following Ruether, notes that the ancient world combined the mind-body dualism with the male-female dualism, so that female was equated with an inferior body, and male with a superior mind and spirit (Edwards 1984: 48-49). She says: "As the body was inferior to the mind, so woman was inferior to man. As the body was a threat to the soul, so woman was a threat to man. As the body had to be subordinated to the mind, so the woman had to be subordinated to

the man” (Edwards 1984: 49). This dualistic thinking was carried through in traditional theology.

Schüssler Fiorenza writes:

Traditional theology combined such a male/female dualism with a body/spirit dualism. Women then represented sexuality, carnality, and evil. Whereas this tradition defines man by his mind and reason, it sees woman as determined by her “nature” and sexuality. . . . Since in ascetic Christian traditions nature and body must be subordinated to mind and spirit, because of her nature woman must be subordinated to man. This subordination of woman is sanctioned by Scripture.

(Schüssler Fiorenza 1993: 97)

Christian feminists believe that behind the insistence on Jesus’ maleness is destructive dualistic thinking. This reasoning associates women with a subordinate inferior body thus making a masculine incarnation a necessity. According to this view, only a male saviour can accomplish redemption. In contrast, Christian feminists argue that there was no dualism in the original creation (Ochs 1977: 133-34) or in the liberation message of the New Testament.⁹

1.3.7 Conclusion

Christian feminism argues that the masculine incarnation is historically contingent. There is little debate that Jesus was actually male, on the contrary, Christian feminists use his maleness to their advantage. They note how Jesus redefined maleness, and through his ministry radically opposed many patriarchal power structures. They insist that there is no ontological connection between

⁹ Commenting on destructive dualisms and New Testament teaching, Ruether writes: “The Gospels do not operate with a dualism of masculine and feminine. The widow, the prostitute, and the Samaritan woman are not representatives of the “feminine,” but rather they represent those who have no honor in the present system of religious righteousness” (Ruether 1983: 137).

Jesus' maleness and the character of God. To make such a connection is to remove women from the plan of salvation and deny their full humanity. Such a connection also negates the significant liberation tradition in Scripture. Christian feminists believe that complementarians have based the necessity of Jesus' maleness on an inadequate use of analogy, a patriarchal mindset, and unbiblical dualistic tendencies. In doing so complementarians have neglected the great liberation themes in Scripture and minimised the place of culture. Consequently, complementarians underestimate how their own culture and experience may influence their own interpretation.

Christian feminists view the trinitarian relationships as non-hierarchical. The metaphors "Father" and "Son" do not necessitate Jesus coming as male since God is beyond masculinity. Therefore, God may equally be portrayed in feminine and masculine terms. Furthermore, changing metaphors to "Mother" and "Daughter" does not essentially change the generation formulation of classical theology. Christian feminists also disagree with the post Christian feminist position that Scripture is irredeemably patriarchal. While noting that there are numerous passages in the Scripture that support and teach patriarchy, Christian feminists argue that these have no normative value, and allocate them to the realm of culture. The normative aspect is the prophetic liberation tradition that speaks of the full equality and humanity of women as imagers of God.

1.4 Post-Christian Feminist Position

1.4.1 Introduction

Post-Christian feminists argue that Christianity and feminism are incompatible and irreconcilable—that one cannot be both Christian and feminist. Their critique challenges

Christianity to its foundation. They abandon Christianity as a religion of the male, an irredeemable patriarchal religion where a great patriarch in heaven sends his Son. They reject Christ, the supreme male figure of this masculine religion. They maintain that the maleness of Christ is relevant in that it reinforces patriarchy; as a symbol, it powerfully impacts its hearers. They argue that the “medium is the message,” thus Christianity cannot extract itself from this medium of a patriarchal past and continue to remain Christianity.

Post-Christian feminists strongly disagree with Christian feminists and biblical egalitarians, arguing that biblical analogies and stories cannot be freed from patriarchy. They deny that the symbols at the heart of the religion—Father, Son, and a male saviour—can ever be changed. They regard Christian feminists as engaged in a futile endeavour (Goldenberg 1979: 10, 25), an endeavour that either ends in syncretism or ignores parts of Scripture. Post-Christian feminists agree with complementarians in arguing that Christianity is inherently patriarchal and that its symbols and metaphors are unchangeable. They believe, however, that complementarians are in an indefensible position, out of touch with the modern world where people are to be treated equally. In addition, complementarians isolate “their theology in a cocoon separate from human knowledge, culture and society . . .” (Hampson 1990: 21). Daphne Hampson claims that complementarianism is inherently fallacious, oppressive, and sexist “for that which ‘complements’ is always in some sense inferior to that which it complements” (Hampson 1990: 102; also Daly 1986: 99-100). In this “equal but different” scheme, it is always the female that complements the male and not vice versa (Hampson 1996a: 67). Post-Christian feminists reject this pseudo complementarity as it still exists within a patriarchal world with its ideals and values.

As we shall see, post-Christian feminists reject Christianity’s patriarchal past, its metaphors and stories, and its ultimate symbol in the person of Jesus. They believe that these have all contributed

to and reinforced the notion that women are secondary and inferior—a fact born out through history where “Christian theology widely asserted that women were inferior, weak, depraved, and vicious” (Daly 1986: 95).

1.4.2 Christianity’s Unbreakable Connection to a Patriarchal Past

1.4.2.1 A thorough patriarchal history

According to post-Christian feminists, Christianity is patriarchal to its very core. Hampson writes:

That Christianity is patriarchal is clearly the case. The long line of prophets, Jesus (who is central to the religion), the apostles and the leaders of the Church throughout history to the present have been men—almost without exception. Women are related to them as wives, mothers and companions. In the stories and parables of the New Testament men perform what were in that society men’s roles and women women’s roles. God is conceived in patriarchal terms: he is King, Lord, Judge and Father—all terms referring to male human beings in that society. Any exceptions to this overwhelmingly patriarchal nature of the religion are trivial.

(Hampson 1985: 341)

Furthermore, those passages and themes that are thought to support women liberation are, on closer inspection, found to be quite patriarchal. They observe that the prophetic tradition, which is meant to strive for liberation, does not struggle against patriarchy. On the contrary, prophetic literature, like Hosea, objectifies the female (Hampson 1990: 98-99). The prophets of the Old Testament who challenged many injustices never directed their criticism against patriarchy. Mary Daly writes: “Indeed, the imagery of Old Testament prophets was very sexist. There was a tiresome propensity for comparing Israel to a whore. . . . It did not occur to the prophets to decry Israel as a rapist—which would have been, behaviorally speaking, a more accurate description” (Daly 1986: 162). Post-Christian feminists find other supposedly liberation texts to be very traditional. Concerning the story of Ruth, for example, Hampson comments that “the story’s obvious message

is that women are doing precisely the right thing when they set their own ambitions aside and care for someone else” (Hampson 1996a: 66). They claim that the story still falls far short of feminist theory and practice. It does not portray male-female equality. Ruth still cannot sit at the gate of the city (Hampson 1990: 104). Likewise, the account of Mary and Martha would have significance only if a man was sitting at the feet of a woman (Hampson 1990: 104). And regarding Luke’s account of the resurrection, Luke still confines women to a traditional role. The women who discover the empty tomb do not go and witness (contrary to Jewish law) but instead go and tell the male disciples (Hampson 1990: 15). Such examples confirm for post-Christian feminists the thorough patriarchal ethos of Scripture.

Post-Christian feminists also find this extensive patriarchy in the ministry of Jesus. In his life, they do not observe a “kenosis of patriarchy.” They view Jesus as one who neither undermined patriarchy nor propounded feminist ideals. For Hampson, this lack is of considerable concern. Hampson notes that “there is nothing in Jesus’ message about the breaking down of gender roles. He has no social analysis of patriarchy. . . . The women in his parables perform wholly conventional roles performed by women in that society. . . . Considering the desperate plight of women in his society, this apparent lack of any awareness that the lot of women needed to be changed must strike us” (Hampson 1996a: 69). So even though Jesus confronted Pharisees, he never challenged the inferior position of women. For instance, in analysing Jesus’ parables, post-Christian feminists note that women are marginalized. These women are in positions that patriarchal society assigned to them. Of course, Jesus helped women, but he also ministered to men. There was “nothing particularly exceptional about Jesus’ behaviour and attitudes towards women” (Hampson 1990: 87). Even if it is granted that Jesus countered patriarchal culture, Daly asks, “Jesus was a feminist, but so what?” (Daly 1986: 73) For Daly, even conceding that Jesus

undermined patriarchy has little value, as she believes it is impossible to remove the overall oppressive patriarchal tradition of Christianity. Moreover, she denies that we can extract adequate models from the past (Daly 1986: 73-74). Thus, Daly considers Jesus' example, whether patriarchal or non-patriarchal, as having little relevance since it is a model confined to antiquity.

Post-Christian feminists conclude that “the text is the product of a sexist, indeed misogynist, culture: the presuppositions of a patriarchal world are written into it” (Hampson 1990: 92). There is a sexual bias “endemic to and therefore perpetuated by Christianity” (Daly 1986: 79-80). Their argument, however, is not merely that the biblical text is patriarchal, but that this patriarchy is so interwoven into its entire message, including the core, that one cannot remove it. There is an unbreakable connection between Christianity and its patriarchal past.

1.4.2.2 The unbreakable connection

Post-Christian feminists argue that Christians have an anchor or foot in history to which they always return. Since Christians hold that there is a revelation of God in history—a special history culminating in Jesus Christ—to be Christian is to continually refer to that history, which is a patriarchal history. They claim that Christianity will always remain inextricably connected to patriarchy, and a person cannot discard this revelation while remaining Christian. Christianity, as a historical religion, cannot abandon its concretion and forms. This is especially true regarding the metaphors for God. They consider it impossible to remove the male/masculine imagery from God (Daly 1986: xxiii-xxiv). Hampson provides some reasons why Christianity cannot be freed from its patriarchal past. She writes: “It is grounded in particular historical events and finds expression in concrete symbolism. However, that very particularity, that very concretion, is sexist”

(Hampson 1985: 342; also Hampson 1996b: 7). For a Christian, the biblical stories and metaphors are normative and “form a model for what God is like and how we should relate to one another” (Hampson 1985: 342). Being normative it is difficult, if not impossible, to change the symbolism and remain in Christianity. Hampson explains: “The bible is considered to be inspired literature which is in some way normative for the religion. Change to the concretion may be thought to be extraordinarily difficult, for the imagery is built into the literature and thought structure which form the basis of the religion” (Hampson 1990: 84). Thus, every time we read the Scripture we hear “Father” and “Son” being applied to God, we hear stories that enforce patriarchy, and we read of the saviour Jesus—a male human being. So for Hampson, “as long as one remains within a biblical and Christian tradition, the problem may be thought to be without solution” (Hampson 1990: 96). One may find supplementary imagery, but the overwhelming imagery remains male (Hampson 1990: 84).

Post-Christian feminists state that there is misogyny at the core and foundation of Christianity that cannot be removed. It is in this regard that they acutely disagree with the work of Christian feminists. Commenting on Ruether’s *Religion and Sexism*, Naomi Goldenberg writes: “Though Ruether has hope that Christianity can heal its ideological split between spirit and body, male and female, I fail to see any grounds for optimism” (Goldenberg 1979: 15). She also takes exception to Letty Russell who “retranslates, skips over or reinterprets parts of the Bible that do not support human liberation” (Goldenberg 1979: 21). Post-Christian feminists believe that the attempts to rid Christianity of its patriarchy are destined for failure, for in order to cleanse Christianity, one would have to ignore significant portions or yield to syncretism. Hampson also criticises Christian feminists for reinterpreting specific texts without stating their final position and for not dealing with the question whether Christianity and feminism are compatible (Hampson 1990: 32, 41, 109).

Furthermore, she questions whether Christian feminists are really remaining within Christianity. She criticises Ruether for never speaking of God, “but rather of people’s concept of God...” (Hampson 1990: 29), and writes that “one finds mention of Christ to be singularly absent from Schüssler Fiorenza’s work” (Hampson 1990: 34). Hampson also asks whether McFague’s use of different metaphors such as the “world as God’s body” is Christian? (Hampson 1990: 158) Hampson believes it is not, and as such, McFague “may construct whatever models for God she may wish” (Hampson 1990: 159). For Hampson, this tellingly illustrates the incompatibility of feminism and Christianity, and the futility of any attempt to reconcile the two. One cannot change the biblical symbols to their foundation and remain in Christianity. Any attempt will result in failure, for Christianity always remains tied to the biblical texts (Hampson 1990: 108). Hampson concludes:

Christianity is a religion which has a historical referent, and which has certain concrete symbols. C. S. Lewis was surely right when, opposing the ordination of women, he remarked that a Mother-Daughter religion would be quite different from the Father-Son religion which is Christianity. Thus many a feminist and conservative Christian join hands in agreeing that Christianity is essentially tied to a symbol system in which God is conceived as male. The implication for such a feminist is that this cannot be her religion.

(Hampson 1985: 345)

Goldenberg also agrees that the feminist ideal and the biblical text are entirely dissimilar. She writes: “A society that accepted large numbers of women as religious leaders would be too different from the biblical world to find the book relevant, let alone look to it for inspiration” (Goldenberg 1979: 3). So why stay within the biblical religion? Post-Christian feminists believe that Christian feminists have not answered this question. If it is not normative, why continue to refer to it? Why not break with the past, especially given that it is so patriarchal? Hampson illustrates the basic difference: “Christian feminists want to change the actors in the play, what I want is a different kind of play” (Hampson 1990: 162). Post-Christian feminists maintain that the actors, however, cannot be changed. One cannot simply break from Christianity’s historical past

like in other disciplines, or even in other religions. Other disciplines, although they develop in a certain historical context, are free to innovate, adapt, and even discard. Not so with Christianity (Hampson 1996a: 52-53).

1.4.3 The Nature, Power, and Impact of Symbols

A fundamental reason why post-Christian feminists regard Jesus' maleness as significant and relevant is due to their view on the power and impact of symbols. Christianity, being rooted in a patriarchal past, has masculine symbols for the divine. It is a historical religion that is tied to that history with its symbols, metaphors, and stories. These symbols are highly influential, inculcating and reinforcing certain beliefs. Because of such images, the present culture views God "as an immaterial male spirit" (Goldenberg 1979: 93). Daly writes: "The majority of those who believe themselves to be sophisticated would probably deny that taking christian myth 'seriously' has had any controlling effect on their behavior or beliefs. The fact is that the symbols of christian and prechristian patriarchy permeate Western culture and are actively promoted by Western technocracy" (Daly 1991: 89)¹⁰. It is argued that the symbols of Christianity continue to exert considerable influence over present culture. These powerful symbols, however, are masculine, and it is these masculine symbols, particularly the metaphors of "Father" and "Son," which is the fundamental problem (Christ 1997: 2). Goldenberg explains:

Women experience psychic oppression only when father-gods are touted as the sole images of the highest religious value in a society. This condition defines patriarchy, fosters scorn for women and dupes women into believing that they are innately inferior to men. However, when father-gods are present within a panoply of psycho-religious images, they

¹⁰ This saturation is such that the word "God" becomes problematic. Daly, for example, because she believes it is impossible to remove male imagery from "God," no longer uses the word.

can no longer enforce their former tyranny. Women will be free to reconsider Christ and Yahweh and to find new places for them.

(Goldenberg 1979: 82)

Carol Christ agrees and states:

Religions centered on the worship of a male God create 'moods' and 'motivations' that keep women in a state of psychological dependence on men and male authority, while at the same [sic] legitimating the *political* and *social* authority of fathers and sons in the institutions of society.

Religious symbol systems focused around exclusively male images of divinity create the impression that female power can never be fully legitimate or wholly beneficent.

(Christ 1979: 275)

Accordingly, for Carol Christ, the symbol of the Goddess becomes notably important and essential. She writes: "Visual images of the Goddesses stand in stark contrast to the image of God as an old white man, jarring us to question our culture's view that all legitimate power is male and that female power is dangerous and evil" (Christ 1997: 22). A Goddess religion is appealing to some post-Christian feminists precisely because it "loosens the grip of masculine symbols upon the contemporary imagination" (Goldenberg 1990: 197). These feminists find the symbol of Goddess necessary to counter patriarchy's destructive impact. As an alternative symbol, it affirms: the legitimacy of female power, the female body, female will and initiative, and female bonds and relationships (Christ 1979: 276-86).

More specifically, the maleness of Christ is relevant for post-Christian feminists, for as a symbol it continues to promulgate patriarchy. As such, Goldenberg believes that "a feminist theology must cease depending on the metaphor of Jesus *himself*" (Goldenberg 1979: 25). Post-Christian feminists do not relegate Jesus' maleness to a category equivalent to race or class. Its significance is more profound. Hampson writes:

The figure of Christ is that of a male figure, and that is not to be evaded. God is conveyed through the use of metaphors which are male not female. And that history is not to be disposed of. It is necessarily present, and present as central to the religion. Even if at a conscious level people think that of course that was a patriarchal age, and we now live in certain respects in a more enlightened age, the metaphors and symbols which are present will be impressed on people's minds.

(Hampson 1990: 9)

For post-Christian feminists, because God is symbolised by male and Jesus was male presents an insuperable dilemma. They believe that Christian feminists do not take seriously enough the central place of these images in Christianity. They assert that feminists who work within Christian parameters have underestimated the impact, power, significance, and deep-rootedness of these masculine images. To merely counter that God is beyond sex is inadequate, for these "symbols are effective at a subconscious and pre-rational level" (Hampson 1990: 161). To illustrate their point, post-Christian feminists note that although complementarians affirm that God is beyond sexual differentiation, they vigorously react to the suggestion of calling God "Mother." The response reveals that complementarians do hold that God is in some sense male (Christ 1997: 23). Thus, Hampson concludes: "It is conservatives and feminist radicals who grasp the importance of symbolism. Both see that the fact that God, and Christ, have been seen as 'male' is crucial to the religion. It establishes a particular place both for men and for women, for the 'male' and for the 'female', within the religion" (Hampson 1990: 75).

Post-Christian feminists insist that the power and impact of these masculine images cannot be tempered or altered by an appeal to more feminine elements for God. They believe that the attempt by Christian feminists to find balancing feminine metaphors is counterproductive, for it merely serves to "enrich or enlarge our concept of the male . . ." (Hampson 1990: 94). In other words, these feminine attributes are merely incorporated into the masculine God, without bringing any modification to his maleness. Instead, God's maleness becomes even more

encompassing. Moreover, these attributes that God takes on are traditionally female roles, so this absorption “does nothing to change the conception of what are authentic roles for women” (Hampson 1990: 95). Hampson, for example, believes that Moltmann’s appeal for a motherly-Father is misguided and unhelpful—a position which merely incorporates feminine elements into the masculine (Hampson 1996a: 180-81). Any appeal to Mary or finding a feminine side in the Spirit is also unprofitable, for likewise these are assumed under the masculine or into the masculine. The Father and Son outnumber the Spirit, and Mary’s importance arises only out of her relation to Jesus (Hampson 1985: 344). For Hampson, the Trinity therefore allows no place for women, and that in Christianity “there is no symbolic place for articulate, self-actualizing woman, the equal of man” (Hampson 1996a: 6).

In response to Christian feminist criticism of her position, Hampson stresses that her arguments affect *all* Christianity and not just fundamentalism. She writes:

For whether the scriptures are given the status of being infallible, or whether they are held to reflect the outlook of a particular time so that it is legitimate to modify biblical teaching, it is still these particular scriptures, with their concrete imagery and history, which are read in church or synagogue. Again, however the scriptures are interpreted, it is still these scriptures, telling of these events, with the portrayal of men and women present in this literature, which is interpreted. What I wish to argue, then, is that it is what is conveyed at a sub-conscious level that is crucial. Precisely because it is at a sub-conscious level that certain presuppositions are conveyed (for example as to the natural relation of women to men), the effect is much less amenable to being countered.

(Hampson 1996a: 54)

Post-Christian feminists maintain that Christianity will always be fastened to its masculine orientated text. It will always be bound to a masculine saviour. Whenever the text is read, the symbols and stories will have a profound impact, even at a subconscious level, conveying that men more closely resemble God, and women are secondary to men (Hampson 1985: 343). It is this subconscious level that is relevant whether one is conservative or liberal (Hampson 1996a: 62).

1.4.4 Beyond Christolatry

Post-Christian feminists argue that the symbols of Christianity are deeply embedded. Therefore, of concern to them is the supreme symbol of Jesus who is a male figure. The fundamental symbol of Christianity is that of a male Christ (Hampson 1990: 60) and this maleness cannot be evaded (Hampson 1990: 75). Hampson writes: "The problem of course with Christology for feminists is that Jesus was a male human being and that thus as a symbol, as the Christ, or as the Second Person of the trinity, it would seem that 'God' becomes in some way 'male'" (Hampson 1990: 50-51). Similarly, speaking of the symbolic impact of a male saviour, Daly observes that it becomes clear that "salvation comes only through the male" (Daly 1986: 77). If this is the case and if a masculine incarnation is necessary, how can it be inclusive of all humanity? (Hampson 1990: 51) For Hampson, this universal representation is impossible for we no longer think in Platonic categories that distinguish between the universal and particular. Even if we still thought in such categories, the dilemma continues, "for it remains the case that the second person of the Trinity is identified with a male, and not a female, human person" (Hampson 1985: 344). So where biblical egalitarians and Christian feminists find liberation in, for example, Galatians 3:28, Daly finds oppression, for both male and female are inextricably linked to "in Christ" who is masculine (Daly 1986: 80).

Post-Christian feminists argue that it is precisely this *male* saviour who cannot save. Daly writes, "A patriarchal divinity or his son is exactly *not* in a position to save us from the horrors of a patriarchal world" (Daly 1986: 96). So Daly speaks of going "beyond Christolatry" (Daly 1986: 69-97) for a male saviour cannot save women. Goldenberg agrees:

Jesus Christ cannot symbolize the liberation of women. A culture that maintains a masculine image for its highest divinity cannot allow its women to experience themselves as the equals of its men. In order to develop a theology of women's liberation, feminists have to leave Christ and Bible behind them. Women have to stop denying the sexism that lies at the root of the Jewish and Christian religions.

(Goldenberg 1979: 22)

Post-Christian feminists also observe that it is far easier to portray Christ as a different race than sex (Hampson 1985: 344-5). The reason is because Jesus' maleness is regarded as more significant, for based on this maleness women are excluded from leadership, whereas those of different race or class are not. Daly provides a critique of what she terms "universalization." She explains:

It is argued, for example, that along with not being a woman Jesus was not black, not elderly, not Chinese, et cetera. The implication would seem to be that women are not the only 'outsiders.' This is a kind of universalization of negatives in regard to the person of Jesus, and while it is, of course, true, it completely misses the point. The problem is not that the Jesus of the Gospels was male, young, and a Semite. Rather, the problem lies in the exclusive identification of this person with God, in such a manner that Christian conceptions of divinity and of the 'image of God' are all objectified in Jesus. . . .

The universalization process is characterized by refusal to recognize the evident fact that the 'particularity' of Jesus' maleness has not functioned in the same way as the 'particularity' of his Semite identity or of his youth. Non-Semites or persons over, say,

thirty-three, have not been universally excluded from the priesthood on the basis that they do not belong to the same ethnic group or age group as Jesus.

(Daly 1986: 78-79)

Since much of Christianity uses Jesus' maleness to exclude women demonstrates the presupposition that God is viewed as male and could only incarnate in masculine form. Given this masculine incarnation, post-Christian feminists affirm that nothing can assuage its patriarchal impact and significance. Therefore, they criticise the 'kenosis of patriarchy' theory as not being radical enough. Hampson writes:

Thus the commendation of a kenotic theology to women, saying that it represents 'the undoing of the power and privilege of patriarchy', does not really meet the point. Feminist women are not looking for condescension on the part of men. They want equality. . . . We

need a much more radical shift, and a different shift, than that which *kenosis* represents, still presupposing as it does a world of privilege and its divestment.

(Hampson 1996a: 144-45)

Post-Christian feminists are also critical of attempts to find female figures or motifs in order to have a more inclusive christology (Hampson 1990: 71). They argue that these attempts will never achieve an equivalent place for women, for Christ still remains male. Hampson notes that it is problematic for Christian feminists to look constantly at a male Jesus, thus their focus moves to women around Jesus (Hampson 1996a: 72). Moreover, she claims that many Christian feminists do not have christologies (Hampson 1990: 62-66). Hampson writes: “Indeed, is it possible—as some Christian feminists have phrased their dilemma—for women to be content with a male saviour? I have never seen Schüssler Fiorenza, any more than Rosemary Ruether, acknowledging the truth of Christianity. Nor indeed, I think, consider its viability for feminists” (Hampson 1996a: 72). This is indicative for Hampson of the tendency of those with feminist ideals to move beyond Christ.

1.4.5 Women’s Experience: A Rejection of Christianity’s Truth and Moral Claims

A foundational starting point for post-Christian feminists is their experience (Plaskow 1980; Hampson 1987) and claim to autonomy. Hampson, for example, advocates a theology of experience where the self is central. Human beings are to be placed central and autonomous. She maintains that “the basic incompatibility between feminism and Christianity lies in the fact that Christianity is necessarily heteronomous, in that it understands God as other than the self and known through revelation. Feminists stand for human autonomy, though not in isolation (Hampson 1996a: vii). Similarly, for Carol Christ, “theology begins in experience” (Christ 1997: 31-49). She writes:

Women's *spiritual quest* concerns a women's awakening to the depths of her soul and her position in the universe. . . . It involves asking basic questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is my place in the universe? In answering these questions, a woman must listen to her own voice and come to terms with her own experience.

(Christ 1980: 8-9)

For post-Christian feminists, this experience becomes a source of knowledge (Christ 1997: 4). It is from this position of experience that they reject Christianity's truth and moral claims. They argue that by starting from women's experience and autonomy, it is impossible to stay within Christianity. They maintain that since Christianity justifies patriarchy through masculine symbols and a male saviour, it is neither true nor moral. Christianity is harmful for it serves to "legitimize the inferior place of women in society" (Hampson 1996a: 284). They maintain that Christianity has propagated patriarchy, and note the evident immoral results of patriarchy. They find the history of male dominance characterised by an unholy trinity of rape, genocide, and war (Daly 1986: 114-22). Hampson writes:

It is not just that women have been battered, raped, sold, exchanged, treated as material objects and made into nonentities. This they have shared with slaves and blacks. But the very conception of God which humans have held, at least within the Judaeo-Christian religion and, one suspects, more widely, has been one which has served to reinforce human hierarchy. . . .

This theodicy question cannot be answered while remaining within the terms of the biblical religion and with the biblical God.

(Hampson 1985: 348)

Post-Christian feminists conclude that Christianity is immoral because Christianity's conception of a male God and a male saviour has led to discrimination against women. Even if the situation is changed today, Hampson wonders how God could allow only men in a previous age to have authority. (Hampson 1990: 24) She views the complementarian position as more ethically coherent, in that God always requires men in authority.

The post-Christian feminist critique of Christian truth and morality extends into other areas. They find themselves in conflict with monotheism and covenant, both of which support hierarchical structures. (Hampson 1996a: 121, 125). The idea of sacrifice is also abhorrent. Hampson states that women “appear almost universally to dislike the theme of sacrifice” (Hampson 1996a: 150). On a different theme, Daly claims that “the categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality are patriarchal classifications” (Daly 1986: 125). Also, based on present experience, Hampson denies that a resurrection or incarnation is possible. Nothing can interrupt what Hampson calls the “causal nexus” of history—the regularity of history and nature where one event follows the other (Hampson 1996a: 12). So in formulating their position, priority is given to what women find valid in their “own experience without needing to look to the past for justification” (Daly 1986: 74). From this basis, women reclaim the right to name their reality—their self, world, and God (Daly 1986: 8).

1.4.6 Conclusion

Post-Christian feminists regard Christianity as idolatrous, where the symbols no longer make sense or describe reality, and so have been revealed as idols. They conclude that the religion is essentially a projection of the ideas and aspirations of men—the same religious system attacked by Feuerbach and Freud. Post-Christian feminists conclude that Christianity, through its metaphors and symbols, teaches that God is in some sense male. Daly’s well-known statement, “if God is male, then the male is God,” (Daly 1986: 19) is applied in this context. They cannot accept a religion whose logical implication is that male is God, or that male is more godlike than female.

Post-Christian feminists consider the maleness of Christ to be relevant and an integral part of Christianity. Jesus' maleness is one of the unchangeable central images of the religion. As a religious symbol, it is overtly and covertly influential, even to the subconscious level. As such, its power serves to legitimate patriarchy. In addition, Jesus' ministry does not curb this influence. Jesus, though benevolent to women, never confronted the oppressive patriarchy of the ANE. Thus, post-Christian feminists conclude that there is no christology that is compatible with feminism.

CHAPTER 2: ARGUMENTS AND CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING WHAT IS REVELATIONAL (OR NORMATIVE) AND WHAT IS CULTURAL—AN ANALYSIS OF COMPRABLE ISSUES

2.1 Introduction

Having set forth the various positions on the significance of Jesus' maleness, we now come to an analysis of comparable issues that influence our topic. In determining what is revelational and what is only cultural, we need to examine similar issues that have bearing on our problem and ascertain any relevance.

Before examining these comparable issues, it is important, however, to note areas of agreement concerning our topic. Among the differing positions, there is consensus that Christ was male. There is no debate on the historicity of Jesus' maleness. Related to this is an acceptance that Scripture refers to Jesus as "Son," although it is debated *why* he is called "Son," and whether this sonship should be applied pre-incarnationally, that is, whether it is legitimate to speak of eternal sonship. There is also concurrence among all views that God is not male. Nevertheless, it remains to be examined whether one or more positions predicate sexuality of God. Both complementarian and non-complementarian positions, while maintaining that God is not male, accuse the other of sexualising God.

Significantly, all clearly affirm that there is an ontological equality between male and female. Similar to the general agreement that God is not male, the implications of this equality are disputed. Is having equality of being and *legislated* role differentiation compatible? Is insisting that

by nature women are confined to being led, at least in church and family, compatible with full ontological equality? May the church necessarily disallow women from leadership because of gender? Alternatively, is equality overemphasised and legitimate distinctions minimised or obliterated? Is the stress on equality usurping a created order?

Across the spectrum of positions, there is also an agreement that some New Testament¹¹ teaching, that was normative for the ANE culture, is no longer binding, apart from general equity. Most agree that we should not require foot-washing (John 13:14), greeting one another with a kiss (1 Cor 16:20), women to wear head coverings (1 Cor 11:1-16), a strict and absolute application of Paul's instruction that women remain silent in the church (1 Cor 14:34-35), an abstaining from the meat of strangled animals and from blood (Acts 15:20, 29), prohibiting braided hair and gold jewellery (1 Tim 2:9, 1 Pet 3:3), or taking wine for the stomach (1 Tim 5:23).

The question of head coverings, for example, illustrates that these agreements are sometimes on a superficial level. Although most claim that women need not wear head coverings,¹² the reasons given are different. Complementarians view the command for head coverings to be a specific cultural application of the general principle of male headship that is established in creation (Piper & Grudem 1991b: 75; Schreiner 1991: 132). Since head coverings were a particular symbol of women's submission in ANE culture, contrary to 20th century culture, they can be abolished. The specific application is removed but the principle of male headship remains in place. Others,

¹¹ There are even more numerous Old Testament examples such as not wearing clothes woven of different material (Lev 19:19). Of importance to our discussion is that even in the New Testament we have culture-specific commands that are no longer binding.

¹² Foh comes close to arguing that women should still wear head coverings (Foh 1980: 36).

however, argue that the head covering command is given because of principles of love. It is a command to wear appropriate dress so as not to give undue offence (Groothuis 1997: 161; Daly 1968: 38). The reason why Paul refers back to creation in 1 Corinthians 11: 8-9 is also disputed. Complementarians argue that Paul is referring to the headship of Adam. Egalitarians assert that Paul is referring to Eve coming from Adam, that is, when Paul uses the word "head," he essentially means "source." It is disputed what principle is invoked from creation. On a more fundamental level, the head covering debate illustrates two different approaches that may be summarised in this manner: (1) A principle established in creation is *given* a specific cultural command. (2) A specific cultural command is *given* a theological basis in creation. Although these may appear identical, the implications of the text are reversed. The first position (complementarianism) argues that there is an unchanging principle of headship, established in creation, which finds various cultural expressions. Since head coverings are only a cultural expression of female submission, and since head coverings no longer depict female submission in 20th century culture, the specific law no longer applies. The principle of male headship remains, albeit with different cultural applications. The second position (non-complementarianism) argues that because there is a change in application (head coverings no longer required), this demonstrates that certain cultural commands can be given a theological basis. The passage illustrates that there are laws, though grounded in creation, which are no longer normative. What remains is the principle of love and Adam as source, not head, which finds different cultural applications. This reasoning is applied to 1 Timothy 2:11-14 where Paul grounds in creation the injunction that women cannot teach or have authority. Similar to head coverings, this command may be viewed as non-normative because of the cultural change even though it is given theological justification. Today, as head coverings no longer denote submission, so women are no longer uneducated and subservient, thus the command not to teach may be viewed as cultural.

In spite of these differences, at the very least, most agree that there are some commands in the New Testament that are specific applications of an overall principle to a particular culture. So even in the New Testament, we have the difficult task of determining what commands have continuing normative force and what are cultural.

How do we decide whether something is cultural? How has the church solved such difficulties, and what implications are there for our problem? We will now examine two areas of importance for our topic, namely slavery and Sabbath. The topic of slavery occurs regularly in the debate, and there is considerable disagreement over the relevancy of slavery. The discussion concerning the Sabbath, although not generally referred to, is relevant, for many consider it another “creation ordinance,” and there are close ties between gender and Sabbath. As we have seen, complementarians rely heavily on the creation ordinance to establish male headship. The Sabbath is relevant because of its ties back to creation, as well as its transformation through redemptive history, and its consummation at the end times.

2.2 Slavery

2.2.1 Introduction

Complementarians and post-Christian feminists argue that the slavery¹³ issue is different from our topic and generally irrelevant. Complementarians consider slavery as ultimately linked to culture

¹³ In our discussion, “slavery” refers to involuntary slavery.

and a fallen world, whereas they consider male headship unchangeably established in creation. Therefore, most complementarians view slavery as wrong, but they still assert male headship. Since slavery is not grounded in creation, complementarians believe that it is largely irrelevant to the discussion. Similarly, post-Christian feminists find little relevance between the two issues. They view the eventual change of the church's view on slavery as more of a surface change, whereas they believe their concerns impact the core symbolism of the Christian faith. In contrast, biblical egalitarians and Christian feminists claim that the slavery issue is similar to our problem and has significant implications. They find parallels between complementarian and pro-slavery argumentation (Gundry 1977: 53), and given these parallels, and that the church now *rejects* slavery, they believe that the slavery question is relevant. We now come to an analysis of the slavery debate, and in particular, the areas of the debate that relate to our concerns. There are numerous parallels in argumentation between pro-slavery and complementarianism, and between abolitionism and non-complementarianism. After stating and assessing these various parallels in reasoning, we will consider which areas are relevant or irrelevant for our topic, and draw some conclusions.

2.2.2 Parallels Between Pro-slavery and Complementarian Argumentation

2.2.2.1 Universality

Pro-slavery apologists attempted to justify slavery from the universality of the institution. John Hopkins writes: "Slavery, therefore, may be defined as *servitude for life, descending to the offspring*. And this kind of bondage appears to have existed as an established institution in all the ages of our world, by the universal evidence of history, whether sacred or profane" (Hopkins 1969: 6). The

implication is that since slavery is universal it must be legitimate. Similarly, complementarians appeal to the universality of patriarchy to justify male leadership. Bruce Waltke, basing himself on Steven Goldberg's thesis, argues that it is "a truism of anthropology . . . that male leadership is normative in every culture and that there is no evidence of matriarchy (Waltke 1995: 36).

Similarly, David Ayers, also referring to Goldberg, writes: "The arguments over the universality of sex differences are crucial and represent more than mere academic quibbling. Only through such discussion can biological differences be established as having social relevance. If, across the dazzling variety of cultures, such similarities consistently emerge, it is a distortion of logic to assume that each society has found an essentially similar way through socialization alone" (Ayers 1991: 316).

Universality, however, does not necessarily imply inevitability—as Goldberg qualifies himself (Goldberg 1993: 49). Neither does universality imply the morality of an institution or form a foundation for ethical value. Some complementarians, like Ayers, come close to a "biology is destiny" approach. Universality does not imply that biologically men are better suited to leadership than women. On such a basis, we could justify adultery from its universality. Or we could conclude that since the majority of criminal behaviour is universally male, men are biologically unsuited for leadership. Moreover, egalitarians and Christian feminists claim that patriarchy came because of the fall—hence its universality. They argue, however, that this universality should be transformed by the gospel.

2.2.2.2 Historical precedent

A second parallel is the argument from historical precedent. The pro-slavery position maintained that historically the church had always given its consent to the lawfulness of slavery. Hopkins states: “I *know* that the doctrine of that Church was clear and unanimous on the *lawfulness* of slavery for eighteen centuries together . . . (Hopkins 1969: 47). Likewise, complementarians argue that the church has generally always held a complementarian view. S. Johnson writes: “There arises at this point, however, a matter worthy of serious consideration: If the Christian church has held this view [complementarianism] for centuries with Bible in hand, then we may presume that there exists some good reason for that fact” (Lewis Johnson 1991: 164). Likewise, Harold Brown argues: “If Scripture does not mean what people have taken it to mean for centuries, then the Bible is obscure, and, due to its lack of clarity, it cannot possess the authority it once had.” (Brown 1995: 199). And Waltke writes: “Until the twentieth century the Church universally understood Scriptures to teach male rulership in the Church . . .” (Waltke 1995: 32). This argument, like the one from universality, is essentially *ad populum*. It is indecisive. The church no longer holds to slavery as a lawful institution, demonstrating that a long held view can be wrong and therefore must be rejected.

2.2.2.3 Unchangeable character and morality of the institutions

As we have seen (1.1.4.1), complementarians appeal to creation to justify male headship, at least in church and family. They regard male headship to have a permanent status because of its foundation in creation. Similarly, pro-slavery apologists believed that slavery was unchangeable. They did not consider the institution to be only cultural, and amassed considerable arguments by

appealing to divine law, ordination, providence, prophecy, and indirectly, to creation. James Thornwell, for example, argued that in contrast to the “rights of man” approach, slavery was founded on divine law and providence (Thornwell 1974: 414). This unchangeable law included the Decalogue and Paul’s commands. Slavery was also a condition founded in prophecy, such as the curse on Canaan in Genesis 9:25 (Ellis 1996: 45-46) which demonstrated that God had ordained slaves to service (Hopkins 1969: 7; Smith 1972: 11). It was considered to be permanent and part of the divine order where people were appointed to different lots in life. The institution of slavery was placed on the same footing with other relationships, such as husband-wife, magistrate-citizen, and parent-child.

Defenders of slavery also argued that, by implication, slavery was a condition inherent to creation, so that the slave was constitutionally suited to this position and fashioned for service. Hopkins writes: “For, if ever there was a race of men, fitted, by nature, for slavery, the African race must be admitted to be in that condition. . . . He is happier, safer, more contented, and more useful, as a slave, than in any other position” (Hopkins 1969: 97). There was the common belief among slavery defenders that slaves were made for their position, and naturally were not fitted for the freedom that others enjoy.¹⁴ The relevant point being that as complementarians believe male headship is permanent, so pro-slavery apologists believed that slavery was unchangeable.

Related to this unchangeable character is the parallel claim as to the morality of the institutions of patriarchy and slavery. Pro-slavery argued that because the Old and New Testaments never

¹⁴ James McPherson writes: “One of the most formidable obstacles to the abolition of slavery and the extension of equal rights to free Negroes was the widespread popular and scientific belief, North as well as South, in the innate inferiority of the Negro race” (McPherson 1964: 134).

condemned slavery, a claim that slavery is evil is to assert that God approved of sinful behaviour. To argue that the institution of slavery is immoral imputes moral evil to God (Hopkins 1969: 6, 15). Complementarians also observe that the prophets never criticized patriarchy (Waltke 1995: 30), and no New Testament teaching condemns patriarchy (Patterson 1997: 107). Patriarchy is a moral institution, so a claim that it is evil implies that God approved of sinful behaviour. Furthermore, it is argued that any claim that patriarchy is wrong, is tantamount to claiming that revelation is distorted (Haas 1995).

2.2.2.4 Protection

In defending the institution of slavery, it was argued that the slave had to be protected, and the only way this could happen was by keeping him in servitude (Smith 1972: 206). Hopkins elaborates:

In the view of the Southern slaveholders, therefore, the general emancipation of their negroes would not only be ruinous to the masters, but cruel, to the last degree, towards the slaves themselves; because it would thrust into the dangers and difficulties of freemen, millions of human beings who are entirely unfitted by nature for freedom, and who need the *protection* [italics mine] and government of their masters, even more than the masters need their labor.

(Hopkins 1969: 97)

This was one of the weakest pro-slavery arguments, and some complementarians have adopted similar argumentation. Piper speaks of the need of protection for women. In defining masculinity, he writes: “AT THE HEART OF MATURE MASCULINITY IS A SENSE OF BENEVOLENT RESPONSIBILITY TO LEAD, PROVIDE FOR AND *PROTECT* [italics mine] WOMEN IN WAYS APPROPRIATE TO A MAN’S DIFFERING RELATIONSHIPS” (Piper 1991: 36).

Both the pro-slavery and complementarian arguments for protection are extremely problematic. Although Piper claims his definition of masculinity is biblically defined, no biblical justification is given for this protection. It appears to be more of a projection of Piper, that is, what he conceives masculinity to be. But there are additional problems. Apart from broadly applying this definition of masculinity to all relationships (not only to church and family) Piper ends in an apparent logical conundrum. He claims that it is a creation attribute of men to protect women, however, the chief need for this protection arises post-fall and because of sinful male behaviour. Why do women need protection, if it is not from evil men? Interestingly, in illustrating this need for protection, Piper refers to protecting a woman who is being street mugged by, presumably, a male assailant. The line of argumentation illustrates confusion between the metaphysical and ethical. It is to confuse what man is by nature (ontology), and what man does wrong (ethics). It is to assert, in a contradictory manner, that in the nature of man is a characteristic that counteracts his sinful behaviour. Of course, a man should protect a woman being attacked, but he should equally protect a man being assaulted. Alternatively, a woman should protect a man being assaulted. In each case, the person should aid according to ability, with differing situations requiring differing gifts of strength, ingenuity, intuition, or verbal skills. Likewise, slavery apologists failed to recognise that while claiming slaves needed protection, slaves essentially needed protection from their slave owners.

2.2.2.5 Equal but subordinate

Pro-slavery stated that slaves were equal but subordinate. Thornwell asks: “But where do the Scriptures teach that an essential equality as men implies a corresponding equality of state?” (Thornwell 1974: 389). While in principle holding that all people were in the image of God, pro-

slavery generally held that slaves were in some way inferior. There was the belief that slaves were equal in being but were given different roles. So Robert Dabney held that the slave was in the image of God, but did not have ecclesiastical equality (Dabney 1982b: 199-217). Tellingly, Smith titled his work on racism in the southern United States, *In his image but . . .* (Smith 1972). Smith writes: “Religious leaders of the white South have always theoretically subscribed to the doctrine of the *imago Dei*, yet until at least well into the present century they, with rare exceptions, affirmed the inferiority of the Negro race and defended the traditional regional pattern of white supremacy” (Smith 1972: vii). A similar transformation has occurred in the church. It is well known that through much of the church’s history women have been held to be inferior in being. Today complementarians, however, while insisting that women are in no way inferior, still hold that women are “in his image, but . . .” They claim the full ontological equality of men and women, but women are denied leadership at least in the home and church. Similar to pro-slavery, complementarians argue that this equality of being is not incompatible with different roles or subordination. Frame writes:

Women and men equally image God, even in their sexual differences, even in their differences with regard to authority and submission. The reason is that the image of God embraces everything that is human. Both men and women, therefore, resemble God and are called to represent Him throughout the creation, exercising control, authority, and presence in His name. This doctrine is not at all inconsistent with the subordination of women to men in the home and in the church. All human beings are under authority, both divine and human. Their submission to authority, as well as their authority itself, images God.

(Frame 1991: 231-32)

Undoubtedly, the church eventually rejected pro-slavery’s “equal but subordinate” scheme.

Whether it is biblical for complementarians to affirm such a position, we will return to in chapter three.

2.2.2.6 Emphasis on Pauline texts

Defenders of slavery referred far more to Paul than to Jesus (Smith 1972: 134-35). The texts they appealed to were mainly Pauline, such as: 1 Corinthians 7:20-24; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-25, 4:1; 1 Timothy 6:1-8; Titus 2:9-10; and Philemon 1-25 (Hopkins 1969: 13-14; Smith 1972: 135). There was a tendency among pro-slavery argumentation to appeal to specific texts rather than general principles of equality, love, and freedom. When challenged with a general principle of love like the golden rule, Thornwell responds: “The rule then simply requires, in the case of Slavery, that we should treat our slaves as we should feel that we had a right to be treated if we were slaves ourselves...” (Thornwell 1974: 429). The principle was incorporated into the system so that even the golden rule was viewed to support slavery (Cobb 1976: 101).

Complementarian argumentation also mainly appeals to Pauline literature, such as: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33b-36; Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; and Titus 2:5. (Their main non-Pauline texts are Genesis 1-3 and 1 Peter 3:1-7). Similarly, principles of love and equality are incorporated into the system of thought. As we have noted, they view equality of being and subordination as compatible. Similarly, headship is not conceived to be in conflict with love.

Poythress writes:

... Christian love transforms the family. Husbands and wives begin to practice the Word of God in Ephesians 5:22-33 and begin to imitate the love that Christ had for the church and the submission that the church ought to practice to Christ. Christian love at its best and most intense is not merely a general, vague sentiment of love or an undefined impulse to do good. ... According to Ephesians 5:22-23, husbands have responsibilities like those of Christ, while wives have responsibilities like those of the church.

(Poythress 1991a: 240)

Overall, both positions claim that there are specific texts (particularly Pauline) that are not abrogated by an appeal to more general principles such as the golden rule.

2.2.2.7 Clear meaning and import

The pro-slavery position held that these texts were clear, and that there was no way around such plain meaning. Speaking of the abolitionists, Thornwell writes: “While they admit that the letter of the Scriptures is distinctly and unambiguously in our favour, they maintain that their spirit is against us; and, that our Saviour was content to leave the destruction of whatsoever was morally wrong in the social fabric to the slow progress of changes in individual opinions, wrought by the silent influence of religion, rather than endanger the stability of governments by sudden and disastrous revolutions” (Thornwell 1974: 407).

Similarly, complementarians ask how would the first century Christian have interpreted passages that are at the forefront of the debate such as Genesis 1-3 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15? Very similar to the way complementarians interpret them today, argues Vern Poythress (Poythress 1991b). Since these early Christians would have at least some of the ANE patriarchal mindset, their interpretation would be along the same lines as complementarians (Poythress 1991b: 1-2). Poythress writes:

When we take into account the complementarian practices in first century cultures and in first century church, feminist readings of the key texts cannot plausibly be sustained. Evangelical feminists are thus forced into the position articulated in 1979 by DeJong and Wilson in *Husband & Wife*. According to this view, NT texts aim at transforming but not at immediately overthrowing patriarchal practice. One cannot directly appeal to any NT proof text in order to justify modern feminist sentiments. Only in the long run do the implications of the transforming forces in the NT become evident.

(Poythress 1991b: 9)

Both pro-slavery and complementarianism argue that their position is the clear or natural interpretation of the texts, the one that the church from the earliest of times accepted. They both

note that opposing their position is an argument from a “transformation principle,” an argument that there are principles inherent to the gospel that, over time, transform these specific texts.

2.2.2.8 Negation of clear texts, by principles, can justify immorality

There is a general concern in pro-slavery and complementarian thought that an emphasis on general principles not only undermines these specific texts, but also opens the floodgates of immorality. There is a fear that if general principles override the specifics, everything will become cultural—that all commands could therefore be viewed as only cultural, and so anything may be permitted. On this basis, pro-slavery was anxious that general principles could then be used to argue for any morality (Thornwell 1974: 428). Similarly, complementarians are concerned that the emphasis on general principles of equality and love, and using those principles to negate male headship, could justify homosexuality or at least leave no adequate defence against it. If general principles can negate headship and the corresponding specific commands, then these principles may be used to nullify any command.

Underlying the pro-slavery and complementarian concern of a drift into immorality is their establishment of the ethical commands of submission in metaphysics. Both assert that the commands for slave and woman submission (ethics) is founded in nature (ontology). It is therefore understandable that they resist a change of ethics. Pro-slavery resisted emancipation, not only because of the clear texts, but because they considered that the slave was suited by nature to his condition. Emancipation would then permit a slave to do something for which by nature he is not suited. Likewise, complementarians oppose egalitarianism, not only because of clear texts, but because they believe these commands of headship and submission are based in creation. Since

many complementarians use the injunction of male headship and female submission (ethics) to define the differences between the sexes (ontology), they believe that to negate headship will therefore negate the differences between men and women—opening the door for immorality.

In other words, for complementarianism, the commands of headship and submission elucidate what is true by nature. Headship and submission define one of the created differences between the sexes. Therefore, to negate headship is to minimise the differences between the sexes, and thus open the door for homosexuality. For non-complementarianism, ontological equality implies that the specific commands of headship and submission are not grounded in nature but are provisional or cultural. They may be changed without the church heading into immorality.

This argument of a “slippery slope” into immorality is unconvincing. At least in the case of slavery, the pro-slavery line of reasoning was demonstrated to be incorrect. The principles of equality, love, and freedom won the day without the church drifting into evil.

2.2.2.9 Counter-cultural

Pro-slavery, like complementarianism, went against the prevailing trend in culture. Pro-slavery apologists readily acknowledged this fact. Hopkins recognised “how distasteful my sentiments must be, on this very serious question, to the great majority of my respected fellow-citizens . . .” (Hopkins 1969: 41). Thornwell agrees and states: “Opposition to Slavery has never been the offspring of the Bible. It has sprung from visionary theories of human nature and society; it has sprung from the misguided reason of man . . .” (Thornwell 1974: 393). Slavery defenders believed that arguments against slavery did not originate from Scripture but from the cultural sentiment

and speculation (Thornwell 1974: 384), and accepted that their position was contrary to the culture.

Given this position of pro-slavery, it is surprising that Piper argues: “We must remember the real possibility that it is not we but evangelical feminists today who resemble nineteenth century defenders of slavery in the most significant way: using arguments from the Bible to justify conformity to some very strong pressures in contemporary society (in favor of slavery then, and feminism now)” (Piper & Grudem 1991b: 66). This is doubtful. Pro-slavery apologists extensively claimed that the abolitionists were conforming to the culture, and recognised that the cultural trend was contrary to slavery. Defenders of slavery supported the original status quo as complementarians do today. Piper recognises that the present cultural influence is feminism, and since he opposes feminism, his position is counter-cultural.

A further parallel is noted in that slavery defenders and complementarians have attempted to make their position more amenable to the culture. Smith notes that there was a development, especially by the time of the American civil war, where pro-slavery apologists sought to develop a more humane slavery, correct abuses, and make it “less vulnerable to outside criticism” (Smith 1972: 200). Similarly, complementarians have dropped the term “hierarchy” and now use “complementarian.” Furthermore, many complementarians now hold that woman submission is only required in church and family, and none would maintain that women are inferior in being, contrary to the church’s historical position.

To imply that a position is wrong because it coincides with cultural concerns is not persuasive. The slavery issue is a case in point, and the Copernican revolution is another. Many times, it is precisely the cultural milieu that forces the church to re-examine its interpretation and position.

2.2.2.10 Tendency to downplay situation and experience

There was an apparent tendency in pro-slavery to downplay the affliction of slaves. As an example, in responding to the question about the plight of slaves, Hopkins spends a chapter on the miserable condition of those in free England (Hopkins 1969: 284-300). Hopkins concludes that this “. . . is a perfect demonstration that millions of people, descended from the superior races of mankind, are in a worse condition, by far, in free England, than the negro slaves of the South, in their social habits, in their sense of morality and religion, and in every other element of human comfort” (Hopkins 1969: 301). Of course, this is beside the point and diverts attention elsewhere. In another occasion Hopkins regards the question, “How would you like to be a slave?” as a “very puerile interrogatory” (Hopkins 1969: 33).

That complementarians undercut experience may be shown in their general neglect of dealing with the persecution and maltreatment of women. For instance, there is no chapter in Piper and Grudem (1991c) on spousal abuse, although the problem is widespread in the church, and some men use biblical texts to justify their oppression, the same texts which the book uses to justify male headship. There is also no chapter examining and denying what the church has traditionally taught concerning the inferior status of women. Although it is easy to criticise what a book leaves out, given the importance that feminism places on the plight of women, it is an awkward silence and so fails to address what is a foundational concern in feminist thinking. As another example,

Kassian, although sympathetic to the plight of women, regards the focus on bad experience as “consciousness raising” — a parallel to Mao Tse-Tung’s approach to incite revolution (Kassian 1992: 61-65). Suffice to say that complementarians have not focused attention on the extensive persecution against women, such as the church’s terrible history of demeaning women.

2.2.2.11 Contrary argument leads to abandoning Christianity

It was argued by pro-slavery that the logical end of abolitionism would be a repudiation of Christianity (Dabney 1982a: 40-41). To support this claim, it was noted that there were ultra-abolitionists who rejected the Bible and departed from Christianity (Hopkins 1969: 333, 350), and that such ultra-abolitionists had called for an anti-slavery Bible and an anti-slavery God (Hopkins 1969: 48). Dabney refers to one person in particular who claimed that “his abolitionism is a prime moving cause with him to spurn Christianity” (Dabney 1982a: 41). Abolitionists were viewed by pro-slavery as attacking the core of Christianity (Thornwell 1974: 393) and departing from the supremacy and authority of Scripture (Thornwell 1974: 390). The logical end of this attack was believed to be a departure from Christianity. Similarly, complementarians argue that non-complementarians are on a path away from Scripture and Christianity (Kassian 1992: 225). To support this assertion it is also noted that that there are post-Christian feminists who have departed from Christianity (Kassian 1992: 227-33). Arising from the pro-slavery and complementarian belief in the clear import of certain texts, as well as the observation that the radical opposition has departed from Christianity, they classify the opposition as departing from Scripture and on a slippery slope to an outright abandonment of Christianity. The slavery issue, however, demonstrates that an abandoning of Christianity did not necessarily follow from an

abolitionist position, since most Christians are now abolitionist, even though some had claimed that their abolitionism led them to deny Christianity.

2.2.2.12 Denial of ordination

In arguing against the public preaching of women, Dabney relates women and slavery. He writes: “So the canons of the early church forbade slaves to be ordained until they had legally procured emancipation; and doubtless they were right in this rule. But in Christ there is ‘neither bond nor free.’ If, then, the equality of these classes in Christ did not imply their fitness for public office in the church, neither does the equality of females with males in Christ imply it” (Dabney 1982b: 100). As Dabney opposed the ordination of slaves (Smith 1972: 239-40), so complementarians also deny women ordination, a position established on the basis of 1 Tim 2:11-15 (Patterson 1991: 259).

2.2.2.13 Current situation to be abolished in glorification

Pro-slavery apologists were not in favour of perpetual bondage and desired that the institution be abolished (Hopkins 1969: 349). Furthermore, it was noted: “That the design of Christianity is to secure the perfection of the race is obvious from all its arrangements; and that, when this end shall have been consummated, Slavery must cease to exist is equally clear . . . In this sense Slavery is inconsistent with the spirit of the Gospel . . .” (Thornwell 1974: 419-20). It was acknowledged that slavery would be abolished in the consummation. Nevertheless, for Thornwell, this spirit of the gospel did not overturn these continuing established roles in a fallen world.

Along similar lines, Waltke argues: “It will not do to obscure the New Testament teaching about husband-headship by appealing to Galatians 3:28: ‘there is neither male nor female.’ While in the eschaton, of which we are already members, that is true, until the redemption of our bodies we still participate in the first creation with its distinction between the sexes” (Waltke 1995: 37). Schreiner also states: “Those who erase the distinction in roles between men and women in the present age are probably guilty of falling prey to a form of overrealized eschatology, for the creational order established with reference to men and women will be terminated in the coming age (cf. Matt. 22:30)” (Schreiner 1995: 138). Complementarians agree that in the eschaton, the present marriage and church structure will be abolished. Like slavery, male headship is removed in the new creation.

2.2.2.14 Conclusion

Numerous parallels exist between pro-slavery and complementarian argumentation. Their number and striking similarity are indicative that they are not coincidental. Furthermore, it is clear that these are not arbitrary parallels for some complementarians continue the pro-slavery argument and maintain that slavery is not intrinsically evil. Foh asks: “If slavery is wrong, why didn’t someone—Jesus or the apostles—say so? Instead of condemnation of slavery *per se*, in the New Testament we find the clear denunciation of the abuses resulting from and associated with slavery. A distinction should be made between the institution itself and the abuses associated with it; denunciation of the abuses related to slavery does not concern the legitimacy of slavery itself” (Foh 1980: 32). She continues:

In the case of slavery, deculturization or de-absolutizing the biblical culture is not the hermeneutic employed. Slavery is not commanded by God; it is only regulated by God. In that sense, its existence was never an absolute, whose abolition needed biblical justification. Nor was slavery an intrinsically evil institution tolerated by Paul because of

his own human limitations or cultural conditioning or because of his hesitancy to upset the social order. Slavery could be an acceptable state if Paul's injunctions were followed.

(Foh 1980: 35)

Oddie also adopts the pro-slavery argumentation. He writes:

Even the extreme case of the institution of slavery itself . . . can, in its concrete expression, actually cease to be demonic if master and slave now see their relationship in the light of Christ: the actual granting of freedom operating on the socio-political plane may then become almost irrelevant. St Paul, in sending back to his master Philemon the runaway slave Onesimus, now a Christian, sends him back 'for good, no longer as a slave, but as more than a slave—as a dear brother, very dear indeed to me and how much more to you, both as a man and as a Christian' (Phil. 15-16). But their earthly relationship of master and slave (surprisingly for our modern expectations) is, so far as we can see, to remain, not abolished but in a vital way made part of the divine order: slaves, says Paul elsewhere, should be obedient to their masters. . . ."

(Oddie 1984: 53-54)

This does not mean that Foh, Oddie, and others support 19th century forms of slavery. Our interest lies in the similar argumentation. Because of the number of parallels, the close similarity in argumentation, and the fact that some complementarians continue the pro-slavery argument demonstrate that the parallels between pro-slavery and complementarianism are not coincidental. The relevancy of these parallels remains to be examined.

2.2.3 Parallels Between Abolitionist and Non-Complementarian Argumentation

2.2.3.1 Expediency

Why did Paul not directly confront slavery and expose it as evil? Albert Barnes gives the reason as one of expediency. He argues that in a similar manner, the New Testament does not directly confront the civil government which in that time was extremely wicked (Barnes 1969: 289).

This argument from expediency is especially prevalent in biblical egalitarianism (as we have already examined), but also occurs in Christian feminism. Daly, before moving to a post-Christian position wrote: “The New Testament gave advice to women (and to slaves) which would help them to bear the subhuman (by today’s standards) conditions imposed upon them. It would be foolish to erect, on this basis, a picture of ‘immutable’ feminine qualities and virtues. Thus, although obedience was required of women and slaves, there is nothing about obedience which makes it intrinsically more appropriate for women than for men” (Daly 1968: 33). The argument from expediency claims that Paul’s commands for submission of slaves and women was to keep the peace. There would have been significant social upheaval, if Paul had directly undermined slavery and patriarchy. Therefore, Paul commands submission on the part of slaves and women to prevent destructive conflict, which would have arisen given that the institutions of slavery and patriarchy were so enmeshed in the culture.

2.2.3.2 Certain texts, when applied, abolish slavery / patriarchy

Abolitionists appealed to certain passages, which, they argued, if put into practice would abolish slavery. One of the preferred texts concerned kidnapping. Barnes attempted to demonstrate that the Mosaic law did not fundamentally approve of slavery, since it opposed kidnapping (Deut 24:7) and most slavery came through kidnapping (Barnes 1969: 118-22). Barnes believed that a rigid application of this law would abolish slavery. Importantly, for Barnes, Mosaic law secured many rights for slaves, and regulated it to make the institution more bearable. Similarly, when discussing Ephesians 6:5-9, Barnes argues that Paul expresses the relationship between master and slave in such a manner as to secure the abolition of slavery. Concerning Ephesians 5:9, he writes: “He [Paul] taught them [masters] their duty towards those who were under them, and laid down

principles which, if followed, would lead ultimately to universal freedom” (Barnes 1996: 122). Barnes argues that in expressing the relationship in this way, Paul transforms the internal relationship, a transformation that would in turn lead to emancipation. Therefore, wherever slavery exists, the command for slaves’ submission still applies as well as the corresponding command to masters’, which when put into practise will transform and eventually overturn slavery.

Non-complementarians adopt a similar line of argumentation. It is argued that passages such as Galatians 3:28 or Ephesians 5:21-33, if rigorously applied, will abolish patriarchy. A thorough application of Galatians 3:28 would lead to ecclesiastical equality, like what has been achieved for Gentiles and slaves. Similarly, Ephesians 5:21-33 correctly utilised would practically work out as an egalitarian marriage. The husband giving up his life would effectively abolish complementarianism.

There is, however, an important difference between abolitionist and non-complementarian argumentation. Whereas abolitionists sought to remove the institution of slavery, non-complementarians are addressing, for example, submission within the institution of marriage. In other words, regarding marriage non-complementarians are not seeking to abolish the institution, but striving for a transformation of the structure within the institution. They desire the abolishment of the institution of patriarchy, which is different from the actual institution of marriage. Abolitionists, however, attacked the actual institution of slavery as well as the structure within it.

2.2.3.3 Appeal to a historically relevant issue

As the male-female debate refers back to slavery, the slavery debate referred back to polygamy. Abolitionists argued that polygamy was allowed but actually sinful—like the issue of slavery. They argued that in the same way polygamy was declared to be sinful, although it was permitted and regulated, so to should slavery be proclaimed sinful. Defenders of slavery denied this association claiming that slavery was grounded in prophecy and divine law (Hopkins 1969: 229) whereas polygamy had no such sanction (Hopkins 1969: 231). In other words, pro-slavery viewed the institution of slavery as normative and polygamy as merely cultural. Similarly, complementarians view the institution of male headship as normative and slavery as cultural. As divine law, ordination, providence, and prophecy functioned to justify the morality of the institution of slavery, so the creation ordinance is used to justify male headship. Non-complementarians appeal to what complementarians do not advocate, namely slavery, and argue that they are inconsistent, that is, they should argue for slavery. Abolitionists appealed to what pro-slavery did not approve, namely polygamy, and maintained that they were inconsistent, that is, they should have argued for polygamy.

In response to these associations, pro-slavery and complementarians deny the correlation with polygamy and slavery respectively. Both claim that the connections are irrelevant, and that they are different issues—their position being permanently established, the other being only cultural. Contrary, however, to pro-slavery arguments that polygamy was only cultural, Barnes found legislation governing polygamy in Exodus 21:7-10 and Deuteronomy 21:15-16; 25:5-10 (Barnes 1969: 162-65). Abolitionists argued that polygamy was established in divine law and thus had a theological basis, like slavery. Similarly, non-complementarians argue that those who justify

headship should on the same basis justify slavery. They refer to texts, such as 1 Peter 2:18-21, which establishes slavery in the work of Christ (König 1993: 148). Therefore, slavery is also given theological underpinnings. Again, pro-slavery and complementarians dismiss the implications for slavery and marriage respectively, arguing that the Scriptures were merely regulating the structure within these institutions without approving of the institutions *per se*.

2.2.3.4 Emphasis on principles of equality, love, and freedom

Abolitionists appealed to three main principles: equality, love, and freedom. They argued that these principles formed the foundation of a transformation dynamic that works itself out in the course of history. Abolitionists appealed to the principle of equality, that all people are made in the image of God (Stewart 1976: 4, 62). They argued that all are created equal (Barnes 1969: 341-46) and have equal rights, such as the rights to property and marriage. All have a common nature (Acts 17:26), a nature that Christ took on, so that no one is by nature inferior (Barnes 1969: 345). They also appealed to the principle of love and argued that the golden rule and law of love “could not be reconciled with involuntary servitude” (Smith 1972: 134). Smith continues: “The abolitionists readily acknowledged that Jesus did not condemn slavery in so many words, but always insisted that he laid down general principles which could not be reconciled with involuntary servitude. Above all else, they pointed to the law of love (Matt. 22:39) and the golden rule (Matt. 7:12) as subversive of the bondage system” (Smith 1972: 134). Finally, abolitionists appealed to the principle of freedom. In Scripture, they found the principle of seven-year release, jubilee, freedom for the oppressed (Isaiah 58:6) (Barnes 1969: 220), deliverance to the captives (Dumond 1959: 48-49), and Paul’s message of freedom. Paramount was the deliverance from

slavery in Egypt, which is a paradigm of what God does and how much he hates slavery (Barnes 1969: 102-03).

It is these three principles that form the basis of a transformation dynamic that brings changes through gradual development. Barnes writes: “It is in this way that God has in fact removed most of the evils of the world by a *gradual* development of principles which strike on great wrongs existing in society, thus preparing the world for the higher development of his will; and it is in this way that wise *men* commonly approach a deep-rooted evil” (Barnes 1969: 288). He continues: “There are certain things, in accordance with this view, which are evil and wrong, but which require patient *instruction* and much *discussion of principles* before the wrong will be perceived, and where, if denunciation be employed instead of argument, the whole object will be defeated” (Barnes 1969: 294). Barnes concludes: “*The principles laid down by the Saviour and his Apostles are such as are opposed to Slavery, and if carried out would secure its universal abolition*” (Barnes 1969: 340).

Non-complementarians find a direct correlation between their concerns and these abolitionist arguments from principles and a transformation dynamic. Endeavouring to further their arguments, non-complementarians note the similarities between their position and abolitionism. They note the similar argument from transformation. The Boldreys’ write: “He [Paul] set in motion a Christianizing process that culminated in the early-nineteenth-century abolition of slavery in England, brought about primarily by the efforts of one Christian member of Parliament—William Wilberforce” (Boldrey & Boldrey 1976: 48). The Boldreys’ view this as parallel to their argument for a transformation of patriarchy. Similarly, Mollenkott, in substantiating her view, appeals to the slavery issue. She writes: “On the subject of slavery, as on

the subject of monarchy, we have de-absolutized the biblical culture. We all agree that one can be a biblical Christian without believing in slavery: in fact, most of us, even traditionalists, would go further and say that enslaving other people is a practice *antithetical* to genuine Christianity” (Mollenkott 1976: 20). As a final example, Ruether regards her position of emphasizing the liberating prophetic tradition as similar to abolitionist reasoning. She writes:

Christian churches in the 19th century pushed to the side texts that justified slavery. They brought to the centre the texts that present redemption in the root meaning of liberation from slavery. They did this in order to reject the church’s long historical tradition of justifying slavery as an institution and to champion the abolition of slavery, when it became evident to the 19th century conscience that this was the right thing to do. Today no Christian church would cite these texts justifying slavery as normative, though they remain in Scripture.

(Ruether 1990: 396)

Similar to abolitionists, non-complementarians place primary importance on the principles of equality, love, and freedom. Kevin Giles writes: “In regard to slavery and the subordination of women the truth of the matter is that while the Bible supports both at one level, at another level there is a critique of both these oppressive structures. There are within Scripture great principles laid down clearly, for those with eyes to see, which point beyond the advice given to particular people at particular times on these matters” (Giles 1994: 16). It is argued that the spirit and principles are opposed to the institution of patriarchy, but it is only in the course of history that the outworking of these principles finds expression. Non-complementarians conclude that the principles must receive priority. Willard Swartley argues that “abolitionist writers gave priority to theological principles and basic moral imperatives, which in turn put slavery under moral judgement. The point we should learn from this is that theological principles and basic moral imperatives should be primary biblical resources for addressing social issues today” (Swartley 1983: 61). Of course, there cannot be a dichotomy between biblical principles and specific texts. The two are not opposed to one another, since biblical principles are founded on specific texts.

Principles also influence our interpretation of specific texts and vice versa. Furthermore, in the slavery debate abolitionists did appeal to many specific texts, such as not oppressing people (Barnes 1969: 357) or paying people for their work. The point, however, is noted that pro-slavery and abolitionism *stressed* a particular approach. With similar correlation today, complementarians tend to focus on specific texts, while non-complementarians focus on theological and moral principles and their application.

2.2.3.5 Ultra-abolitionism and post-Christian feminism

In both the slavery and male-female debate, there was a radical element—ultra-abolitionist and post-Christian feminist respectively—which departed from Christianity. In each case, the radical element generally agreed with the respective pro-slavery and complementarian argumentation—that the Bible supports the institution of slavery and patriarchy. Pro-slavery argumentation led some to reject Christianity. There were a few who, in leaving Christianity, agreed with slavery defenders that the Bible was pro-slavery. Similarly, post-Christian feminists agree with complementarian argumentation that the Bible does teach and legislate patriarchy, and therefore they reject Christianity.

2.2.3.6 Conclusion

The parallels between abolitionist and non-complementarian argumentation are clear. They were clear to women of the nineteenth century who saw the connection between the abolitionist position and their concerns (Hampson 1996a: 3). Non-complementarians also agree that these parallels exist between themselves and abolitionism.

2.2.4 Relevancy of Slavery Issue

2.2.4.1 Areas that Apply

Complementarians maintain that the associations with slavery are irrelevant. Piper and Grudem write: “Therefore, while it is true that some slave owners in the nineteenth century argued in ways parallel with our defense of distinct roles in marriage, the parallel was superficial and misguided” (Piper & Grudem 1991b: 66). Complementarians argue that these similarities are interesting but are ultimately inconsequential, because slavery and male headship are two separate issues. Post-Christian feminists also agree that the analogy to slavery is largely irrelevant. The parallels, however, are relevant in a number of areas.

2.2.4.1.a Parallel arguments are unconvincing

The parallel arguments of pro-slavery and complementarianism demonstrate that some complementarian arguments are unconvincing. Since the church now regards slavery as morally incompatible with the gospel, some of the arguments used to defend slavery, and their corresponding parallels with complementarianism, are to be treated with caution. As we have seen, the arguments, for example, from universality, historical precedent, or need for protection, carry little weight. The issue of slavery is relevant in that it helps establish the relative importance and validity of various arguments. In addition, it helps to disclose particular lines of reasoning and certain emphases.

2.2.4.1.b Change of hermeneutic

How do complementarians argue that the institution of slavery is immoral? Piper and Grudem write:

The preservation of marriage is not parallel with the preservation of slavery. The existence of slavery is not rooted in any creation ordinance, but the existence of marriage is. Paul's regulations for how slaves and masters related to each other do not assume the goodness of the institution of slavery. Rather, seeds for slavery's dissolution were sown in Philemon 16 ('no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother'), Ephesians 6:9 ('Masters...do not threaten [your slaves]'), Colossians 4:1 ('Masters, provide your slaves what is right and fair'), and 1 Timothy 6:1-2 (masters are 'brothers'). Where these seeds of equality came to full flower, the very institution of slavery would not longer be slavery.

(Piper & Grudem 1991b: 65)

Significantly, many of the passages quoted above were used by pro-slavery apologists to justify the institution of slavery, that slavery was legitimate provided slaves were treated humanely. The argument of Piper and Grudem, however, depends on the "seeds of equality," a decidedly abolitionist approach! Similarly, in comparing slavery and marriage, Edmund Clowney writes:

Why, then, does not the loving submission of the wife and the sacrificial love of the husband subvert the structure of authority in the marriage relationship? Because slavery is an enforced relationship that is altered in its *essence* by mutual love, while marriage is itself a relationship of love ('one body'), a relationship brought by grace to fulfil God's design in the roles appointed by his creation

(Clowney 1995: 228)

In addition, Dorothy Patterson writes:

[S]ome have tried to suggest that slavery was accepted and uncondemned and thus embraced by the writers of the Old and New Testaments, even though it was never affirmed or encouraged, and they assert that the emancipation of slaves was the product of the secular liberal establishment. Yet one must look beyond the instructions given to believers for bearing the burdens of a cultural setting with Christlike responses to the more fundamental ethical principles found in Scripture. These biblical principles, though not explicitly applied to slavery, if generally acknowledged and appropriated, must eventually lead to its abolition.

(Patterson 1997: 60)

Pro-slavery did view slavery as firmly established in divine providence, prophecy, order, and law, and therefore not undermined by principles of love, equality, or freedom. Similarly, complementarians view male headship as firmly established in creation, also not undermined by various principles. Nevertheless, in rejecting slavery, complementarians use abolitionist reasoning such as principles of equality and love to argue why slavery is wrong. Clowney, while defending complementarianism and denying that the principle of love destroys male headship, argues that the principle does destroy slavery. Likewise, Patterson, from a complementarian position, argues that there are foundational ethical principles that abolish slavery. This leads to an intriguing point: we have noted the numerous parallels in argumentation between pro-slavery and complementarianism, yet in rejecting slavery as a moral institution, complementarians use *abolitionist* reasoning to explain why slavery should no longer continue. Most complementarians reject slavery, but the hermeneutic employed to repudiate slavery is along the lines of principles and not specific texts, which is opposite to their general approach to the headship issue. It appears that they can only maintain slavery as immoral by an appeal to general principles—an approach that would have been dismissed by pro-slavery apologists. Given the parallels, a more consistent argument would maintain that slavery, as an institution, was moral because of the specific commands and no denunciation. In other words, if complementarians applied the same line of argumentation to slavery as they do to headship, they would support slavery. Yet, since they generally condemn slavery, it demonstrates that complementarians cannot *per se* denounce a hermeneutical approach that focuses on principles.

2.2.4.1.c Theological underpinnings of the institution of slavery

Defenders of slavery dismissed the polygamy analogy as irrelevant and argued that polygamy was merely cultural and only regulated by God. Likewise, complementarians treat the slavery analogy as irrelevant, and argue that slavery was merely cultural and only regulated by God. They argue that while the institution was not approved, the structure within in the institution was regulated. Is slavery, as an institution, given a theological basis? Complementarians endeavour to demonstrate that slavery was only cultural because the New Testament only establishes slaves' submission and not the institution. They maintain that slavery was not established in creation and neither was there a "permanent moral command" associated with slavery (Knight 1991: 177). Pro-slavery apologists certainly did not view slavery in this manner. As we have seen, defenders of slavery had amassed compelling arguments for the establishment of slavery. So convinced, they argued that their opponents were departing from Scripture and giving into cultural pressure. Contrary to Knight's claim, pro-slavery even found support for their position in the first table of the moral law (Ex 20:10, 17; Deut 5:14) (Smith 1972: 196; Hopkins 1969: 8).

In fairness to the pro-slavery position, the New Testament commanded slaves' submission and made no comment about the morality of the institution. It connected slavery with theological principles, such as the calling of God and work of Christ (1 Peter 2:18-21). Significantly, slavery is applied to the divine names (Col 4:1; Eph 6:9; 2 Tim 2:21) where God is referred to as "Master." In addition, in their relationship to God, Christians are referred to as "slaves to righteousness" (Rom 6:18), "slaves to God" (Rom 6:22), and "Christ's slaves" (1 Cor 7:22; cf., Col 4:12). Paul regularly referred to himself as a slave (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Titus 1:1). And following Paul's example, in their relationship to one another, Christians are urged to become slaves to other people (1 Cor 9:19).

The above provides a theological basis for the institution of slavery. It is special pleading to claim that this only applies to the regulation of slavery and not the institution—a distinction the New Testament does not make.

Slavery is cultural, but it is given theological underpinnings while that cultural situation continues. If this is correct, it demonstrates that some issues, though cultural, are established theologically. As slavery continued, the theological basis might have appeared to legitimise and permanently establish the institution of slavery, yet principles of equality, love, and freedom eventually brought liberation. Slavery was demonstrated to be only cultural on the basis of an appeal to principles, and not by dichotomising the institution and the structure within it. This partly explains why an impasse was reached between pro-slavery and abolitionism, and why it is difficult to determine what is only cultural. Both positions had powerful arguments and strong theological positions, the one appealing to the theological basis, the other to general principles. Thus, it is understandable that a few complementarians argue for the morality of the institution of slavery. The error of pro-slavery, however, was to use the theological basis to permanently establish the institution.

2.2.4.1.d Gospel challenge

As the Bible challenged the evil within slavery, that same challenge comes to marriage. J.B. Blue writes: “Rather than attack the system of slavery, the Bible attacks the sins in slavery—the sins of brutality, disrespect, and mistreatment on the part of the owner and the sins of hatred, dishonor, and indolence on the part of the slave.” Similarly, even though it is debated whether patriarchy is evil, the Scriptures clearly denounce the sins that can occur within marriage, such as abuse (physical or emotional), hatred, anger, disrespect, oppression, unkindness, impatience, or placing

one's desires first. The slavery debate is relevant in that it draws attention to the sins within marriage, and at least exposes those who use headship to justify any of the above sins—a point all positions agree with.

2.2.4.2 Areas that do not Apply

Non-complementarians argue that their concerns are similar to the slavery debate. There, are however, areas that do not correspond. There are exceptions to the parallels between abolitionism and non-complementarianism.

2.2.4.2.a The abiding institution and virtue of marriage

Abolitionists fought to abolish the institution of slavery, and in doing so portrayed slavery as always a sin apart from its abuses (Dumond 1959: 40). The institutions of slavery and marriage are dissimilar in that marriage continues as an abiding and good institution established by God in creation, whereas slavery arose in a fallen world. We are dealing with separate issues inasmuch that abolitionists were working for a removal of an institution whereas non-complementarians are working for change within a remaining institution. In the case of marriage, non-complementarians are not dealing with an immoral institution that has to be removed, rather a moral institution established in creation, which they desire to transform. Moreover, at least some abolitionists saw a fundamental difference between slave-free and male-female relationships. Whereas pro-slavery saw the slave-free relationship as inviolable as the relationships between husband and wife, and child and parent, abolitionists saw a differentiation. Barnes writes: “But it is not *true* that in any sense the apostles ‘legislated’ for slavery as they did for the relation of husband

and wife, and parent and child. It is not true that they ever represented those relations as parallel, or as equally desirable and acceptable to God” (Barnes 1969: 276). Barnes, in fact, was complementarian regarding the marriage relationship.¹⁵

Related to the marriage institution are the abiding distinctions between male and female, in contrast to the revocable differences between slave and free. There are permanent distinctions between men and women that arise out of creation, contrary to slave-free distinctions. Any absolute correspondence between the two issues cannot be maintained. Since marriage is an abiding institution, the slavery issue is irrelevant in that it cannot answer whether there is a complementarian structure established at creation, and if so, may it be transformed?

2.2.4.2.b Foundational feminist concerns

Post-Christian feminists, like complementarians, maintain that the slavery debate is mostly irrelevant. Hampson writes:

In the nineteenth century the bible could be quoted to justify a use of slaves, provided humane. Now no one would do that. Indeed the principle of racial equality is increasingly coming to be recognized by everyone except a tiny minority in the Christian church. What is so different about the case of women?

But the challenge of feminism is not simply that women wish to gain an equal place with men in what is essentially a religion which is biased against them. The challenge of feminism is that women may want to express their understanding of God within a different thought structure

(Hampson 1990: 3-4)

¹⁵ See, for example, Barnes’ commentary on Ephesians 5:22-33 where he adopts an “equal but subordinate” position (Barnes 1996: 108-15).

Hampson regards the slavery issue as relevant in a limited way, namely illustrating transformation by the principle of equality. The slavery issue for Hampson, however, is generally dissimilar and more of an external change (Hampson 1996a: 54). Post-Christian feminists believe that patriarchy is more embedded in Christianity even to the extent of the divine names, while slavery does not have this entrenched imagery. The supreme images are patriarchal and not in terms of slavery. Given post-Christian feminist thinking on the power and influence of symbols, it is not unexpected that they view slavery as more external. Even though Christianity has reinterpreted itself regarding slavery, this is tangential to the main concerns of post-Christian feminists.

Contrary to post-Christian feminist claims, we have noted that slavery imagery is applied to God and ourselves. There is significant slavery imagery applied to God, our relationship to him, and our relationship to other people. Consistency demands that post-Christian feminists also take account of the power and influence of these images. Nevertheless, it is still granted that feminist concerns are more foundational, and that patriarchal imagery is more extensive and embedded than slavery.

2.2.5 Conclusion

McPherson writes: "By 1860, however, the Bible argument was pretty well played out. Thirty years of controversy had only shown that the Bible could be quoted effectively on both sides of the slavery issue" (McPherson 1964: 136). Similarly, Swartley states: "In the slavery debate, both sides used the whole Bible remarkably well, and the *whole* Bible was perceived to support opposing positions!" (Swartley 1983: 60). Both positions used the biblical material in a comprehensive and persuasive manner to support their position. Scripture was used extensively and with integrity on

both sides. It was difficult to disprove either position. No consensus was reached, not only because of differing hermeneutical approaches, but also because of underlying presuppositions such as the superiority of one race over another.

In the slavery debate, we observed the relative strengths of each position. The strength of pro-slavery was the grounding of the institution in divine law, ordination, prophecy, and providence. Likewise, the strength of the complementarian position is the grounding of headship in creation. In contrast, the strength of abolitionists was their focus on the implications of the image of God (equality), love, and freedom. Similarly, non-complementarians' strongest arguments lie in the principles of equality, love, and freedom—principles that form the foundation of a transformation dynamic. The strength of the one is the weakness of the other. There are also differing emphases: while pro-slavery and complementarians stress the normative, abolitionist and non-complementarian focus on the situational and existential¹⁶.

What about these differing approaches? Is one superior to the other? Clearly, the abolitionist reasoning won the day—argumentation that even complementarians use today. The slavery and male-female debates, however, have their differences. The issue of slavery, although relevant, does not entirely solve our problem. Patriarchal metaphors are more deeply embedded into Christianity. Marriage, unlike slavery, is declared by God to be good, and is established in creation. This leads us to a discussion concerning the Sabbath, considered by many as another creation ordinance.

¹⁶ For the categories of “normative,” “situational,” and “existential,” I am indebted to Frame (1987: 73-75, 89-90).

2.3 Sabbath and Lord's Day

2.3.1 Introduction

The debate concerning the Sabbath demonstrates, like slavery, the difficulty in determining what has continuing normative force. It illustrates the significant problem of ascertaining what is provisional and what is permanent¹⁷. Does the Sabbath continue? What change, if any, has come to the Sabbath through the new covenant? Is the Sabbath a creation ordinance, and if so, may it be transformed or abolished? What is the relationship of the Sabbath to the Lord's Day? There is by no means agreement on these questions. Such disagreements are understandable, since the Sabbath debate revolves around complex theological issues, such as the relationship between the old and new covenants, the relationship between creation and redemption, and the role of law in the New Testament. The topic is relevant for us in that there are parallels between gender and Sabbath. The Sabbath and male-female distinctions are founded together in Genesis 1-2. Furthermore, many complementarians regard the Sabbath, like marriage and male headship, as a creation ordinance. Thus, similar to the male-female controversy, the Sabbath discussion ultimately traces back to creation, and the question whether there is a divinely established permanent structure. In assessing the relevance of the Sabbath for our problem, we will outline the major views and conclude with an analysis.

¹⁷ These helpful categories, I owe to Douma (1996: 141).

2.3.2 Seventh-Day

The seventh-day position secures the permanence of the Sabbath on the grounds of creation, moral law, and covenant. First, they argue that the creation account establishes a perpetual order to the Sabbath (Bacchiocchi 1988: 34). The Sabbath continues because it is tied to creation (Andreason 1942: 236) and identified with the seventh day in Genesis (Andreason 1942: 53). At creation, it is this seventh day that was blessed and sanctified (Andreason 1942: 56-57). M. L. Andreason writes: “Three passages associate the Sabbath with the divine rest accomplished at the completion of creation. They are Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:11; 31:17” (Andreason 1972: 174). Concerning Exodus 20:9-11, Niels-Erik Andreason writes:

The purpose of the creation Sabbath theme here is to provide a reason for the Sabbath regulation in verses 9-10, and not as in Gen. 2:1-3 to bring the creation account to a specific conclusion. Whereas Gen. 2:1-3 refers only to the seventh day on which all the creation was completed and all creative activity stopped, with no mention of the previous six-day period, Ex. 20:11 contrasts the six days of creative activity with the seventh day of rest. The main point of Ex. 20:11 is clearly to draw this distinction, for that is the whole argument of the commandment, namely, that verse 11 is parallel to and provides an analogy to the same distinction in verses 9-10.

(Andreason 1972: 199)

In other words, there is an analogy between the fourth commandment and the creation ordinance. The law, including “seventh-day,” ultimately goes back to creation and the divine example. Since the Sabbath is founded in creation, it is not merely limited to Israel or to a particular time. The position maintains that what was established at creation by divine example may not be modified, except by clear precept. As there is no command revoking the Sabbath, it continues in this present age. Hebrews 4:1-11 confirms this continuation while also grounding the Sabbath in creation (Bacchiocchi 1988: 42). There *still remains* a Sabbath rest for the people of God; that is, the Sabbath is not provisional.

Secondly, the Sabbath is permanently established in the moral law—law that is a manifestation of the character of God. This moral law is abiding, holy, and spiritual. It is inconceivable that the Ten Commandments are abolished in the new covenant (Andreason 1942: 148). So to change from Sabbath to Sunday is to modify this law. It is argued that such an alteration warrants clear teaching, of which there is none in the New Testament. Something as significant as a modification in the moral law requires a clear injunction. Yet, even Jesus' attitude towards the Sabbath demonstrates that "the question was not Should the Sabbath be kept? Rather, it was How should the Sabbath be kept?" (Specht 1982a: 94) Therefore, seventh-day adherents criticise those who use the fourth commandment to justify Sunday observance. Samuele Bacchiocchi asks: "How can the fourth commandment . . . be legitimately applied to Sunday, when it is the seventh and not the first day that the commandment demands to keep holy?" (Bacchiocchi 1977) It is explicit that the position argues for an absolute application of the moral law, the law that was never revoked, and that continues even beyond the ordinance of marriage (Isa 66:22-23).

Thirdly, the Sabbath is based on the eternal covenant. Gerhard Hasel explains:

Retrospectively, the Sabbath looks back. As a sign of remembrance the Sabbath memorializes God as Creator and His creation as undisturbed by sin (Gen. 2:2, 3; Ex. 20:8, 11; 31:17). Prospectively, the Sabbath, as a sign of an 'everlasting covenant' (Ex. 31:16) in which God bound Himself to His covenant people and they accepted the obligation of celebrating the Sabbath, contains an 'emphatic promise' for all generations. As covenant sign and rooted in Creation, the Sabbath makes possible redemptive history, i.e., covenant history that moves forward to its ultimate goal.

(Hasel 1982: 36)

He continues: "The Sabbath is a covenant sign through which God has pledged that the present proleptic experience of freedom, liberation, joy, and communion on the weekly Sabbath is but a foretaste of the ultimate reality in the glorious future" (Hasel 1982: 37).

Given this foundation of the Sabbath in creation, moral law, and covenant, seventh-day advocates find fault with various Sunday positions, especially those that stress the creation ordinance and moral law. For instance, Hans LaRondelle criticises John Murray for holding to the Sabbath as a divinely instituted creation ordinance and not placing the fourth commandment in a different category, and yet still claiming that there is a transfer from Sabbath to Lord's Day (LaRondelle 1982: 285). He believes that this position, like other Lord's Day theologies, ends with a "un-Biblical dichotomy between the work of the Creator and the work of the Redeemer, the Re-Creator" (LaRondelle 1982: 293).

How does the seventh-day position respond to apparently contrary New Testament passages? They find no New Testament passage abrogating the Sabbath. Some examples will illustrate their interpretation. For example, they maintain that the gathering at Troas (Acts 20:7-12) was at night and a farewell gathering for Paul (Specht 1982b: 123-24). It was a special meeting (Andreason 1942: 169-70), and besides, Paul met many more times on the Sabbath (Andreason 1942: 171). In Romans 14: 5-6, Paul is not referring to the Sabbath but various ceremonial days, possibly fast days (Dederen 1982: 335-36). Moreover, Paul, who upheld the moral law, would hardly be referring to the fourth commandment as abrogated. Likewise, in Colossians 2:16-17, Paul once again is referring to festival days and ceremonial Sabbaths (Wood 1982: 338-41). 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is not describing a church service (Andreason 1942: 173-74), and the collection was to *privately* put aside money (Specht 1982b: 124-25). Finally, to argue that John is referring to Sunday in Revelation 1:10 is reading back the Patristic usage into the text (LaRondelle 1982: 288-89; Specht 1982a: 126).

They also find it telling that the Sabbath is not mentioned as a controversy at the Jerusalem council. Walter Specht writes: “It is significant that the matter of Sabbathkeeping is not mentioned as an issue at this conference. Had there been a movement on foot to do away with the Sabbath or to change the day of worship to Sunday, there would no doubt have been considerable debate and bitter contention on the part of the large number of Jewish Christians who were “zealous for the law” (chap. 21:20)” (Specht 1982a: 111). If Paul had taught an abrogation of the Sabbath, it would have surely caused difficulties for many in the church. The absence of any mention of conflict over the Sabbath indicates that it continued to be observed.

Bacchiocchi concludes:

The adoption of Sunday observance in place of the Sabbath occurred, not in the Jerusalem Church by apostolic authority to commemorate Christ’s resurrection, but rather in the Church of Rome during the early part of the second century, solicited by external circumstances. . . .

The difference then between the seventh-day Sabbath and Sunday is not merely one of names or numbers. It is rather a difference of authority, meaning, and experience. It is the difference between a *man-made holiday* and *God’s established Holy Day*.

(Bacchiocchi 1995: 60)

2.3.3 Sunday-Sabbath

The Sunday-Sabbath position adopts similar argumentation to seventh-day. The difference of position primarily occurs in the transfer from seventh to first day. In arguing for the observance of the Sabbath, Murray states that the Sabbath is grounded in: (1) the creation ordinance, (2) the divine example, (3) the Decalogue, and (4) the example of Christ who did not abrogate the Sabbath, and confirmed that the Sabbath was made for man (Murray 1957: 30-35; 1976: 206-08). For Murray, the creation ordinance and moral law have not become obsolete. He writes: “In a

word, sin does not abrogate creation ordinances and redemption does not make superfluous their obligation and fulfilment” (Murray 1976: 206). This position, however, disagrees with the seventh-day conclusion. Murray continues to argue for Sunday observance based on the greater work of redemption accomplished in the resurrection (Murray 1976: 216). He concludes:

Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week (cf. Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). For our present interest the important feature of the New Testament witness is that the first day of the week continued to have *distinctive religious significance* (cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). The only explanation of this fact is that the first day was the day of Jesus’ resurrection and for that reason John calls it ‘the Lord’s day’ (Rev. 1:10).

(Murray 1976: 221)

Similarly, Greg Bahnsen, following Murray, affirms that the Sabbath is permanently established in a creation ordinance and the moral law (Bahnsen 1984: 228-30). In view of its abiding validity in creation and moral law, all people are required to observe the Sabbath. In the new covenant, neither Jesus nor the New Testament writers rescinded this institution. Jesus only removed the legalistic interpretations of the Sabbath. In answering why the Sabbath is changed to Sunday, Bahnsen states that “the New Testament does distinguish the *first* day of the week from the other six (1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 20:7) and denominates it ‘the Lord’s Day’ (Rev. 1:20)” (Bahnsen 1984: 230).

The Sunday-Sabbath position permanently establishes the Sabbath in creation and moral law (Beckwith & Stott 1978: 13-14, 44-45). The moral law not only bases the Sabbath command in creation (Ex 20:8-11) but also in redemption (Deut 5: 12-15). As such, the Sabbath continues in the present age, and points towards a fulfilment in the eschaton—a Sabbath rest for the people of God (Heb 4:9-11). Since this rest is still a future reality, the sign remains (Beckwith & Stott 1978: 12). There is, however, a change of day recorded in the New Testament where Christians met on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 16:2). There is a transition, based on the resurrection, from Sabbath to Lord’s Day; however, the principle in creation and the moral law still remains.

The change of day in the new covenant is essentially a ceremonial change (Beckwith & Stott 1978: 44). More importantly, the Sunday-Sabbath focuses on the new creation and the greater redemption through Christ's work (Beckwith & Stott 1978: 44). Thus, from a somewhat modified Sunday-Sabbath position, J. Douma, while agreeing with much of Bacchiocchi's thesis, disagrees with his claim that the "shadows" are maintained, when we now have the substance who is Christ (Douma 1996: 137). Although agreeing in much argumentation, the Sunday-Sabbath position criticises seventh-day adherents for not taking sufficient account of the shadows, the flow of redemptive history, and the Spirit who leads into all truth (Douma 1996: 138).

2.3.4 Lord's Day

2.3.4.1 Transformation from Sabbath

This position adopts a "transference of the Sabbath" (Coetzee 1995: 74) approach, an approach that attempts to find middle ground between the continuity and discontinuity of the old and new covenants (Coetzee 1995: 74). Jewett comprehensively argues for this position. He attempts to secure a midpoint between the rejection of the Sabbath by the Reformers, and the general acceptance of the Sabbath by the Puritans. On the one hand, Jewett disagrees with the Reformers (Jewett 1971: 100-05) arguing that the Sabbath command is related to the Lord's Day. He writes: "By making the Sabbath commandment merely a type and shadow, by reducing the Lord's Day to an expedient custom, the Reformers, we contend, erred on the side of Marcion; they failed to do justice to the church's inheritance in Israel" (Jewett 1971: 105). On the other hand, Jewett believes that the seventh-day position commits the opposite error of doing injustice to the discontinuity between the covenants (Jewett 1971: 107). Jewett also distances himself from the puritan insistence

“on the perpetuity of the fourth commandment” (Jewett 1971: 117). He believes that the Sunday-Sabbath position cannot be rigorously sustained, for it is clear that the fourth commandment specifies the seventh-day.

For Jewett, the Sabbath has been transformed in the new covenant by the resurrection. He finds continuity and discontinuity between the Sabbath and Sunday. There is a change of day, but like the Sabbath, Sunday is one of rest. Commenting on Hebrews 3:7-4:11, Jewett argues that, similar to the old covenant church, we also have our day of rest as a sign of our present rest in Christ and also our future final rest (Jewett 1971: 83-84). There is continuity between Sabbath and Sunday since the rest still remains (Jewett 1971: 152, 164), therefore we cannot split the Sabbath entirely from the Lord’s Day (Jewett 1971: 92). Jewett writes: “*Christians, therefore, are both free from the Sabbath to gather on the first day, and yet stand under the sign of the Sabbath in that they gather every seventh day*” (Jewett 1971: 82).

2.3.4.2 Non-transformation from Sabbath

A non-transformation position holds that the Lord’s Day cannot be identified with the Sabbath. It argues that there is no abiding creation ordinance that binds all people to Sabbath observance. Moreover, when we come to the New Testament, there is no mention of Jesus resting on the Sabbath, and no mention of the fourth commandment applying to Christians (König 1995: 88). The position claims that the New Testament makes no distinction between moral and ceremonial law, and that Paul did not regard the fourth commandment to be binding on Christians (de Lacey 1982: 173, 180-84). So, “where meetings of Christians are related to a specific day, it is without

exception to the first day of the week” (König 1995: 89; also, König 1964: 29-36). There is a day set apart for the church. D. A. Carson articulates a non-transformation Lord’s Day position:

First, we are not persuaded that the New Testament unambiguously develops a ‘transfer theology,’ according to which the Sabbath moves from the seventh day to the first day of the week. We are not persuaded that Sabbath keeping is presented in the Old Testament as the norm from the time of creation onward. . . . We are also not persuaded that Sunday observance arose only in the second century A.D. We think, however, that although Sunday worship arose in New Testament times, it was not perceived as a Christian *Sabbath*.

(Carson 1982b: 16)

This position regards the Sabbath as a unique sign for Israel. Harold Dressler writes: “The biblical evidence is that the Sabbath was inaugurated for the people of Israel to be celebrated as a weekly sign of the covenant. The Sabbath is not viewed as a universal ordinance for all mankind but as a specific institution for Israel. As a sign of the covenant it was to last as long as that covenant” (Dressler 1982: 34). It is affirmed that the Sabbath, belonging to Israel’s covenant, was abolished by Paul in the new covenant. In the New Testament Paul teaches the abrogation of the Mosaic Sabbath, which was a shadow of what has come in Christ. Referring to Colossians 2:16-17, A. T. Lincoln writes: “That Paul without any qualification can relegate Sabbaths to shadows certainly indicates that he does not see them as binding and makes it extremely unlikely that he could have seen the Christian first day as a continuation of the Sabbath” (Lincoln 1982a: 368). In this regard, it is noted that Bacchiocchi “fails to explain why the Sabbath alone of these shadows should abide in the era of the new covenant” (de Lacey 1982: 195 n166). Again, in Galatians 4:10: “Paul viewed any attempt to impose Sabbath keeping . . . upon Gentiles as wrong, and any tendency on the part of converts to submit to this coercion as a retrograde step” (de Lacey 1982: 181). Finally, in Romans 14:5, Paul affirms that the keeping of various days (including Sabbath) is a matter of conscience, over which no one may pass judgement (de Lacey 1982: 182-83). Thus D. R. de Lacy

finds it hard to accept that Sunday be identified as the Sunday-Sabbath, since Paul allowed the continued observance of the Sabbath (de Lacey 1982: 185).

What about Hebrews 3:7 - 4:11? The non-transformation position regards this passage as not speaking of resting on a weekly Sabbath or Sunday but believing the gospel, by which we enter that rest (König 1995: 90; Lincoln 1982b: 215). It is claimed that Hebrews 3:7-4:11 does not have Sunday in view, and “if any literal day of rest is presupposed by the passage then it would certainly be the Jewish Sabbath rather the first day of the week” (Lincoln 1982b: 214). Even this assumption, however, is doubtful since the writer of Hebrews stresses a radical break with the old covenant (Lincoln 1982b: 214). So this rest is fulfilled in Christ. By believing the gospel, we receive that rest, and will enter his rest in the future. The first day becomes a day of celebration of Christ’s work, and not a day of rest. It is essentially a new day, and not a change of day. Overall, there is no transference in New Testament theology between Sabbath and Lord’s Day (Lincoln 1982b: 216), and no direct relationship between Sabbath and Sunday.

2.3.5 No-Day

Historically, the Reformers held the position that considers all days alike and holy. They believed that the church should meet on a particular day for expediency (Jewett 1971: 100-06). Calvin’s position provides a representation of this view. Calvin regarded the Sabbath as a foreshadow of spiritual rest (Calvin 1960: 395). New Testament passages such as Colossians 2:17, Galatians 4:10-11, and Romans 14:5 clearly teach for Calvin that the Sabbath was a shadow and is now abolished (Calvin 1960: 399). The Lord’s Day, although not mandated, is to be kept for good order in the church (Calvin 1960: 399). Calvin writes: “For because it was expedient to overthrow superstition,

the day sacred to the Jews was set aside; because it was necessary to maintain decorum, order, and peace in the church, another was appointed for that purpose” (Calvin 1960: 399). Although the Sabbath was abrogated, Calvin maintains that it is still expedient to assemble on certain days. The church may observe a different day or sequence, although we should meet at least once a week¹⁸ (Douma 1996: 124). Calvin concludes:

To sum up: as truth was delivered to the Jews under a figure, so is it set before us without shadows. First, we are to meditate throughout life upon an everlasting Sabbath rest from all our works, that the Lord may work in us through his Spirit. Secondly, each of us privately, whenever he has leisure, is to exercise himself diligently in pious meditation upon God’s works. Also, we should all observe together the lawful order set by the church for the hearing of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and for public prayers. In the third place, we should not inhumanly oppress those subject to us.

(Calvin 1960: 400)

Importantly, although Calvin held that Christians are not required to observe the Lord’s Day, he still argued for a Sabbath creation ordinance. Commenting on Genesis 2:2-3, Calvin writes: “First, therefore, God rested; then he blessed this rest, that in all ages it might be held sacred among men: or he dedicated every seventh day to rest, that his own example might be a perpetual rule” (Calvin 1993: 106). It is pertinent to observe that one can affirm a Sabbath creation ordinance, and yet argue for a “no day” position, as in the case of Calvin. The reason is because, even though one may hold to a Sabbath creation ordinance, there can be differences regarding what principle in that ordinance is carried through. Richard Gaffin notes that for Calvin, the principle in creation that remains is not one of a specific day, but one of resting from sin (Gaffin 1962: 54). It was possible for Calvin to hold a “no day” position and still hold to a creation ordinance, since the principle of resting from our works is retained.

¹⁸ Douma corrects a misconception that claims Calvin allowed for meetings at intervals longer than a week.

From Calvin, we observe that one can invoke different principles from the identical creation ordinance, that is, not the seven-day structure but resting from our works. In other words, differing positions can still hold to the theological basis (creation ordinance) of the Sabbath, yet end with opposing positions. Similarly, as we have observed in our debate, complementarians differ from egalitarians in what principle applies from the creation ordinance of marriage. Is it “headship” or “source”?

2.3.6 Analysis

2.3.6.1 Theological basis of Sabbath

In the Old Testament, the Sabbath is established in the moral law and given a theological basis in creation and redemption (Gen 2:1-3; Ex 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15). Seventh-day and Sunday-Sabbath arguments, although differing on what day to observe, pick up on this theological foundation, and argue for the Sabbath’s continuation. The argument progresses as follows: Since the Sabbath is instituted in creation it “belongs to the nature of things . . .” (Beckwith & Stott 1978: 6). The Sabbath is established in the divine act at creation and the divine character expressed in moral law. Since Sabbath is found in moral law, it is permanent. As few would argue that the other nine commandments have been abolished, so the Sabbath continues in the new covenant. Considering that neither Jesus nor the New Testament writers abrogate the creation ordinance or moral law, the Sabbath abides. Finally, in view of the rest still remaining for the people of God, the sign of the Sabbath must continue. The strength of this argument lies in the theological justification given to the Sabbath.

There are some similarities between this line of argumentation and pro-slavery which argued for the continuation of slavery from its theological basis. Pro-slavery found no abrogation by Jesus or Paul, and therefore argued for the continuation of the institution of slavery. The Sabbath is, however, on a stronger theological foundation than slavery. Consequently, it is more difficult to avoid the conclusion of pro-Sabbath arguments than pro-slavery. For example, by stressing the creation ordinance and the *unalterable* expression of the moral law, it is hard to escape the seventh-day argument that the seventh-day must be kept, since the seventh-day is particularly mentioned both in the creation account and in the moral law. Given that there is no explicit transfer theology in the New Testament, and based on the criteria that the creation ordinance is permanent and the moral law unchangeable, what reasoning allows for a change to Sunday? Bahnsen, for example, does not explain according to his position how this change to the moral law is permissible. According to Bahnsen, apart from ceremonial law that was rescinded by Christ's work, the Christian is obligated to obey the entire Old Testament law (Bahnsen 1984: 213, 310, 312-13). His Sunday-Sabbath view appears to contradict his thesis that Old Testament law (Decalogue inclusive) is binding in exhaustive detail and not abrogated by Christ (Bahnsen 1984: 264). Bahnsen's stress on the normative to the expense of the situation apparently does not allow him to consistently hold to his thesis, that is, account for a change to moral law. His emphasis on norms does not take sufficient account of the cultural situation in which law was given. Hence Bahnsen's criticism of Meredith Kline's work which derives interpretative implications from ANE treaties (Bahnsen 1984: 571-84).

The church largely rejects the seventh-day position and its absolute adherence to the Sabbath's theological foundation. On what basis is such a rejection made? In our view, the seventh-day position errs in minimising the progress of redemption and the transformation that has occurred

in the new covenant, particularly through the resurrection. The seventh-day position thus depreciates the prescriptive (Col 2:14-17, Gal 4:8-11, Rom 14:5-6), and descriptive passages (Acts 20: 7-11, 1 Cor 16:1-2, Rev 1:10). It illustrates the error, like pro-slavery, of using the theological basis to argue for the permanence of the institution, while neglecting the transformation element. By emphasising the normative (moral law) it downplays the redemptive-historical situation in which the law was given¹⁹.

2.3.6.2 Sabbath: a changeable institution

Many complementarians hold to the Sabbath as a creation ordinance (for example, Beckwith & Stott 1978: 7; Douma 1996: 181; Waltke 1995: 30), yet are not seventh-day. They trace the principle of Sunday observance back to moral law and creation. Therefore, they acknowledge that there has been some change in the Sabbath creation ordinance and moral law, even if according to them it is a minor change. We conclude that from their position, the possibility exists in this present age for a creation ordinance to undergo a structural change. Granting their view that headship is also established in creation, it is possible for a modification to occur. Although the Sabbath is established in creation and redemption, it is not unchangeable in its expression.

According to a common complementarian position, the possibility may be represented as follows:

¹⁹ There are even modifications, based on the situation, in the accounts of the moral law in Exodus and Deuteronomy. For example, as Israel is about to enter the land, they are exhorted not to covet their neighbour's land (Deut 5:21) which is excluded from Exodus 20:17.

1. Sabbath Ordinance (creation)
2. Fulfilled in Christ who is our rest. A structural change from 7th to 1st day.
3. Final rest (consummation)

1. Marriage Ordinance (creation)
2. Fulfilled in Christ who is our bridegroom. *A possibility for change of structure.*
3. Great marriage banquet (consummation)

According to this position, both creation ordinances continue in this present age. Each will reach a final consummation in the eschaton. Both ordinances point to Christ and find fulfilment in him who is our rest and bridegroom. The Sabbath has undergone a structural change; therefore, it is reasonable to affirm the possibility of change in marriage. This is granting many things from a complementarian position. As we have seen with Calvin, it is possible to hold to a creation ordinance and yet maintain a different principle. Similarly, most egalitarians find the principle in the marriage ordinance as one of “source” and not “headship,” and thus see no need for a structural change. Obviously, the question remains whether the New Testament warrants a change regarding headship. (This is granting the complementarian position that headship is established in creation). The possibility for change cannot be excluded since, for a number of complementarians, there has been a change to the Sabbath creation ordinance—a change that is warranted by the New Testament.

Furthermore, those maintaining a change from Sabbath to Sunday generally agree that there is no explicit command to do so. Douma grants that there is no specific verse in the New Testament teaching a transfer of Sabbath to Lord’s Day, but such a transfer has biblical warrant under the guidance of the Spirit who leads into all truth (Douma 1996: 138). For Douma, the change was not merely an ecclesiastical ordinance, but an outworking of the gospel of redemption. Similarly, Coetzee writes: “Therefore it must be clear: a command or decision that the Sabbath as day of rest within the New Covenant, thus for Christians, MUST be moved from the seventh day (Saturday) to

the first day (Sunday) does NOT EXIST, not from Jesus Christ, or from his apostles, or anywhere in the New Testament” (Coetzee 1995: 78). Therefore, regarding the Sabbath discussion, most agree that there are some issues that do not have direct warrant in the New Testament, but are a necessary outworking of New Testament teaching. In this case, according to a Christian Sabbath or a transference position, the necessary consequence changed the structure of the fourth commandment and creation ordinance. According to a non-transference position (held by some complementarians), the new covenant abolished the Sabbath, which even more markedly shows that what had a substantial theological basis may be rescinded.

We have seen in our discussion concerning slavery that complementarians attempt to dismiss the implications of slavery by arguing that the institution was not established in creation or a permanent moral command. However, in approaching the Sabbath, which according to their position is grounded in creation and moral law, they allow for a change. The Sabbath is another example, like slavery, where complementarians and non-complementarians concede that apparently permanent institutions may be provisional. The Sabbath debate demonstrates that an institution or law with a compelling theological basis can be transformed or dispensed. This does not imply that any biblical teaching may therefore be dismissed on an *ad hoc* basis. A change or abolishment needs to be demonstrated by direct or indirect Old and New Testament teaching. The debate also illustrates, like slavery, how the majority of the church came to modify or discard an institution with a strong theological foundation. It is a change or rejection fundamentally based on a transformation principle, in this case, the resurrection. Furthermore, this majority position is decided, like abolitionism, not on the basis of *explicit* teaching. Accordingly, how the church has argued for such alterations is complex and not easily quantifiable. The reasons for a change or rejection are not immediately apparent. In each case, the pro-slavery and pro-Sabbath positions,

with their theological foundations, are the “neater” positions. The opposing view(s) have a greater challenge to argue their position and explain a modification or abolition.

This change is noteworthy for our topic, since it is apparent that the Sabbath was more firmly theologically entrenched than complementarianism. In other words, the Sabbath is established in moral law, whereas woman or wife submission is not²⁰. The Sabbath is clearly taught in Genesis 2, whereas wife submission is not. Moreover, wife/woman submission is not explicitly commanded anywhere else in the Old Testament. A few passages may mitigate this claim. (1) The curse in Genesis 3:16 declares that a husband shall rule over his wife. Even most complementarians, however, agree that this statement, as being part of the curse, is a harsh ungodly ruling—a punishment for disobedience (for example, Waltke 1995: 34, 36-37). (2) In Esther 1:22, Ahasuerus sends an edict throughout Persia commanding men to rule over their household. Few will argue, however, that such a command from a pagan king constitutes an abiding norm. (3) Proverbs 12:4 describes a wife as her husband’s crown. Such a metaphor is to be understood at least in comparison with wisdom being a crown (Prov 4:9), which is part of the numerous similarities the sage makes between wisdom and the virtuous woman. (4) In Isaiah 3:12, it is lamented that in times of judgement women rule over the people. Such a statement, though applicable in its context, should be seen in the light of passages like Lamentations 5:8 where people grieve, in a time of punishment, that slaves rule over the land.

²⁰ It may be argued that wife submission comes under the 5th commandment and its general application of submission to all authority. (For such argumentation see, Douma 1996: 181). In our discussion, such an argument would be begging the question. To demonstrate that it came under moral law, one would have to assume the point under discussion.

This is not to claim that women were not submissive in the Old Testament (1 Peter 3:5) or were not under their husband's authority (Num 30:1-15), but that there was no explicit command to do so. The relevant point being, that, according to the Old Testament, the Sabbath is more permanently embedded in moral law, creation, redemption, covenant, and the new heavens and earth (Isa 66:22-23). Nevertheless, most agree to at least a change, and if not, a complete abolishment of the Sabbath.

2.3.6.3 Dual practices permitted

The Sabbath-Lord's Day debate also lends itself to consider that many things were in transition in the New Testament. Certain old and new covenant practices continued to be permitted alongside each other, such as, baptism with circumcision, and Sabbath with Lord's Day. Paul can require circumcision and in other cases vehemently oppose it. Both men and women are baptised in the new covenant (Acts 8:12). Some men, however, like Timothy are also circumcised (Acts 16:1-3), yet Titus is not (Gal 2:3). Paul did not condemn Sabbath keeping (Rom 14:5-6). Nevertheless, Christians, including Paul, are found meeting on the Lord's Day (Acts 20: 7-11, 1 Cor 16:1-2). Concerning our problem, is it possible that there were dual practices regarding women in the New Testament, that depending on the circumstance some were allowed leadership roles and others were not? Any position should take account of this possibility. Lincoln advances this position regarding the role of women:

. . . there is evidence from Paul's letters of some women having leadership roles. But the instructions about subordination in the household code would have had implications for the role of women in the general life of the churches and have contributed to the identification of positions with any authority as male prerogatives, making it harder for the acceptance of leadership abilities of exceptional women . . . The results of this can be seen

already in the Pastorals, where, as the household becomes the dominant model for the Church, women are excluded from authoritative teaching roles . . .”

(Lincoln 1990: 391)

Poythress and Grudem argue that biblical egalitarianism is inconsistent, by claiming on the one hand that Paul teaches male leadership in the church, but on the other hand, arguing that Paul allowed women to assume any role (Poythress 1991b: 2; Grudem 1994: 938-39). Such an observation has merit, but two points need to be noted. First, as we have seen in chapter one, some egalitarians do not argue that Paul actually taught male leadership. Secondly, those who do maintain such a position may not *necessarily* be inconsistent if it is granted that there was a transitional process in the New Testament where dual practices were allowed. Moreover, the inconsistency argument may be reversed. Complementarians regularly appeal to the universality of patriarchy, but in giving a reason why the subordination of women in the New Testament is *not* cultural, they argue that the ANE culture allowed for female deities and female priests. Thus, Paul prohibited women from leadership in a culture that allowed for female leadership. Therefore, complementarians conclude that this gives weight to their view that women are not allowed in leadership because of creation and *not culture*. Is it consistent, however, to argue that all cultures are patriarchal, yet, based on the New Testament culture, women could have assumed any role, but were not allowed?

2.3.6.4 Conclusion

The majority of the church accepts that the Sabbath has been transformed or even abolished. Given the transformation or transference positions of many, this indicates that a creation ordinance can be structurally changed. We have noted that the argument for a transformation or abolishment of the Sabbath does not have direct textual warrant. This does not imply that it is a

weak position, rather that there is only no direct reference transferring Sabbath to Sunday, or abrogating the fourth commandment. Nevertheless, the position has biblical warrant. Therefore, it demonstrates that, with biblical grounds, an institution with a compelling theological justification may be changed or abrogated.

Relating the Sabbath and our debate, it is apparent that both issues have New Testament texts where the extent of the transformation is debated. Take for instance Colossians 2:14-17 and Galatians 3:28. It is debated whether Colossians 2:14-17 teaches an abrogation of the Sabbath institution, or merely deals with so-called ceremonial elements surrounding the institution. Similarly, does Galatians 3:28 eliminate male headship? Concerning our problem, most acknowledge that there is at least some transformation from old to new covenant regarding the place of women. In the new covenant, men, women, slaves, and young are prophets, priests, and kings, contrary to Israel's cultus where old, free men generally filled these roles. Both men and women receive the sign of baptism (Acts 8:12). The Spirit is poured out on both men and women (Joel 2:29, Acts 2:18). There is at least some change in female positions. The question remains as to how far this transformation occurs.

CHAPTER 3: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S MALENESS

3.1 Introduction

Is Jesus' maleness revelational or cultural? Is maleness essential to Jesus Christ, so that his maleness reveals God's character, or is foundational for the gospel, or both? Does Christ's maleness relate to a continuing creation ordinance? There are essentially two different answers. The complementarian position argues for the necessity of Jesus' maleness and its revelatory character. Non-complementarian positions maintain that Jesus' maleness was a cultural phenomenon. Having described the various positions and arguments, and considered the two topics of slavery and the Sabbath, we now come to an analysis and critique of the various positions. This discussion is not limited to critique, and we advance our own position. As observed in chapter one, the discussion and arguments range over several related issues. In order to bring coherency and logical progression to the material, we use the sonship of Christ as an organising motif for much of the discussion. This enables us to address our problem and interact with related concerns.

We start with the basic agreement that Jesus was male and that the New Testament refers to Jesus as "Son." What now are the implications? What does "Son" mean? Is this sonship eternal? If sonship is eternal, does it imply that maleness is ultimately necessary to Christ? If sonship is eternal, does it mean that maleness is foundational for the gospel and essential for salvation? And if it is foundational and essential, does this necessary male incarnation exclude women from

salvation? Our first line of discussion is an overview of Christ's sonship and the multitude of differing aspects to his sonship.

3.2 The Sonship of Christ

3.2.1 Firstborn Son and Heir

In the Old Testament, the first-born son had special privileges and responsibilities, and received the "birthright." M. J. Selman notes that these privileges may have included a paternal blessing (Gen 27:27-29), a larger inheritance (Gen 25:5-6; Deut 21:15-17), a position of family leadership (Gen 42:37), and an honoured place at the table (Gen 43:33) (Selman 1982: 378). There was a unique relationship between father and first-born son, which may be observed, for example, in the lives of the Patriarchs. Abraham had a special love for his first-born Isaac, including a concern for Isaac's wife (Gen 24:1-9), and at his death Abraham left all he owned to his first-born (Gen 25:5). Isaac as a father gave special attention to his first-born Esau (Gen 25:28), and Jacob devoted himself to the first-born of his beloved wife Rachel (Gen 37:3). There clearly existed a special relationship between the father and first-born son, hence Joseph's concern when Jacob blessed the younger Ephraim ahead of the first-born Manasseh (Gen 48:17-20).

In the Old Testament, the first-born male animal and human belonged to God (Ex 13:2, 12-13; 22:29; 34:19; Num 8:17; Deut 15:19). This was a sign of their redemption from Egypt (Ex 13:12-16). The special position of firstborn developed and became analogous to Israel's relationship with God (Ex 4:22; Hos 11:1; Jer 31:9), was applied to David (Ps 89:27), and Matthew, when portraying the life of Jesus as a recapitulation of Israel's history, extends the analogy to the incarnate Son

(Matt 2:13-15). Although being Mary's firstborn (Luke 2:7), Jesus is also God's firstborn Son (Ps 89:27; Heb 1:6). Christ fulfils the position of which David was a type (Ps 89:27). As antitype, Christ is the true Israel and the true firstborn Son. In the New Testament, the analogy of firstborn is further applied to the resurrection where Christ is the *first* raised from the dead (Rom 8:29; Col 1:18; Rev 1:5). It is also developed into a title for Christ (Col 1:15) meaning one who is superior or pre-eminent. As firstborn Son, he is the Creator of all. Therefore, as firstborn, Christ's sonship includes the idea of pre-eminence, first raised from the dead, a belonging to God, a special relationship with God, and is a sign of redemption.

Consideration of the analogy of firstborn leads us to the related idea of heir. Walter Kaiser notes the connection between sonship and heir in Psalm 2: "The Son has only to ask for it, and everything is his from the Father" (Kaiser 1995: 99). As Son, Christ is heir of all things (Heb 1:2). The reference to "firstborn" in Hebrews 1:6 may be understood in this sense of "Christ's appointment as heir in the exordium" (Lane 1991: 26). He is the son-heir whom the tenants kill in order to claim his inheritance (Matt 21:38). A parallel thought occurs in Galatians 4:7 where Paul connects sonship and heir. To be a slave, in contrast to a son, is to have no inheritance. Our being heirs relates to Christ. All things are ours (1 Cor 3:21-23) because everything belongs to Christ. To be *in Christ* is to be given all that belongs to Christ (Eph 1:3). Christ as Son stresses that he is heir and that all things belong to him.

3.2.1 Incarnate Son

In his birth narrative, Luke places some emphasis on the connection between sonship and incarnation. Leonhard Goppelt notes: "Luke based Jesus' divine sonship on his birth

accomplished by the Spirit (Lk. 1:32, 35)” (Goppelt 1981: 202). Jesus is a son, who will be called the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:31-32). The reason for the title “Son of God” is given that the Spirit will bring about his birth (Luke 1:35). Through the work of the Spirit in the incarnation, he is called “Son of God.” So in Luke’s genealogy Adam is called the “son of God” (Luke 3:38), like Jesus (Vos 1926: 185). Jesus was the one born of God (1 John 5:18), and he was a son, that is, a male (ἄρσεν) child (Rev 12:5). One aspect of Jesus’ sonship directly relates to the incarnation. He is called “Son of God” by virtue of the incarnation.

3.2.2 Son as Messianic King

In Luke’s birth narrative, Jesus’ sonship is also directly connected with kingship (Luke 1:32-33). God’s promise to David was a son who would rule forever (2 Sam 7:12-16). This king would not only be David’s son by birth (v. 12) but also God’s son by adoption (v. 14). The Old Testament clearly taught that the messianic king would come from the seed of David (Isa 11:1, 10; Jer 23:5-6; 30:9; 33:14-18; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25). The New Testament confirms this promise by stating that Jesus is the son of David (Rom 1:3). Matthew, who uses the phrase “son of David” in ten occurrences, particularly stresses that Jesus is the son of David. “Son of David” defines Christ (Matt 22:42), an identity even recognised by children (Matt 21:15). Jesus, however, is not merely David’s son in a nationalistic sense. Jesus referring to Psalm 110:1 asks the question: “David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?” (Matt 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44). Obviously, Jesus was not denying his Davidic descent, but emphasising his true identity as king and son. Christ is a fulfilment of whom David was a type and shadow, although his kingdom is not of this world as noted in Jesus’ interaction with Pilate (John 18:33-37).

The connection between sonship and kingship can further be seen in the terms “Son of God” and “Son of man” which have royal connotations. Psalm 2 speaks of the king who is adopted as the son of God. At the king’s enthronement he is begotten, that is, adopted as son. This anointed one is king (Ps 2:2-6) and son (Ps 2:7; cf., Ps 89:26-27). In Psalm 82, the rulers are identified as gods and sons (Ps 82:6). And Nathanael’s confession in John 1:49 relates “Son of God” and kingship. Thus, the title “Son of God” applied especially to the king, who represented the people. Similarly, the “Son of man” figure in Daniel 7:13-14, which most agree forms at least part of the background to New Testament usage, is a kingly figure. Daniel speaks of the Son of man who will usher in the everlasting kingdom of God. As one who comes in the clouds, he is a heavenly king who will rule the earth. This imagery is adopted for instance in Matthew 16:28 which speaks of the coming of the Son of man and his kingdom, and in Revelation 14:14 where the Son of man is seated on the clouds. Thus, Herman Ridderbos states that the terms “Son of man” and “Kingdom of God” are correlates (Ridderbos 1962: 31). He writes: “The ‘coming of the Son of Man’ (Matt. 10:23) is synonymous with the ‘coming of the kingdom of God,’ as appears from a comparison of Matthew 16:18 [sic] and Mark 9:1” (Ridderbos 1962: 31).

Christ is the messianic king. As anointed one, he is the Son of God (Matt 16:16; 26:63-64). As the son of David, Son of God, and Son of man, his sonship applies to kingship. To speak of Jesus as “Son” is to accent his kingship.

3.2.3 Sonship and Humanity

In the perennial debate concerning the background of the “Son of man” sayings, the influence from Ezekiel’s prolific use (93 times) of “son of man” is often denied. Many argue that the term

used by Ezekiel is not to be identified with the expression used in the New Testament (Vos 1926: 250; Jeremias 1971: 268; Ladd 1974: 147; Howard Marshall 1976: 66; see also Dunn (1980: 65-97) and Bruce (1982) who in their discussions on the Son of man neglect any connection with Ezekiel). The primary reason for this denial is that Ezekiel's use cannot account for the apocalyptic use of "Son of man" in the Gospels. A few, however, believe that Ezekiel's use may be attributed to Christ (Brownlee 1986: xli). C. F. D. Moule allows for this interpretation, while preferring the dominant background to be Daniel 7 (Moule 1977: 12). Jürgen Moltmann also incorporates the meaning "true human being" into Christ as the Son of man (Moltmann 1990: 14), and John Macquarrie goes to the opposite extreme by rejecting apocalyptic imagery and concentrating only on Jesus in his humanity (Macquarrie 1990: 41-42).

Without becoming enmeshed in the complexities of the debate regarding the Son of man sayings, our concern only relates to establishing the connection between Christ's sonship and humanity. It is generally agreed that Ezekiel's meaning of "son of man" is "human one," and particularly contrasting humanity with divine transcendence (Allen 1990: 9). William Brownlee writes: "When Ezekiel is addressed as 'son of man,' this means that he is spoken to as a member of the human race, not as a male . . ." (Brownlee 1986: 25). Ezekiel is called "son of man" denoting "human being," and especially Ezekiel's frail humanity as compared with God. A similar sense of "humanity" is found in Psalm 8:4 (cf., Heb 2:6) and Psalm 146:3. It may even have this import in some New Testament passages such as Matthew 12:32 (Vos 1926: 49; Cullmann 1963: 153). Given this meaning of "human one" there appears to be no sufficient reason why this cannot form part of the background to the New Testament usage, for the term "Son of man" is apparently a development from multiple backgrounds. These multiple backgrounds perhaps suited Jesus' intention not to make the overt claim to the messianic figure of Daniel 7:13-14. We agree with

Carson who says “it is likely that Jesus chose ‘the Son of man’ as his favourite self-designation *precisely because it was ambiguous*” (Carson 1982a: 113). (This self-designation can be seen in comparing the various synoptic parallels). Carson allows for the background to Daniel 7 as well as the frail human side to the term that better fits the suffering motif of the Son of man (Carson 1982a: 113). The relationship between Son of man and suffering is well known, however, the connection is not often made with Ezekiel. For example, F. F. Bruce argues: “Jesus enriched the expression [Son of Man] by fusing with it the figure of a righteous sufferer, probably the Isaianic Servant, so that he could speak of the suffering of the Son of man as something that was ‘written’ concerning him” (Bruce 1982: 70). It is apparent that the apocalyptic “Son of man” in Daniel 7:13, 4 Ezra 13; and 1 Enoch 37-71 cannot account for all the New Testament uses, since a major aspect to the ministry of the Son of man is his suffering (Matt 8:20; 17:12; 26:2; Mark 8:31; 9:12; Luke 9:22, 58). This suffering Son of man does, however, fit Ezekiel who had a similar ministry of suffering (Ezek 2:6, 21:6, 12; 24:16) and prophetic lament (Ezek 2:10; 19:1; 27:2; 28:12; 32:2). Like Jesus, Ezekiel’s son of man is a human in suffering.

The connection between sonship and humanity may even be observed in Daniel 7:13-14, which most agree forms at least part of the background to the Son of man sayings. The figure in Daniel 7:13 is *like* a human being, for he is *like* a son of man. (Daniel 8:17 uses the phrase in this sense of “human one.”) He is a human figure with divine attributes in contrast to the beastly worldly kingdoms. Even if Daniel’s figure is the only background to the New Testament sayings, it still implies Christ’s humanity.

Another aspect of Christ’s sonship is his humanity. To be the Son of man is to belong to the nature of man—generically understood. In this sense, it is similar to other uses in the New Testament

where to be “son of . . .” is to belong to or have similar characteristics and nature to the consequent descriptor. For example, there are those described as sons of this age (Luke 16:8), and sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2; 5:6; Col 3:6). Or individuals such as Judas who is called the son of perdition (John 17:12), one who is a son of hell (Matt 23:15), one who is a son of peace (Luke 10:6), and Barnabus who is a son of encouragement (Acts 4:36). There are also those who are sons of the kingdom (Matt 8:12; 13:38), believers who are encouraged to become “sons of light” (John 12:36; cf., 1 Thess 5:5), and sons of Abraham (Gal 3:7), that is, those who believe have the same spiritual nature as Abraham.

3.2.4 Baptism and Transfiguration

At Christ’s baptism and the outset of his public ministry, he is declared to be “Son” (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; John 1:34). It is generally agreed that the synoptics follow a similar pattern of alluding to Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. By referring to Psalm 2:7, the synoptics stress the messianic appointment of Jesus at his baptism. This is confirmed by the coming of the Spirit that is mentioned in all four Gospels. This descent of the Spirit is an anointing (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:37-38; cf. 1 Sam 16:13; Isa 61:1) which sets Jesus apart and empowers him for his ministry. When challenged about his authority, Jesus refers back to his baptism (Matt 21:25; Mark 11:30; Luke 20:4). It is possible that Jesus appeals to his baptism for it is his messianic appointment, hence his authority.

In the church’s eagerness to deny any form of adoptionism, the significance of Jesus’ baptism is downplayed. It is argued that the baptism of Jesus does not imply adoption, that Jesus does not become the son because he already is the Son of God (Edwards 1991: 57; Ladd 1974: 164). The

reference to “beloved Son” in the baptismal narratives does indicate an *already existing* relationship. Nevertheless, the association with Psalm 2:7 shows that there is a development in Christ’s sonship. The quotation from Psalm 2:7 denotes a heightening of sonship. The baptismal narratives only become a problematic adoptionistic christology if one denies the prior relationship. Concerning Jesus’ baptism, Poythress states that “in the course of redemptive history, there are transformations in Jesus’ role and even in his very mode of existence *with respect to his human nature*” (Poythress 1987: 97). The baptism of Jesus is at least a declaration of sonship. But we argue further that it is a new stage in his theanthropic identity. It is a higher stage of sonship, a new stage of the sonship where Christ is given the Spirit without measure (John 3:34) and anointed for service. As we shall see, in the progress of redemptive history there is a progression of Christ’s sonship, even to the resurrection and exaltation.

At the transfiguration, we have a further identification of this sonship (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 2 Pet 1:17). The baptismal statement is basically repeated as Jesus goes to the cross. The event reaffirms his sonship precisely when Jesus has explained the path of obedience the Son will take. This leads us to a connection between sonship and obedience. By alluding to Isaiah 42:1, the synoptics make the connection between sonship and servanthood, a connection between the Son and the Suffering Servant.

3.2.5 Obedient, Suffering, and Subordinate Son

Many have recognised the relationship between sonship and obedience (Nolan 1979: 218; Cullmann 1963: 299-305; Berkhof 1979: 282-83). Christ is Son in his obedience to the will of the Father (Matt 26:39). As Son, he follows the Father’s example (John 5:19), does the Father’s will,

and completes the work given to him (John 4:34; 17:4). He came to do the will of the Father (Heb 10:9). There is a non-reciprocal relationship with the initiation of the Father and the obedience of the Son. As a Son, he learned obedience (Heb 5:8). To be Son is to be obedient. This obedience is ultimately obedience to death, which is suffering. So as Son of man he lives a life of suffering (Matt 8:20; 17:12; 26:2; Mark 8:31; 9:12; Luke 9:22, 58). He lives a life of suffering because he is obedient.

We note that immediately following Jesus' baptism, which he underwent as part of his obedience to fulfil all righteousness, Christ is taken into the wilderness. Here he is tested as to his obedience as Son: "If you are the Son of God . . ." (Luke 4:1-13; Matt 4:1-11). Concerning this wilderness trial, Ridderbos writes: "It is a test to which Jesus has to submit in order to prove his perfect *obedience* to the Father and his *commitment* to the Father's mandate. The tempter's intention, accordingly, is not to deprive Jesus of his messianic *certainty* . . ." (Ridderbos 1962: 157). The temptation is to deny his call to be Son, that is, obedient Son. It is a temptation to achieve his messianic kingly role by serving Satan (Matt 4:8-9; Luke 4:5-7). Similarly, the taunt at the cross was: "Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" (Matt 27:40) It is a direct challenge to disavow his mandate as obedient Son, by using his power to save himself.

In 1 Corinthians 15:28, Paul states that when the Son has *done* this, that is, brought all things under his dominion, then the Son will be made subject to the Father, so that God may be all in all. The Son's obedience continues to the consummation. This obedience, however, still lies within the redemptive-historical context. Many agree that this is to be understood functionally and not ontologically (Fee 1987: 760). In connection with this verse, Cullmann writes his well-known statement: "Here lies the key to all New Testament Christology. *It is only meaningful to speak of the Son in view of God's revelatory action, not in view of his being* (Cullmann 1963: 293). Although

Cullmann overstated the implications and later clarified (modified?) his position by stating that the functional does not exclude the ontological (Cullmann 1962), his point is noted. This final act in redemptive history does not apply so much as to being, but is rather a fulfilment of Christ's redemptive role. This is the final redemptive work of the Son's obedience, albeit future, that culminates the work begun at the resurrection.

Related to the Son's obedience is his subordination to the Father's authority. Another feature of Christ's sonship is his subordination, particularly in three areas: authority, knowledge, and glory. The Son is under the Father's authority and obeys him. The Son does have authority to teach (Matt 7:29; Mark 1:22, 27), forgive sins (Matt 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24), to judge (John 5:22; cf. Acts 17:31), drive out demons (Mark 1:27), and gives authority to the disciples (Matt 10:1; Mark 3:15; Luke 9:1). Nevertheless, this authority is given to him by the Father (Dan 7:14; Matt 28:18; John 5:27; 17:2). The Son is also subordinate in knowledge (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32; cf., Acts 1:7). Only the Father knows the day or hour. These times and dates the Father has set by his own authority. There are certain things that the Son in his subordinate state did not know. Finally, not only does the Father give authority to the Son, but also glory (John 17:22, 24). Sonship relates to subordination in glory, since glory is given to the Son. So the Father is greater than the Son (John 14:28), and at the consummation, the Son will be subject to the Father (1 Cor 15:28).

3.2.6 Resurrection and Exaltation: the Appointment of Sonship

Regarding Romans 1:3-4, it is agreed that a two-nature interpretation has clouded this passage (Käsemann 1980: 11). These verses are not speaking of a human-divine nature scheme, rather the contrast involved between verses 3 and 4 are two successive stages of Christ's incarnate existence

(Gaffin 1987: 100). It is a difference between Christ's incarnation as man (according to the flesh) and his resurrection (according to the Spirit). As to his incarnation, he was a descendant of David, namely a son. Yet, Christ's resurrection ushered in a new stage of his sonship (Dunn 1988: 14). The resurrection is the appointment (Cranfield 1975: 61) or enthronement of Christ as the Son (Käsemann 1980: 11) where he becomes "God's Son in power" (Lövestam 1961: 47). Like his baptism, the resurrection is a further heightening of Christ's sonship. It is a new stage in his sonship. This interpretation is confirmed by Paul's application of Psalm 2:7 to the resurrection of Christ in Acts 13:33. The resurrection is a new state of sonship where Christ is made alive by the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18) and with power. A parallel example may be observed in Acts 2:36, where Peter claims that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. It would be incorrect to argue that Jesus was not Lord before his resurrection and ascension. Instead, Peter is emphasising a new stage in the Lordship of Christ. Similarly, regarding the resurrection Jesus is now the *powerful* Son of God. We may speak of it as his re-adoption, similar to our re-adoption at our resurrection (Rom 8:23).

There is one final development in Christ's sonship. Significantly, the writer of Hebrews applies Psalm 2:7 not to the resurrection but to Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God (Heb 1:3-5). After Christ secured salvation (Heb 1:3), he sat down and received a better name than angels. This better name is "Son." It is a name conferred at the exaltation, which confirms his superiority to angels and gives Christ a new status. We may say that this inheritance of the better name "Son" is of such a climatic character that, in comparison to his status before this moment, he was almost not a Son.

3.2.7 Son as Image, Priest, Prophet, and Equal with God

There is a clear parallel between Christ's sonship and image (Ridderbos 1975: 68-78). As the Genesis narrative links the image of God to kingship and ruling over creation (Gen 1:27-28), it also connects image with sonship in Genesis 5:3 where Seth is described as the being in image of Adam. Two New Testament passages (Col 1:13-15; Heb 1:3) explicitly connect Christ's sonship and the image of God. Christ as Son is the exact representation (*χαρακτήρ*) of God (Heb 1:3). He is the expressed, exact, and perfect representation of God—the radiance of his glory. Since the Son is in the image of God, he faithfully represents and reveals God. To see the Son is to see God (John 14:9) for he is the exact image of God.

As the writer of Hebrews connects sonship and image, he also connects sonship and priesthood. In Hebrews 1:3, it is the Son who has provided purification for sins. And the writer applies Psalm 2:7 to Christ's appointment as high priest (Heb 5:5). Commenting on Hebrews 5:5, William Lane writes: "A correlation between Christ's sonship and priesthood was implied in the exordium to the sermon, when the priestly function of making "purification for sins" is ascribed to the transcendent Son (1:3), but here it is asserted explicitly" (Lane 1991: 118). Christ's sonship is integrally connected with his priestly redemptive work. The connection is one in which Christ's sonship forms a foundation for priesthood (Heb 7:3). Only as Son is he holy, blameless, and pure (Heb 7:26).

The relationship between Christ's sonship and prophetic ministry may be observed in Hebrews 1: 1-14, where the writer speaks of the superior revelation, in contrast to angels, that has come in the last days through the Son. It is because of this superior revelation that we must pay more careful

attention to the Son (Heb 2:1-4; cf., 10:28-29). This sonship is foundational for his prophetic ministry. As Son, he is at the Father's side (John 1:18), and therefore is in the unique position to reveal and make known the Father.

Finally, Christ's sonship indicates that he is equal with God. As Son of man he belongs to the nature of humanity, so as Son of God he is equal to God. In certain places, the designation "Son" signifies equality with God (John 5:17-18; 10:30, 33, 36; 19:7). The Son's equality with God is also seen in his intimate knowledge of the Father (Matt 11:27, Luke 10:22). No one knows the Father except the Son and vice versa. This intimate and complete knowledge implies equality.

Furthermore, divine attributes are also predicated of the Son demonstrating his equality with God. A few examples will suffice. The demons on all occasions except one (Luke 4:34) refer to Christ as the Son of God (Matt 8:29; Mark 5:7; Luke 4:41; 8:28). Together with this affirmation of "Son," the cries of the demons presuppose Christ's divine power and authority over them. The wind and the seas obey the Son (Matt 14:33). Christ is described as the Son of man of Daniel 7:13 who comes on the clouds (Matt 24:30; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; Rev 14:14). Coming in the clouds was reserved as the sole prerogative for God (Isa 19:1; Ps 18:9-12; 68:4), hence the violent opposition to Jesus' claims (Matt 26:63-68; Mark 14:62-65). The Son forgives sins, yet only God can forgive sins (Matt 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24). The question of the Pharisees is correct: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" The Son is the one who forgives sins—something only God can do, thus his equality with God.

3.2.8 Eternal Sonship of Christ

3.2.8.1 Introduction

Jesus is Son in his redemptive activity. To speak of Jesus as Son is to speak of him in a diverse and multifaceted way. Christ is the firstborn Son who is pre-eminent, first raised from the dead, and heir. As Son, he is equal with God, but is also human. He is the obedient and subordinate Son to his Father, even to the end of history where he gives all things to the Father. As obedient to death, he is also a suffering Son. As the Son-king, he is the promised messianic king, the son of David. As the Son-prophet, he images, reveals, and represents God. As the Son-priest, he secures salvation for his people. There is a progressive development and heightening of this sonship from the incarnation, through baptism, resurrection, and exaltation. The question that now arises is whether this sonship is merely functional or has implications for ontology. In other words, may we speak of eternal sonship? In a merely functional christology, Christ is “Son” only from the incarnation and solely in reference to his activities. (For such a position see, MacArthur 1983: 27-28). In examining various christological passages from John, Paul, and Hebrews, our goal is to ascertain whether we may speak of eternal sonship. Is eternal sonship exegetically defensible?

3.2.8.2 John 3:16

God’s love for the world is demonstrated precisely because his unique (μονογενῆς) Son is the object of his giving. Conceivably the proximate reference of the giving is the death of Christ, and therefore “Son” has only meaning post-incarnation. This is confirmed by the reference to his death and the “lifting up” in verse 14. Nevertheless, to confine the giving of the Son simply to his

death undermines the significant point of verse 16, which is the supreme manifestation of God's love. By implication, there exists an intimate relationship of Father and Son before the giving and sending for the demonstration of love to be meaningful. The love in view is precisely in the giving (John 3:16) and the sending (John 3:17) by which Light has come into this world of sin and rebellion (John 3:19). To limit sonship to redemptive-history weakens this ultimate demonstration of love (cf., 1 John 4:9-10). It appears that John presupposes that sonship exists before the incarnation.

3.2.8.3 John 17:1-26

In his prayer, Christ addresses himself as "Son." The passage emphasises that it is the Son who was sent into the world by the Father (John 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25). It is apparent that this sending is neither abstract, nor is it only a function with the relationship of Father and Son commencing only at the incarnation. Two elements demonstrate an eternal aspect: the glory the Son had with the Father before the world began (John 17:5), and the Father's love for the Son before the creation of the world (John 17:24). The foundation of the sending lies in an eternal fellowship and relationship of Father and Son. Again, eternal sonship is presupposed.

3.2.8.4 Romans 1:3-4

We have already noted regarding Romans 1:3-4 the progressive stages in Christ's sonship. Paul speaks of the "Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead." These verses have implications for eternal sonship, since the subject of the two clauses is

“Son.” Despite Dunn’s claims that the eternal pre-existence of the Son is post-Pauline (Dunn 1988: 12) and that there is no reference here to pre-existent sonship (Dunn 1980: 35; Käsemann 1980: 12), the two clauses appear to presuppose eternal sonship (Gaffin 1987: 106). The apparent tautology “Son, who . . . was declared . . . the Son of God” is resolvable. The divine eternal Son is appointed the Son with power at his resurrection.

3.2.8.5 Romans 8:3, 32

Romans 8:3 concerns the “sending” of the Son. The purpose of the sending is Christ’s death as a “sin offering,” yet the sending equally applies to his incarnation “in the likeness of sinful man.” As in Galatians 4:4, it appears that sonship is not constituted at the incarnation, but already in view. The eternal Son is sent, born of a woman, and in the likeness of sinful flesh.

Romans 8:32 refers to the “not sparing” or “giving up” of the Son. The phrase, “did not spare his own Son” takes us back to Genesis 22:12. A number of commentators have indicated the allusion to the sacrifice of Isaac (Furnish 1993: 118; Dunn 1988: 501; Cullmann 1963: 301). The stress on God’s own (ἴδιος) Son has the same emphatic force as John’s (μονογενής) and the beloved (ἀγαπητός) Son of the baptism narratives, and applies to the Son’s uniqueness. Kramer rightly argues that this “giving up” must be taken in the widest possible sense speaking of the coming of the Son into this world (Kramer 1966: 117). For Paul, God will supply everything since he has given his *own* Son. The promise of God’s continuing love is based on God giving his only Son. If this sonship only originates at the incarnation, Paul’s argument is weakened. A loving relationship of Father and Son existing prior to the incarnation is assumed.

3.2.8.6 Hebrews 1:1-14

In Hebrews 1:1-3 the Son is described as the supreme revelation of God. We note the obvious parallelism:

In the past	last days
God spoke to our forefathers	God spoke to us
through the prophets	through his Son

At this point, there are two possible options concerning the title “Son.” “Son” may be viewed proleptically, anticipating his function in redemptive history, or it may be taken as referring to the eternal pre-existence of the Son, without excluding his function as incarnate man. The latter is the more natural reading and better fits the author’s intent. “Son” is modified in the two subsequent clauses in which the writer includes functional and ontological aspects of the Son. He gives content to “Son” in portraying his eternal divinity together with his role as incarnate man. In other words, the author extends “Son” beyond mere function. The Son is appointed heir of all things. As Son, he receives an inheritance of a better name. Yet, in the final clause, it is the same Son through whom God made the universe. The Son is portrayed in his pre-existent eternal divinity, that is, ontologically.

The rest of the passage also cannot be limited to mere function. Here the Son is described as the exact representation of God’s being (v. 3) that has implications for ontology. More functional aspects are the Son who upholds all things (v. 3), provided purification for sins (v. 3), sat down at the right hand of God (v. 3), and was begotten (v. 5). The passage, however, concludes identifying the Son as *θεός* (v. 8), Creator (v. 10), and eternal (v. 11-12). Even the more functional elements may not be entirely separated from ontology; for example, only as God can the Son uphold all things (v. 3).

This passage inextricable unites sonship with divinity. It joins the Son's function on earth with his being prior and subsequent to the incarnation. The Son was Creator (pre-incarnation) and is glorified at the right hand of God (post-ascension). His sonship in view is both functional and ontological, and not merely in reference to his theanthropic identity. He is considered "Son" in his creative action, in his redemptive accomplishments, and in his final glorification. It is precisely his pre-existent divinity that has bearing on his redemptive function. Hence, we may speak of Christ's eternal sonship, which is another way of expressing the unification of divinity and sonship.

3.2.8.7 Hebrews 7:3

Hebrews 7:3 reads: "Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever." Melchizedek's genealogy was not included in Genesis, so he is in an unusual position as a true worshipper of God, but whose ancestry is not mentioned. It is not that Melchizedek had eternally existed or that he had no literal father or mother. The author's intention is rather to reinforce the non levitical-Aaronic identity of Melchizedek. Yet, Melchizedek is only a type or shadow of Christ who was "without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life." The crux of this verse applies to Christ and not Melchizedek. Christ, however, as to his human descent was the son of David (Matt 1:1; Rom 1:3). He had a genealogy: royal (Matt 1:1-17) and physical (Luke 3:23-38). He had a human mother (Matt 1:16, 18; Luke 1:30-31, 2:7). The writer of Hebrews notes further on in chapter 7:14, "For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah . . ." Thus Hebrews 7:3 primarily refers to the eternal sonship of Christ. It inextricably connects the phrase "Son of God" with the eternal being of Christ.

3.2.8.8 Conclusion

“Son” has meaning eternally prior to the incarnation and is presupposed in Pauline, Johannine, and Hebrews christology. Eternal sonship provides the foundation for Christ’s function on earth and assigns content to the “giving” and “sending” of the Father by which we understand the supreme manifestation of God’s love. As such, one cannot separate the sonship of Christ from his eternal divinity. Although it is generally agreed that the emphasis in the New Testament is on function, the difficulties in making an absolute distinction between function and ontology have been noted. Poythress correctly argues that any precise distinction between function and ontology eventually breaks down (Poythress 1981: 422-23) and Berkhof agrees that “a purely functionalistic way of thinking leads nowhere” (Berkhof 1979: 285). To claim such an absolute distinction would be tantamount to denying true knowledge of God.

A merely functional christology that maintains “Son” has reference only post-incarnation is unsatisfactory. Contrary to Christian feminism, which distances itself from ontological sonship (1.3.4.2), the New Testament clearly presupposes and implicitly teaches eternal sonship.

3.3 Jesus’ Maleness and Eternal Sonship

3.3.1 Introduction

In our argument, we have arrived at the eternal sonship of Christ. The question now before us relates to the meaning and implications of eternal sonship. What do we mean when we speak of the second person of the Trinity as eternal Son? In order to answer this, we need to ascertain what

elements of Jesus' sonship may be extended and applied pre-incarnationally. In doing so, we will be able to determine whether the designation "eternal Son" implies a necessary male incarnation, and whether it is oppressive of women or excludes women from salvation, or both. It will provide an answer as to the relevance of Jesus' maleness. In our discussion, we will also ask whether the relationship between Jesus and Wisdom modifies or adds to our understanding of "Son." Finally, a broader but related concern is whether this eternal sonship implies eternal subordination, thus providing a basis and justification for women subordination—an equal but subordinate scheme.

3.3.2 Eternal Generation

3.3.2.1 Introduction

Behind the traditional doctrine of the Trinity as one essence and three persons lies an analogy of causation. The Father is the Augustinian *fons trinitatis*—the fountain or source of the Trinity. This is the historical position of the church and expressed in the Nicene Creed, that the Son is begotten of the Father. While the exact meaning of eternal generation—a concept formulated by Origen (*De Principiis* 1.2.1-13)—is debated, the concept is used to justify opposing positions.

Both complementarian and non-complementarian positions use the analogy "Son" in a particular manner to argue their position. It is argued by some biblical egalitarians like Jewett (1.2.4) and Christian feminists (1.3.4.2) following classical christological categories that the essential element of "Son" is that he is generated from the Father. Just as a father generates a son, so we may speak about a mother generating a daughter. Following traditional theology, Jewett, for example, asserts that the only univocal element in the trinitarian name—Father, Son, and Spirit—is that the second

and third persons originate, as persons, from the Father. Therefore, it is legitimate to substitute a Mother-Daughter analogy, for it still retains the essential or univocal element of the original analogy, namely causation or origin. In doing so, we have left our conception of God unaltered. Thus, a masculine incarnation is unnecessary (1.2.4).

Some complementarians, however, argue for a necessary male incarnation based on eternal generation (1.1.5). As Jesus is the eternally begotten Son, it is nonsensical to conceive of a female incarnation. Furthermore, complementarians use the doctrine of eternal generation to maintain that Christ is eternally subordinate in authority (Grudem 1991a: 456-57, 539-40; Grudem 1994: 251). The eternal generation of the Son is employed to justify and provide a basis for women's subordination yet full equality. Grudem and Schreiner (1991: 129-30) stress that this is the teaching of the church through its history, and argue that biblical egalitarians, by denying a subordination of role to the Son, have departed from historic Christianity. A similar position was adopted by Barth who claimed that God "exists as a first and as a second, above and below, *a priori* and *a posteriori*" (Barth 1956: 201-02). For Barth, the doctrine of eternal generation provides the basis for the relationship between Father and Son (Barth 1956: 209), a relationship where the Son is subordinate and obedient to the Father. Such a relationship provides justification for the subordinate but not inferior position of a wife to her husband (Barth 1956: 202). To provide support for the questionable "equal but subordinate" construction, complementarians appeal to innertrinitarian relationships where they argue that the Son is both equal and subordinate. In other words, they argue that their view on the subordination of women does not contradict her full equality, since the Son's subordination does not minimise his full divine equality. As one final example, Peter Toon connects eternal generation, a male incarnation, and male priority in order to justify non-inclusive language. He writes:

There is holy order in the creation where the male man is first in order and the female man is second in order; but, at the same time there is a perfect equality in terms of essential being of the male and female man. In the New Testament Jesus Christ, the male Man who is the Word made flesh, is proclaimed as the true image of God.

To maintain holy order we need also to maintain the long-established custom of speaking of God's creatures made in his image as man or as mankind. We do not have to be saying 'man and woman' and 'he and she' all the time. The use of the word man in the traditional sense conveys the notion of order for he being first in order contains in himself she who is second in order. It is wholly appropriate that the word man can mean both the human race and the male species; and that the word woman can only mean female man and never the human race. This, in a trinitarian perspective, mirrors the truth that the Father is first and the Son is included in the Father, for he is begotten of the Father before all ages.

(Toon 1996: 240)

3.3.2.2 Difficulties with a "causation" extension

A discussion concerning eternal generation is necessary for three primary reasons: (1) eternal generation is used to justify the necessity or non-necessity of Jesus' maleness, (2) eternal generation is used to permanently establish complementarianism and justify an "equal but subordinate" scheme, and (3) in our discussion, we are seeking to ascertain what eternal sonship means. What elements of the analogy "Son" carry through to eternal sonship?

3.3.2.2.a The reduction of "Son"

As noted, Jewett and others interpret the doctrine of eternal generation so as to deny a necessary masculine incarnation. We need to briefly examine Jewett's presuppositions concerning metaphor and his idea about univocality. The question may be raised as to whether univocality exists and whether all our knowledge concerning God is analogical. (Van Til 1974: 11-14, 100). Even if generation were univocal, it would still be analogical, since the Son is not *literally* begotten. Even

so, we understand that by “univocality” Jewett essentially means that aspect or feature of a metaphor that may be extended to reveal truth. More importantly is that Jewett inclines to a single-point approach to metaphor that is heavily reductionistic. By using his idea of univocality he appears to suggest that a metaphor may be extended in only one particular way. Yet, language cannot be limited in this scientifically precise manner. We agree that a metaphor may be extended in some ways and not in others, however, a metaphor is open ended, often incorporating many features at the same time and its meaning cannot be reduced to Jewett’s idea of univocality. In section 3.2, we referred to some fourteen different aspects of the analogy “Son.” To insist that the univocal aspect of “Son” is limited to causation or origin is unsatisfactory. Furthermore, causation or generation appears to be one of the least likely candidates for extension. There are numerous difficulties with extending the analogy “Son” to imply causation, origin, or source in the eternal Trinity. We now examine two key areas where problems arise: (1) biblical, and (2) the movement towards philosophical abstraction.

3.3.2.2.b Biblical objections

A number of verses are cited for the doctrine of eternal generation (2 Sam 7:11-13; Ps 2:7; Prov 8: 23-24; Mic 5:2; John 3:16; 5:18, 26; 10:38; 14:11; 17:21; 2 Cor 1:3; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3.)²¹ An examination of these passages, however, has not established a doctrine of eternal generation or an analogy of causation. This lack of Scriptural evidence was demonstrated as far back as Calvin. Thus according to Warfield, Calvin opened up the way for the denial, or at least, a neglect of the doctrine of eternal generation, for he destroyed the Scriptural proof texts and left little biblical

²¹ Although our discussion is confined to the eternal generation of the Son, even scantier Scriptural evidence is offered for the procession of the Spirit, such as John 14:16, 26; 1 Cor 2:10.

basis for the doctrine, except what could be inferred from the terms “Father” and “Son” (Warfield 1991: 277).

A couple of examples will suffice. We have already observed that Psalm 2:7 is applied in the New Testament to the baptism, resurrection, exaltation, and priesthood of the Son. As Son, Jesus fulfills this psalm in redemptive history. So the use of Psalm 2:7 in the New Testament does not teach or imply an eternal generation of the being or person of the Son. Again, for example, John 5:26 reads: “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.” In context, this verse has a different intention than generation, and rather concerns the resurrection (cf., verses 21, 28-29). Furthermore, a generation interpretation would seem to imply that the Son was created, that is, given life, contrary to Jesus’ claim that he is the life (John 11:25; 14:6). So Pannenberg rightly concludes that there is little biblical basis for eternal generation (Pannenberg 1991: 306).

Apart from these passages, the doctrine has been adduced from John’s use of *μονογενής* (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). Although the tendency in the past was to use this word to argue for eternal generation, few would maintain this today. A general consensus is being reached that *μονογενής* does not refer to an eternal generation (Pannenberg 1991: 306), but rather denotes the uniqueness of the Son. In this connection, Carson notes that to derive “only begotten” from *μονογενής* is a root fallacy error (Carson 1984: 29-30). And Murray Harris, after his analysis, concludes: “As far as the evidence of the NT is concerned, it may be safely said that *μονογενής* is concerned with familial relations, not manner of birth. Neither the virgin birth of Jesus nor the ‘eternal generation’ of the Son is in John’s mind when he uses the adjective *μονογενής*” (Harris 1992: 86-87). Finally, Poythress persuasively argues that a technical term in systematic theology

cannot be equated to any specific biblical term (Poythress 1987: 74-79). The primary reason is that a systematic term is a result of a compilation of teaching from various verses and passages.

Applying this to eternal generation, we note that this is a theological construct, which endeavours to explain combined biblical teaching. To then turn around and derive such a construct from a single biblical word amounts to a confusion of word and concept.

3.3.2.2.c Tendency to philosophical abstraction

There is a lack of biblical evidence for eternal generation. What remains is what we may infer from the names “Father” and “Son.” Is it legitimate, by using the analogy “Son,” to carry-over into the eternal Trinity the idea of causation, origin, or source?

When reading of a familiar analogy such as the “eye” or “ear” of the Lord (Ps 94: 9), we understand that this tells us something about the character of God. Nevertheless, we do not use Psalm 94:9 to speak of God as having a “supra-eye.” Of concern to us is how far do human characteristics, which are reflections of God’s attributes, apply to the character of God. With every analogy, there is a corresponding disanalogy (Frame 1987: 230). In other words, care should be taken not to confuse the eternal with the temporal (Van Til 1974: 226). Although an analogy gives us a true understanding of God, human attributes cannot be completely applied to God. While not holding to a supra-eye, the church does teach the omniscience of God. We recognise that the human eye is an analogy of an infinite attribute of God, and as an analogy, it may not be extended in certain areas without leading to absurdity.

So we ask the question: Considering the contrast of ontology between God and humanity, does eternal generation confuse the divine and human nature, the eternal and the temporal? Has the temporal aspect of the analogy “Son,” the disanalogy been carried-over? Just as it is absurd to conceive of God having a “supra-eye,” so it is difficult to conceptualise God generating. Thus, Calvin states: “Indeed, it is foolish to imagine a continuous act of begetting, since it is clear that the three persons have subsisted in God from eternity” (Calvin 1960: 159). Calvin had an obvious problem with the doctrine of eternal generation as it stood, and Warfield observes: “Calvin seems to have found this conception difficult, if not meaningless” (Warfield 1991: 247).

Calvin’s position serves as a relevant illustration of the difficulties that arise when trinitarian relationships are conceptualised in this manner and when the elements of causation, source, or origin are extended from “Son” into eternity. It also shows that the church has not been unified regarding this concept. As seen, complementarians argue that biblical egalitarians are departing from a supposed monolithic teaching regarding trinitarian relations, and in particular, the subordination in role of the Son as implied by eternal generation. This criticism needs some modification. Although the traditional position of the church, eternal generation has been modified by Calvin and Warfield, was denied by some in the early church (Kelly 1978: 240; cf., 105-106) and various forms of New England theology (Alfs 1984: 33-34), and is increasingly under attack (Boettner 1947: 121-22; Buswell 1962: 111-12; Boff 1988: 137-47; Pannenberg 1991: 300-27; Erickson 1995: 309-10).

Calvin writes:

For whoever says that the Son has been given his essence from the Father denies that he has being from himself. But the Holy Spirit gives the lie to this, naming him ‘Jehovah.’ Now if we concede that all essence is in the Father alone, either it will become divisible or be taken away from the Son. . . .

. . . Conversely, there must be some mark of differentiation in order that the Father may not be the Son. Those who locate that mark in the essence clearly annihilate Christ's true deity, which without essence, and indeed the whole essence, cannot exist.

(Calvin 1960: 150)

Calvin objected to the generation of the essence of Christ because of its implications of subordinationism, claiming that such a theology produced three unequal divine essences, compromised the one essence of God, hence the oneness of God, and denied justice to Christ as *autotheos* (God in himself) (Calvin 1960: 149-54). Such a position was for Calvin a denial of the aseity of the Son. Nevertheless, to mark the differentiation in the Trinity, Calvin held that the Father generated the *person* of the Son. He writes: "Therefore we say that deity in an absolute sense exists of itself; whence likewise we confess that the Son since he is God, exists of himself, but not in respect of his Person; indeed, since he is the Son, we say that he exists from the Father. Thus his essence is without beginning; while the beginning of his person is God himself" (Calvin 1960: 154).

Calvin's overriding concern was to do full justice to Christ as *autotheos*, the full and complete deity of the Son. So when considering classical formulations, especially the Nicene fathers, Calvin found them contrary to biblical teaching. Complementarians who claim that eternal generation teaches subordination in role are not entirely correct. Quite often, it is used to teach a generation of being, hence Calvin's problem with the doctrine. Calvin was thus to revise the doctrine and consequently speak only about the generation of the person of the Son. In his position, Calvin defended the classic formula of "one essence, three persons." He preserves the one essence of God by denying the generation of the essence of the Son. Christ's full and complete deity is argued from the one essence of God. He safeguards the three distinct persons by appealing to the generation of the person of the Son.

Calvin, however, is on even weaker exegetical grounds for such a distinction. Is such a bifurcation of essence and person satisfactory or even possible? The biblical material never abstracts Christ's person from his being. Either the passages quoted in support of eternal generation refer to the person/being of Christ as eternally generated or they refer to no generation at all. The verses make no distinction between the person and the essence of Christ. Therefore, when Christ says in Revelation 22:13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End," he is speaking as a person. Biblically, Christ is never portrayed as mere essence abstracted from his person. Furthermore, since the simplicity of God indicates that his attributes are identical with his being (Bavinck 1977: 170-72), the Son possesses his being and person within himself from all eternity. Calvin, having weakened the biblical texts for the classical view on generation, in the process, has undermined his own position.

Another illustration of this philosophical abstraction is seen in Miroslav Volf. He raises the question: "But are the relations between divine persons not asymmetrical, nonegalitarian, hierarchical? Is not the Father first, the Son second, the Spirit third? So it would seem, if the Father is the 'origin,' if the Son is 'generated,' and if the Spirit 'proceeds'" (Volf 1996: 180). While desiring an egalitarian society, Volf still wants to maintain the traditional formulation of the Father as source of divinity, but together with an egalitarian metaphysic. This leads him, following Moltmann, to postulate a distinction between the constitution and life of the Trinity. Volf writes:

At the level of the *constitution* of the divine persons, the Father is the 'first' because he is the source of divinity. Without such a source, it would be impossible to distinguish between the three persons; they would collapse into one undifferentiated divine nature. At the level of *relations*, the Son not only 'comes from' and 'goes to' the Father, but the Father has 'given all things into his hands' and 'glorifies the Son' (John 13:1ff.; 17:1). With respect to the immanent Trinity, these statements about the economic Trinity mean that in constituting the Son, the Father gives all divine power and all divine glory to the Son. As the source of divinity *the Father therefore constitutes the mutual relations between the*

persons as egalitarian rather than hierarchical; all persons are equal in power and equal in glory. At the level of the life of the Trinity, the Father is not 'the First,' but 'One among the Others'.

(Volf 1996: 180)

Volf, in his desire to have human egalitarian relationships, makes a division in the Trinity between being and relation. On the level of being the Father is source and first, yet in the area of relationship the Trinity is egalitarian. He offers, however, no biblical material to justify such a position. A few pages on, Volf notes that all three persons constitute each other. He writes that the “distinct persons are internally constituted by the indwelling of other persons in them. The personal identity of each is unthinkable without the presence of others in each; such presence of others is part and parcel of the identity of each” (Volf 1996: 187). Volf emphasizes the important mutual indwelling or *perichoresis*. But once again, there is a distinction made between being and person. On the level of being, the Father is the one who constitutes the Trinity, yet on the level of person, each member constitutes the other. Nevertheless, Volf *still* has an *ontological* hierarchical Trinity—an arrangement that complementarians use to justify their position. Furthermore, Volf’s claim that without maintaining the Father as the source of divinity would lead to a dissolving of distinctions in the Trinity is dubious. Calvin saw that such reasoning led to subordinationism, and denial of the aseity of Christ. More recently, Pannenberg, who rejects Moltmann’s distinction between a constitutional and relational level (Pannenberg 1991: 325) echoes Calvin’s concern at this point: “Any derivation of the plurality of trinitarian persons from the essence of the one God, whether it be viewed as spirit or love, leads into the problems of either modalism on the one hand or subordinationism on the other” (Pannenberg 1991: 298, cf., 334). Volf’s division appears to be unnecessary—more a philosophical abstraction with little tie to the biblical material.

3.3.2.3 Conclusion

This suggests an alternative view that does not extend causation or generation from the analogy “Son” is more satisfactory. It keeps us tied to the biblical material and away from the perennial tendency in systematic theology towards abstraction. This is not to deny eternal sonship or limit “Son” to mere function, only to claim that “Son” cannot be extended in certain areas like causation or generation. When Cornelius Plantinga argues that the language of Father and Son suggests “both kinship and derivation” (Plantinga 1989: 28), it is this derivation that we disagree with. The language suggests many things. Similarly, John Thompson writes: “There is and must be total equality; this was guaranteed in the patristic era by the success of the *homoousion*, which means that each person is fully divine. At the same time, since Son and Spirit have their source in and come from the Father, owing their being to him, there inevitably arises a form of subordination” (Thompson 1994: 146). This “total equality” of the Son is qualified. We then ask: is this qualified equality a total equality? Calvin, not influenced by modern discussions on equality, saw that such a position did not preserve the full equality of the Son, and denied Christ as *autotheos*.

So Erickson writes:

I would propose that there are no references to the Father begetting the Son or the Father (and the Son) sending the Spirit that cannot be understood in terms of the temporal role assumed by the second and third persons of the Trinity, respectively. They do not indicate any intrinsic relationship among the three. Further, to speak of one of the persons as unoriginate and the others as either eternally begotten or proceeding from the Father is to introduce an element of causation or origination that must ultimately involve some type of subordination among them.

(Erickson 1995: 309)

Eternal sonship still maintains the differentiation of persons in the Trinity without denying the unity. Eternal sonship remains a term to describe the underived distinctive character/being of the Son that differentiates him from the Father and the Spirit. An eternal distinction is preserved by maintaining the Son as *autotheos* as to his person and being. This eternal sonship of Christ is an affirmation against various forms of modalism (since he is distinct from the Father and the Spirit), merely economic trinitarianism (since he was not only the Son from the time of the incarnation), and subordinationism (since Christ is God himself, *autotheos*, the Creator, the beginning and the end). This is nothing less than the full implications of the Nicean *homoousios* and Calvin's *autotheos*.

3.3.3 Is the Son Eternally Subordinate and Obedient?

A related topic to the generation of the Son and our concern as to the meaning of eternal sonship is the question whether the Son is eternally subordinate and obedient. Does "Son" imply an eternal subordination and obedience? We agree that subordination and obedience are aspects of sonship in redemptive history. Nevertheless, it is a significant step to apply this subordination and obedience to the eternal character of Christ. Again, this goes to the question: What elements of Son are carried through to eternity and why? It is not sufficient simply to refer to texts that speak of the Son's subordination or obedience. Further argument is necessary to demonstrate that these particular qualities carry through. Which of the following characteristics of Son is applicable to his eternal divinity: obedience, firstborn, humanity, suffering, subordination, equality, maleness, incarnation, or the perfecting of the Son? Is the maleness of Jesus based on an eternal maleness of the Son? Does his subordination in knowledge apply pre-incarnationally? How are we to determine what characteristics are carried over? What elements of the analogy "Son" can and

should be fully understood within the redemptive-historical context? There is no simple answer, because metaphors by their very nature are not closed systems, often simultaneously incorporating many features. “Son” is a multifaceted analogy, which may not be reduced. Some areas, however, may not be extended without ending in philosophical abstraction or absurdity.

As observed, because of the redemptive-historical context, “Son” is a multifaceted analogy. To speak of Christ as Son is to incorporate many ideas. But, being an analogy and given the redemptive context, there are certain elements that cannot carry over into divine being. Most agree, for example, that the incarnation cannot be carried back to teach that the Son had a beginning at some point in time—an Arian “there was when he was not.” Or, that as God’s firstborn, Christ the Son is first of many “Sons.” The analogy of firstborn, however, is extended back to teach that Christ the Son is pre-eminent over all creation (Col 1:15-16), so firstborn can be extended in some areas but not in others. Few apply the relationship between sonship and humanity pre-incarnationally and so claim that the Son was eternally human. In addition, most resist carrying over the maleness of the Son into eternity. In fact, all positions affirm that maleness cannot be predicated of God. Therefore, certain aspects of Son cannot be carried through. The obedience and subordination of the Son, however, are more difficult to ascertain. We will argue that such an extension is problematic and unnecessary.

Grudem writes: “If the Son is not eternally subordinate to the Father in role, then the Father is not eternally ‘Father’ and the Son is not eternally ‘Son.’ This would mean that the Trinity has not eternally existed” (Grudem 1994: 251). Letham makes a similar point; that a denial of this order of authority and obedience in the Trinity would end in modalism (Letham 1990: 68). Despite such strong statements, we simply ask: “Why define the eternal distinctions between Father and Son

solely in terms of subordination and obedience?” This reasoning is highly reductionistic and unsatisfactory. It is to use the analogy “Son” in a limited and debateable manner. Grudem uses only one aspect of the analogy Son, namely subordination, and reduces it to encompass the essential distinction between Father and Son. Moreover, in Grudem’s discussion, this subordination is also used to define the relationship of the Spirit in the Trinity. In other words, as subordination defines the distinctions between Father and Son, so it also defines the distinctions between Father and Spirit, and Son and Spirit. One wonders how this consistently relates together. For instance, how can Grudem maintain that the Father and the Son send the Spirit (Grudem 1994: 249), when the Son is eternally under the Father’s authority? Although traditionally held by Western theology, we still ask the question: does not the Son need his *own* authority in order to send the Spirit? Otherwise, consistent subordinationism ends in an Eastern position with the supreme rule of the Father (a position Grudem does not maintain). The only option for Grudem is to suggest that the Spirit relates to the Father and Son, as children relate to their parents. Therefore, the Spirit remains under the authority of Father and Son, like children under the authority of their mother and father. As the mother is under the father’s authority, so the Son remains under the Father (Grudem 1994: 257). Grudem notes that this illustration has no biblical warrant. The reason for this lack is apparent. Such an analogy would introduce an inherent confusion. “Father” and “Son” is already an analogy between parent and child. To then explain the Spirit’s role by moving “Son” to a position of parent leaves one with an illustration that has no earthly correspondence. “Holy Spirit” is a name that has no familial or subordination connotations. It has no causation, gender, or subordination associated with it. This suggests that the distinction lies elsewhere.

Not only does Grudem extend subordination into eternity, but only one aspect of the Son's subordination. By what reasoning does Grudem limit this subordination to authority, and not to glory or knowledge? We have noted these other aspects to the Son's subordination (3.2.6), and it is difficult to separate them from each other. For example, the limitation of the Son's knowledge is directly related to the Father's authority (Acts 1:7) where the times have been set by the Father's own authority. If a person is going to extend the subordination of the Son, why not consistently apply all the subordination texts to the Son's eternal divinity? John Dahms approaches such a position where he uses John 14:28 to justify the eternal *ontological* subordination of the Son (Dahms 1994: 358-59). Dahms claims that any interpretations that deny this essential and eternal subordination "implicitly deny the unity of the incarnate Son" and are of the same error as Nestorianism (Dahms 1994: 352). To justify eternal subordination he also uses Mark 13:32 and Matthew 24:36 that speak of the limitation of knowledge of the Son. Dahms is led to suggest that this limitation is part of eternal sonship (Dahms 1994: 356). Thus, he consistently applies subordination but arrives at a christology from which the church has always distanced itself. Dahms has negated the redemptive-historical context, and comes close to denying analogy. The logical end of Dahms' emphasis on the "unity of the incarnate Son" is to take *every* aspect of Son into eternity—including his humanity, maleness, and suffering.

Accordingly, if we cannot carry over into eternity the subordination in knowledge and glory, why take back subordination in authority? It is clear that the Son is given authority from the Father (Dan 7:14; Matt 28:18; John 5:27; 17:2). Nonetheless, this imparting of authority can be fully understood within the redemptive-historical context. In what context is the Son given this authority? Primarily, it is Christ as the Son-king who is given authority. He is the adopted messianic king of Psalm 2:8-9 (cf., Rev 2:26-27) and the royal figure of Daniel 7:13-14 to whom

God gives authority. As the Son of man, he is given this authority (John 5:27)—authority to forgive sins (Matt 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24) and to judge (John 5:22; cf. Acts 17:31). As Son of man, he is Lord over the Sabbath (Matt 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5). Interestingly, the prior verse to the Father giving authority (John 5:27), speaks of the Father giving life to the Son (John 5:26). As most interpret the giving of life to apply to the resurrection, that is, apply it solely in its redemptive-historical context, we argue for a similar understanding of this giving of authority. To speak of the Son as eternally subordinate in authority implies that the Son was not the divine judge of humanity before the incarnation, or that he did not forgive sins pre-incarnationally; the reason being that he is only given this authority from the Father to judge and forgive post-incarnationally. This authority is given to the Son in a certain context and particularly is bestowed subsequent to the completion of the Son's mandate. So there is even a development in this giving of authority. In Luke 4:6, the obedient Son is tempted to obtain the authority (ἐξουσία) of the nations by worshipping Satan, and not by fulfilling his role as obedient Son. Thus, after completing his mission, full authority is given to the resurrected Son (Matt 28:18; Eph 1:20-22). This giving of authority can be fully understood as a development within the redemptive process.

It is argued, however, that if Christ was not eternally subordinate or obedient, there is no basis for Christ's subordination or obedience on earth. Dahms writes: "*If Father and Son are essentially alike in every respect, the Son could never subordinate himself to the Father without denying his own nature. To suggest that his decision to do so is an eternal decision does not help matters. It simply implies that he is eternally denying what he is. God has freedom and can do new things, but not contrary to his nature*" (Dahms 1994: 364). Philippians 2:6-11, however, suggests the opposite: that the Son was equal, but gave up these divine privileges (Bilezikian 1997: 62). The kenosis of the Son is essentially the Son giving up his rights—right to knowledge, authority, omnipresence,

independence, and glory. The argument that the Son's subordination or obedience is eternal, because if it were not Christ would deny his nature, can be reversed. If it is his nature to be subordinate, then by nature he cannot reveal God's authority and rule. As Son, he reveals God, and reveals the authority of God for he is God. The Son possesses all the attributes of God including authority. In him dwells the fullness of God (Col 1:19; 2:9). Whoever has seen the Son has seen the Father (John 14:7-11). Christ can only reveal who he is. If it is in his nature to be subordinate and obedient, he cannot reveal the authority and rule of God. Furthermore, if he is subordinate and obedient by nature, how can his obedience to death on earth be voluntary and not necessary? A position stating that full divine authority may not be attributed to Christ in his eternal nature, strikes one as a denial of Christ as *autotheos*—having all the attributes of God, including his authority and rule.

We may approach this discussion from another angle. The subordination of the Son is directly related, and almost synonymous, to the obedience of the Son. To speak of the obedient Son, is to speak of the authority of the Father, an authority to which the Son subordinates himself and obeys. As many take subordination into eternal sonship, John Thompson, reminiscent of Barth (1956: 200-10), takes the obedience of the Son into eternity. Thompson writes:

The obedience of the incarnate Son reflects that of the Son in the eternal life of God. Were this not so, the obedience in the incarnate life up to and including the cross would not be possible. In going this lowly way of obedience to death Jesus is not following a capricious or arbitrary way but one which God the Father has chosen for him and which has its basis in the very being of God in the relation of Son to Father.

(Thompson 1994: 48)

Similar to the discussion on subordination, it is argued that to deny eternal obedience is to be left with no basis for the obedience of the Son on earth. Nevertheless, Thompson is selective about what he imputes to divine being. In arguing against a view that states that the Spirit shares in the

generation of the Son, Thompson disagrees by stating that the Spirit's begetting only applies to Christ's humanity. He writes: "To transfer this directly to the eternal Son and then say he was begotten of the Father through the Spirit is exegetically problematic and theologically speculative. It moves away, in an unhelpful way, from the main thrust of biblical revelation and our experience of salvation" (Thompson 1994: 154). We would agree, but still ask why do we not apply the apparent priority of the Spirit, in certain texts, to the ontological Trinity? There is a priority given to the Spirit in that the Son was conceived by the Spirit (Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35), anointed by the Spirit (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:37-38; cf. 1 Sam 16:13; Isa 61:1), offered himself over to death by the Spirit (Heb 9:14), and was resurrected by the Spirit (Rom 1:4; 8:11). Thompson takes over the obedience of the Son but not the Spirit's generation of the Son. Is not taking over obedience just as exegetically problematic? To speak of eternal obedience raises the questions: what is the nature and context of this eternal obedience? In a perfect environment and holy relationship, is it meaningful to speak of obedience and its manifestation? We contend that the obedience of the Son (like subordination) can be fully understood within the context of a sinful world. The Son's obedience (3.2.6) is in the context of a world where disobedience is paramount (Rom 3:10-18), and where temptations to disobedience are universal (e.g., Gal 6:1; Jam 1:14; 1 Pet 5:8; Rev 2:10). Furthermore, in the incarnation, the Son acquires a human nature that naturally recoils before suffering. In such circumstances, the Son's obedience is in marked contrast and understandable. It is in this context that the Son is obedient in resisting the temptations that come from suffering (Heb 2:18; Heb 4:15). He learns obedience by what he suffered (Heb 5:8). It is in this world that the Son experiences what it means to obey, and the power of temptations that comes to humanity in a suffering world. Thus, he is now one who is sympathetic (Heb 4:15) and merciful (Heb 2:17). For the writer of Hebrews there is an unbreakable connection between temptation, suffering, and

obedience, so that the Son learns obedience through suffering and its temptations. Together, they lead to the perfecting of the Son (Heb 2:10; 5:9; 7:28).

There is a tendency in systematic theology to flatten and minimise the redemptive-historical context. Thus, the church has depreciated the significance of the Son's baptism because of adoptionism, or postulated a two-nature scheme in Romans 1:3-4, or downplayed the appointment of sonship at the resurrection and exaltation. There is also the tendency to carry over into eternity certain aspects of sonship, such as the Son's obedience, derivative authority, or subordination. Ridderbos offers a corrective:

It has often been supposed that in the manner in which Paul speaks of the destining, the sending, the glorification of the Son of God, tendencies are to be discovered what would later be called subordinationistic or adoptionistic. But this is an illusion. Paul is nowhere engaged in limiting Christ's divine glory, whether in his pre-existence or in his exaltation, with respect to that of God himself. For him Christ's being the Son of God is none other than being God himself. And if it has been thought necessary to subtract anything from that assessment on the basis of certain expressions, it is due to the transposition of redemptive-historical into ontic categories. Indeed, it is characteristic of Paul that he speaks of Christ's divine Sonship in no other way than in direct connection with his redemptive work. His whole 'Christology' rests on the manner in which he has learned to understand Christ in his cross and resurrection as the Sent One of the Father. For this reason he delineates even the glory of Christ in his pre-existence and in his divine exaltation with features drawn from redemptive history, and the image of the second Adam can be clearly recognized in the pronouncements of Christ's 'riches' in heaven and his 'being equal with God.'

(Ridderbos 1975: 77-78)

We have argued that the subordination and obedience of the Son can and should be limited to the redemptive historical context, similar to Christ's humanity, incarnation, and maleness. One final concern remains at this point. It relates to using the so-called subordination of the Son to justify an equal but subordinate scheme in male-female roles. In order to give weight to the controversial "equal but subordinate" arrangement, many complementarians (Grudem, Letham, Schreiner, and others) appeal to the ontological Trinity. It can be summarised in four points:

1. Father: authority and head
2. Son: equal but subordinate in role to the Father
3. Man: authority and head
4. Woman: equal but subordinate in role to man

Points (3) and (4) are a reflection of (1) and (2) respectively. The trinitarian relationships form the basis for complementarianism. It is debateable, however, whether such a formulation has biblical warrant, and whether the relationships between man and woman are ever compared to eternal innertrinitarian relationships. And given point (2), we have argued that eternal subordination is not part of Christ's eternal divinity. Nevertheless, granting this position, we also note the following: Given (3), Christ, as a man must have authority, since according to this scheme, male is given authority reflecting the trinitarian relationship. But given (2) Christ does not have authority. So given (2) and (4), why was there not a female incarnation? If Christ were eternally subordinate, according to this arrangement he should have been female. Why insist on a masculine incarnation? The more (2) and (4) are emphasized, the more a real conflict is exposed and a necessary masculine incarnation is undermined. The point being that complementarians emphasise Christ's subordination to justify an equal but subordinate scheme, at the same time as emphasising male authority and insisting on a necessary male incarnation. Yet, given a masculine incarnation, we have one who is subordinate incarnated in a position of authority.

We conclude that complementarians cannot use the subordination or obedience of the Son to justify an "equal but subordinate" construction as applied to women. This subordination or obedience of the Son is not part of divine nature, and is limited to the redemptive-historical

situation. In addition, by arguing in this manner, many complementarians end with two irreconcilable propositions: (1) the Son is eternally subordinate, and (2) the Son is incarnated (male) in a position of authority. Both, however, are crucial to the position.

3.3.4 A Polarising and Sexualising of the Analogy “Son”

3.3.4.1 Introduction

Our discussion now moves to other problematic uses of the analogy “Son.” In our debate, there are numerous instances of a polarising and sexualising of the analogy. Most agree that the analogy “Son” does have truth content, that the analogy does mean something. Complementarians and biblical egalitarians maintain this. Christian feminists have criticised complementarians for not holding consistently to their view on analogy. Post-Christian feminists also believe that metaphors or symbols have content. One major area of disagreement is how much of the analogy carries over, and why was the analogy used? Can it be changed without modifying essential meaning and content? In the debate, the propensity is to polarise the analogy viewing it either “from above” or “from below.” In addition, there is a tendency to impute sexual connotations to the analogy.

3.3.4.2 Polarising the analogy “Son”

3.3.4.2.a From above

We have noted that many complementarians have an approach “from above” (1.1.2 & 1.1.3).

When it comes to the analogy “Son,” there is the implication that at least some forms of revelation

come to us devoid of cultural interference. Thus, considering the title “Son,” it is argued that there is no separation between what God is and what he reveals of himself. Bloesch and Kassian speak of “Son” as a catalogy. It is an analogy *sui generis* (Kassian 1992: 145). Such formulations are extremely problematic, and some have addressed Bloesch’s apparent confusion (Wren 1989: 95-102). Wren argues that it is very difficult to make such distinctions and only possible if we remove Scripture from the realm of human experience (Wren 1989: 102). Since our language is human and related to culture, to speak of a “catalogy” comes close to denying that language can reveal God. Similarly, when speaking about the divine title “Son,” Torrance argues that there is no separation between what God is and what he reveals of himself. Torrance, however, still has to wrestle with culture and analogy. In fact, he argues that the sonship of generation, that is, a son who is a son and grandson of other sons, cannot be carried over, neither can the gender of “son” (Torrance 1992: 137). So even regarding “Son” Torrance concedes that certain aspects of the analogy cannot be carried over, which means that there is a difference between God and what he reveals. Complementarians acknowledge that God transcends sexuality and that sexuality may not be predicated of God. Therefore, they concede that certain aspects of the analogy under discussion cannot be carried through, casting doubt on the existence of a “catalogy.” There is, generally speaking, always an admission that certain aspects of the analogy cannot be applied to the being of God, although some of the formulations apparently contradict this. It thus becomes a question of degree. How much or what parts of “Son” may be carried over?

We maintain that there is always a degree of difference between what God is and what he reveals. We may not completely equate God with “rock,” “El,” or an “unjust judge.” There is always a corresponding disanalogy. Of course, some analogies are more important than others. The point being that many complementarians use what amounts to a different hermeneutic when it comes to

our debate. Other analogies in Scripture are treated as they relate to culture, but “Son” is considered to lie beyond culture. On other issues, complementarians usually take significant account of the culture, but in our topic the tendency is to argue that this issue is beyond culture, or “from above,” or that God ordained the patriarchal culture. Such a method appears to circumvent the difficult task of interpretation. What is the place of patriarchal culture? To say that God defines the culture apparently solves the difficulties too easily. For example, considering the creation narrative, the tendency for complementarians is to see Genesis 1 and 2 as *prior to* culture, however, this “prior to” is generally only applied to our topic. When addressing other aspects of the creation narrative, many complementarians work from the assumption that it is revelation *in* culture. So, in defending male headship, Waltke argues that God ordained Israel’s culture (Waltke 1995: 30). Nevertheless, when considering another aspect of the same creation narrative, Waltke interprets this according to the Leviathan imagery of ANE culture (Waltke 1974: 5-17). In other words, he significantly interacts with culture on the broader topic of creation, but does not when dealing with the narrower creation of male and female, and particularly the Genesis 2 narrative. This does not mean that his interpretation is necessarily incorrect, but in one area of the narrative, cultural factors are weighed, and in another area, they are not for God ordained them. Similarly, many complementarians like Dorothy Patterson argue that “Adam” is used in Genesis 1:26-27 for both men and women, thus justifying male headship (Patterson 1997: 149, 159). But there is little interaction with the historical-cultural situation. The Pentateuch was written to a particular culture, in a particular language, and with particular theological concerns. Even on the level of language, “Adam” as a Hebrew word is related to culture. Carson notes some of the linguistic complexities usually glossed over in this type of argument. (Carson 1998: 165-70).

Complementarians would not argue for a three-tiered, geocentric universe, because they take significant account of culture. Moreover, in other areas they do substantially interact with culture,

so most have no difficulty, for example, in recognising that the creation account parallels ANE creation myths (Waltke 1974), or that the structure of Deuteronomy is comparable with Hittite suzerainty treaties (Kline 1963), or that Jesus spoke in parables whose content is specifically related to that society (Bailey 1976). Nevertheless, in approaching our topic, there is a tendency to minimise culture. When commenting on George Knight, Harvie Conn writes: “With many evangelicals, he shares a failure to verbally appreciate the cultural and social factors that also play a part in our understanding of even biblically-structured role relationships” (Conn 1984: 111). Likewise, Conn criticises Foh, who has a simplistic answer to the difficult “cultural question.” (Conn 1984: 113). While acknowledging that he moves to the egalitarian side of the debate, (Conn 1984: 116), Conn criticizes complementarians for being “ahistorical” and the evangelical feminists for having a “dualistic approach to Scripture” (Conn 1984: 116-17). He rightly emphasizes the need to give attention to the horizons of the ancient writers and modern interpreters, as well as the impact of our interpretation on the non-Christian world (Conn 1984: 121-23).

When it comes to interpreting “Son,” many complementarians depreciate the historical-cultural situation. Because “Son” is a name from above, there is little attempt to derive the meaning of “Son” from redemptive history. They imply that the meaning of “Son” is transparent and unrelated to culture, that it is a divine name having no origin in human experience. To argue that words like “Father” and “love” are not figurative but are used in “their first and most original sense” (Berkhof 1979: 76) is not too problematic as long as it is applied consistently. This is true of all analogy, that it has its origin in God. We agree that human characteristics are theomorphisms—that ultimate reality starts with God. They are all catalogues in the sense that God is the archetype. Nevertheless, the name “Son,” like all analogies, is culturally conditioned, in that not every aspect of the analogy may be applied to God. It relates to culture in that it has a

particular theological meaning in that culture, for example, the special relationship that existed between father and firstborn son. As in section 3.2, we must conclude from the biblical ways of using “Son,” what it means for Jesus’ sonship.

3.3.4.2.b From below

As many complementarians approach this topic “from above,” a number of non-complementarians come “from below.” Biblical egalitarians like Jewett speak of the “need to struggle creatively with the basic language of theology, which has projected the masculinity of the theologian on the God of whom he speaks” (Jewett 1991: 14). Other Christian feminist theologians have made a similar point. Halkes writes: “The feminist protest against the image of God as Father was necessary because the dominant culture had developed this image according to its own ideal and had made it subservient to that” (Halkes 1989: 97). The tendency in non-complementarian thinking is to say that “Son” is from below, that is, the analogy is only a reflection of patriarchal society. If complementarians sometimes error by prejudging something to be transcultural, non-complementarians sometimes error by having a hermeneutic that allows for everything to be cultural. In polarising the analogy, both positions move away from genuine knowledge of God, although this is particularly apparent in Christian feminism. If complementarianism drifts toward a complete association of all aspects of the analogy “Son”—a merging of phenomenal and noumenal worlds, non-complementarians move towards a radical split of these worlds, where the knowledge of God is minimised. It is apparent that the language of Christian feminism moves towards the impersonal. Chopp uses “Word” for God (Chopp 1989). Schüssler Fiorenza uses “G*d” (Schüssler Fiorenza 1995). The extreme is Daly changing to a verb (Daly 1986). The breakdown of language is clear and borders on scepticism. Here “Son” is viewed not as an

analogy, but rather a Feuerbachian projection of the desires and goals of men. It is a movement away from a personal, known, and knowable God. Nevertheless, we do know God through analogy. Israel knew God, the New Testament church knew God, and we know God. It is clear who Jesus is. In the Son, we have seen the Father. He who came into our world is the exact representation of God. We do have genuine knowledge of God through analogy, and without this knowledge, there is no basis for a relationship.

Opting for either end of the polarisation “from above” or “from below,” is fraught with difficulties. If it is from above, God’s revelation entirely forms the culture, and “Son” has little relationship to culture. If it is from below, humanity entirely defines revelation, and “Son” has no revelatory meaning. Rather, God’s revelation is *in* history²². Because it is in history, the relationship between the two is complicated, and cannot be solved by an approach from above or below. Just as it is incorrect to say that there is no separation between who God is and his revelation, so is it incorrect to dismiss the analogy “Son” as a mere reflection of patriarchal society. At this point, both positions turn aside from genuine knowledge of God.

3.3.4.3 Sexualising the analogy “Son”

Although both positions are careful to state that sexuality may not be predicated of God, each has sexualised the analogy “Son.” Eternal sonship is often given a sexual connotation, even though it is claimed that such an association is illegitimate. As seen in section 1.1.3, some complementarians make the direct connection between the trinitarian name “Son” and the male incarnation.

²² I am indebted to Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr., for this formulation.

Following their tendency to reason “from above,” the Son had to be incarnate as male, so that the male incarnation is directly related and consequential to eternal “Son.” Therefore, it appears that by virtue of the Son’s nature or character he *had* to become male. Complementarians who posit such an ultimate necessity to Christ’s maleness, impute maleness into the being of God. We agree that maleness is related to “Son” but it is a relationship similar to “obedience” or “subordination.” It is a characteristic that we should wholly understand in the redemptive-historical context. This point will be substantiated later, suffice to say that all positions explicitly affirm that God is not male.

Sexual predication is also apparent in non-complementarian thought. A Biblical egalitarian like Jewett in his systematic theology alternatively uses “he” and “she” in reference to God (Jewett 1991: 336-433). Jewett does not claim that this solves the difficulty, and ideally would like a new pronoun. Nevertheless, he opens himself to the criticism that instead of removing sexual polarity, by alternating pronouns he has promoted this polarity that leaves us with a “disturbing image of God-Who-Suffers-from-Gender-Confusion,”²³ Similarly, in endeavouring to counter patriarchy, Moltmann writes:

A father who both *begets* and *gives birth* to his son is no mere male father. He is a motherly father. He can no longer be defined as single-sexed and male, but becomes bisexual or transsexual. He is the *motherly Father* of his *only-born Son*, and at the same time the *fatherly Father* of his *only begotten Son*. It was at this very point that the orthodox dogmatic tradition made its most daring affirmations. According to the Council of Toledo of 675 ‘we must believe that the Son was not made out of nothing, nor out of some substance or other, but from the womb of the Father (*de utero Patris*), that is that he was begotten or born (*genitus vel natus*) from the Father’s own being’. Whatever this

²³ Jean Lyles’ impression after hearing Walter Brueggeman preach a sermon where he alternatively referred to God as “he” and “she” (Lyles 1980: 431).

declaration may be supposed to be saying about the gynaecology of the Father, these bisexual affirmations imply a radical denial of patriarchal monotheism.

(Moltmann 1981: 53)

We have covered the difficulties of the concept of generation, but there is a further problem. By speaking of “bisexual” and “gynaecology,” Moltmann has further sexualised the analogies of Father and Son.

Christian and Post Christian feminists have also sexualised the analogies “Father” and “Son.” This may be demonstrated by noting a difference between Christian feminism and post-Christian feminism. Although they have several similar presuppositions and concerns, their speaking of God is remarkably different. Christian feminism, because it seeks to remain within Christianity, changes speech about God to impersonal language. Post-Christian feminists because they depart from Christianity, leave the analogies intact, and in fact intensify them, speaking about the powerful influence of such symbols. Behind this difference are both positions sexualising the analogies. Christian feminists depersonalise and abstract the analogies because they believe they have sexual connotations. Post-Christian feminists reject Christianity because they believe that the analogies have sexual connotations, but since they leave Christianity, they have no need to alter the analogies. In fact, they *overemphasise* them to strengthen their position.

A further sexualising may be seen in the criticism levelled by Post-Christian feminists against traditional theology. Hampson argues that Christianity has formulated the Trinity in terms of male sexual experience—that traditional trinitarian theology could imply a homosexual relationship, for it has sometimes conceived of the Trinity in what sounds like homosexual terms when describing the relationships as an interpenetration of being (Hampson 1996a: 159-63). The question arises: Did traditional theology, even while trying to speak of the mutual loving

relationship between the persons of the Trinity, adopt language that based in male sexual experience? Alternatively, is this *perichorisis* only problematic to Post-Christian feminists because they have once again sexualised the analogies—hence the problem, and so they read back into past formulations their own conception? Hampson has made the claim, but it would be difficult to demonstrate that this lay behind the concept of *perichorisis*. Either way, or both, there is a sexualising of the analogy. Post-Christian feminists also observe the general reaction to changing “Father” to “Mother,” and conclude that the reason is sexism. Although in some instances this may be the case, the reasons may lie elsewhere, such as a commitment to the text of Scripture. Are Post-Christian feminists again imputing to other positions their own conceptions? Again, either one or both have sexualised the metaphor. In several instances, all positions have slipped into sexualising the analogies beyond their intended meaning.

Despite arguments that “Father” and “Son” are inherently sexist, sexuality is never attributed to God. Given that “Father” in its context exemplified a loving relationship, fellowship, authority, discipline, creative action, and care, and not sexual bias or tyrannical rule, many do not consider it oppressive. Although “Father” or “Son” may be used for oppressive purposes, the Bible never gives them oppressive meanings. The analogies may not be extended illegitimately, and then claimed to be oppressive. Granted, a redefinition does not ally Christian and post-Christian feminist concerns. Symbols are powerful, but there is always a disanalogy. Their power can go both ways. To someone who lost a father, it may be comforting; to someone abused, it may be problematic. Similarly with God referred to as “Master.” A slave may justify a rejection of Christianity on this basis that the symbol is inherently oppressive. Today, however, few consider the “Master” imagery as applied to God as offensive or oppressive, since slavery is no longer at the forefront of theological discussion. Carson notes an interesting case:

There are a little over a dozen words in the Greek New Testament that might in some contexts be rendered 'slave.' The only one of these that must be rendered "slave," if we follow Greek precedent, is *doulos*. In the KJV, however, the vast majority of occurrences of *doulos*, especially when referring to believers, are rendered "servant." It is difficult to resist the supposition that "slave" seemed too harsh and unattractive, not least because of the social and cultural realities of the time. Modern translations rightly render far more occurrences as "slave" than did the KJV.

(Carson 1998: 65-66)

Once the slavery issue lost its intensity, translations included more instances of "slave." Certainly, "Father" and "Son" is used more than "Master," but not because God is more male, rather because God is more like a father than a master.

3.3.5 Maleness, Image, and Salvation

3.3.5.1 Introduction

The analogy Son should not be polarised or sexualised—both lead to a denial of knowledge of God and place a wedge between our world and God. We have also argued that certain aspects such as generation, causation, subordination, or obedience should not be applied to eternal sonship. On the positive side, how do we understand the analogy of eternal "Son"? As an analogy, it is open-ended, and therefore we cannot precisely state what we may extend. Questions and objections may be raised when certain elements are carried over. Nevertheless, we should clearly state what aspects of the analogy cannot be understood exclusively in the redemptive-historical context.

3.3.5.2 The Son as God

One aspect of sonship that no Christian has hesitation carrying over is the Son's divine nature. As we considered, in some cases when we speak of the Son we speak of him as God (3.2.8). Sonship denotes his full divine equality, for the Son is God. This aspect of sonship cannot be understood completely within the redemptive-historical context. It is necessary to apply it eternally, for it is foundational for every aspect of the Son's work. This sonship is foundational for his priesthood, in that because he is Son-God he is holy, blameless, and pure (Heb 7:26). It is foundational for Christ's prophetic ministry, in that as Son-God he is at the Father's side, in the unique position to fully know the Father and reveal him to us (John 1:18). This aspect of sonship is foundational for his messianic kingly rule, in that as Son-God, he is the supreme ruler over all creation (Col 1:15), and his throne is forever (Heb 1:8). As Son-God, the Son will come in the clouds, a sole prerogative of God (see section 3.2.7) and usher in the kingdom. Only as Son-God can the Son's voice raise the dead from their graves (John 5:25) and can the Son sit in judgement over humanity (Matt 25:31). As Son-God, he is the almighty king—his messianic rule grounded in this aspect—adding to our argument that he is not eternally subordinate. Contrary to the claim that the Son's earthly subordination needs to have a basis in an eternal subordination, in fact, the giving of authority to rule, judge, and forgive sins has its foundation in the Son who is God. Only God can forgive sins, judge humanity, and rule over all. As God, the eternal Son is not subordinate in glory, knowledge, or authority. As Son-God, the Son is also the pre-eminent creator (Col 1:16; Heb 1:2), the sustainer (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3), and redeemer (Col 1:20; Heb 1:3). As this aspect of sonship carries through, it clearly blocks other elements and casts doubt on others. As Son-God, Jesus' maleness cannot be carried back into eternal sonship, for sexuality is never ascribed of God. God has eyes, ears, heart, hands, feet, and arms, but genitalia is never used. No sexuality is ever ascribed

to God (König 1993: 108). Likewise, Waltke argues that though the grammatical forms for God are masculine and analogies are mostly masculine, it is agreed that in the Old Testament God was regarded as non-sexual. In Deuteronomy 4:15-16, the command is not to make an image in any form—*man or woman*. Furthermore, in the ANE the custom was to sacrifice male animals to male gods and female animals to female gods; but in Israel both male and female were sacrificed to God (Lev 3:1; 4:23, 28) (Waltke & O'Connor 1990: 108-09). As Son-God, maleness may not be predicated of him. Therefore, eternal sonship has nothing to do with maleness.

3.3.5.3 Christ as the archetypal image of God

In carrying forward our discussion about the significance of the maleness of Christ and the meaning of eternal sonship, we now raise two questions. First, considering the relationship between sonship and image, does Christ as the image of God apply solely post-incarnation, or is he the image of God before the incarnation? Second, what is the relationship, if any, between the masculine incarnation and Christ as the image of God? In section 3.2.8, we argued for the connection between sonship and image, that to speak of Christ as Son is to emphasize that he is in the image of God. How then is the Son as “image of God” to be understood? Is it used in reference to the Son’s incarnate state, his eternal state, or both? There are diverse opinions on this question. Berkouwer does not attempt to address the question whether “image” in Colossians 1:15 applies to the pre-existence or incarnate state of the Son, and claims that we cannot make a distinction between the Son in his pre-existence and his incarnation (Berkouwer 1962: 107-08). Ridderbos argues that when Paul speaks of Christ as the image of God he is referring to his pre-existence and even uses the term to describe the relationship between Father and Son (Ridderbos 1975: 71). Cullmann adopts a position that understands “image” as referring to Christ as the heavenly pre-

existent God-man, the heavenly man who becomes a man (Cullmann 1963: 175-78). Kline sees the image as especially applying to a pre-incarnational theophany of the Son at creation (Kline 1980: 16).

We have already addressed Berkouwer's position by making distinctions between the various aspects of sonship, and deciding which are applied pre-incarnationally. It is doubtful that Berkouwer can consistently maintain his position. For instance, concerning passages relating to the subordination of the Son, like John 14:28, Berkouwer does make a distinction and argues that this is to be understood in the context of the Son's humiliation (Berkouwer 1954: 185-89). In other words, regarding such subordination passages Berkouwer does not apply them pre-incarnationally and thus makes a distinction. Neither is Cullmann's hypothesis of a heavenly God-man satisfactory. By applying the humanity of the Son pre-incarnationally, he undermines the decisive nature of the incarnation and the humiliation of the Son, part of which was to assume human nature. Despite Cullmann's position, there is no sufficient reason why image cannot also refer to bodily representation (contra, Hughes 1989: 28-29). The mistake is to take this aspect of image back into eternity. We allow the concept of Christ as "image" to include various features, such as: equality (Kleinknecht 1964: 389; Kittel 1964: 395), theophany, glory, representation (including physical). "Image," similar to "firstborn" are aspects of sonship, yet both have aspects in themselves.

Now considering Colossians 1:15, the christological title "image of God" may be viewed proleptically, anticipating Christ's incarnation and dwelling among us as the one who fully reveals God to us. Most commentators, however, note at least the clear allusion to Genesis 1:26-27. The passage directs us pre-incarnationally, while not negating the implications for the incarnation.

Does it make sense, however, to speak of Christ as “image” before the incarnation? As noted above, not every aspect of “image” is to be applied pre-incarnationally. But features like equality or glory (2 Cor 4:4) can be applied before the incarnation. Some, like Kleinknecht, argue that primary meaning of “image” in Colossians 1:15 is equality, that “image” implies the reality itself (Kleinknecht 1964: 389). Similarly Kittel argues that in Colossians 1:15 and 2 Corinthians 4:4 “all the emphasis is on the equality of the εἰκὼν with the original” (Kittel 1964: 395). And Harris writes concerning Colossians 1:15: “The degree of resemblance between the archetype and the copy must be determined by the word’s context but could range from a partial or superficial resemblance to a complete or essential likeness. Given [Colossians] 1:19; 2:9, εἰκὼν here signifies that Jesus is an exact, as well as a visible, representation of God” (Harris 1991: 43). In the concept of Christ as the image of God, there is an implied equality. This equality is the basis for the Son’s full revelation of the Father in redemptive-history. For Christ as the image is not to be less than the imaged, for to see the Son-image is to see the Father (John 1:18; 12:45; 14:9, cf., Heb 1:3a). A corresponding thought is found in Philippians 2:6, where Christ who is in the form (μορφή) of God, can be said to be equal with God. Furthermore, even the representational aspect of “image” can be understood before the incarnation, and in particular the various theophanic appearances, such as Isaiah’s temple vision (Isa 6:1-13), which John understands Isaiah to have seen Jesus’ glory (John 12:38-41). Finally, if Christ as the “image of God” has multiple backgrounds, from not only the creation narrative, but also sapiential literature, as O’Brien argues, “the term points to his revealing of the Father on the one hand and his pre-existence on the other—it is both functional and ontological” (O’Brien 1982: 44).

So considering the allusion to Genesis 1:26-27, Christ as the image of God reminds us of the creation narrative of male and female who are created in this image of God. This gives a decidedly christocentric character to the creation of male and female. An analogous thought occurs in Hebrews 1:2-3, where the writer connects the Son as the exact representation of God's being with the creation of the universe. And in 2 Corinthians 4:4, Christ as image of God is connected with being the glory of God, and is directly related to the creation narrative in verse 6. So as Christ is the image of God, we are made in that image. Christ is the archetypal image, the one from which humanity is patterned (Kline 1980: 24; Bruce 1984: 58; Hughes 1989: 13). Male and female are copies of Christ. This forms the basis for the incarnation. Since humanity is made like Christ, Christ can be made like us in every way (Heb 2:17). Regarding the extensive debate concerning the meaning of humanity made in the image of God, this much may be said: to be in the image of God is to be like Christ. What this means for our purposes, is that maleness is not part of this image. Both male and female are copied after Christ who is the archetype. To be like the Son-image has nothing to do with being male. We may demonstrate this further by observing that, in the process of salvation, it is this image of Christ into which *both* men and women are conformed—a point we will substantiate later. Furthermore, by understanding image as applying to Christ's pre-existence, we have included certain aspects of "image" into our understanding of eternal sonship. Image is another feature of sonship that should be carried back and not limited to the redemptive-historical context.

Our understanding Christ as the "image of God" is not, however, limited to his pre-incarnation, work at creation, or theophanic appearances. Christ as the image of God has particular reference to his incarnation and redemptive work. As the Son-image, he reflects and reveals the glory of God to humanity. This glory and image parallel one another (2 Cor 4:4; Heb 1:3a). To see the Son-

image is to see the glory of God (John 1:14) for the Son is the exact representation of God's being (Heb 1:3a). As the Son-image he completely and perfectly represents and reveals God to us, so to see the Son is to see the Father (John 1:18; 12:45; 14:9). Therefore, to include maleness into the Son-image includes maleness into God, for Christ as Son-image is the expressed image and exact representation of God's being. This applies not only to image as understood pre-incarnationally, but also includes the Son in his human incarnate state, for even in this circumstance the Son reveals the glory of God. Again, if maleness is part of this "glory," it makes maleness an attribute of God. If a male incarnation is necessary to reveal the glory of God, it brings maleness into the being of God. It is to say that the Son had to be male, for precisely *in being male* he reveals God to us. Although incarnate male, this maleness is not part of this image. The Son-image excludes maleness.

As image is applied to the Son eternally prior to the incarnation (Col 1:15, Heb 1:2-3), it demonstrates that maleness cannot be carried over. It is the image that both women and men are created in. It is also the image that fully reveals God to us post-incarnationally. Finally, it is the Son-image into which men and women are conformed—a point to which we now turn.

3.3.5.4 Our salvation and conformity to Christ's image

In the New Testament, believers are described as being renewed in the image of God. Specifically, believers are being transformed into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18). We reflect Christ in ever increasing measure, until we shall be like him (1 John 3:2). We are being renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness (Col 3:10; Eph 4:24). This renewal is part of our new creation (2 Cor 5:17), so as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image

of the man from heaven (1 Cor 15:45-49). There is “greater” to redemption that transforms humanity beyond the original Edenic situation. In each situation, in the original creation and the new creation, the Son-image is the archetype. The Son is the pattern for the first and new creation. As the creation of male and female is in the image of Christ, so our recreation is in the image of the Son. Consequently, maleness cannot be a part of this image; otherwise, it would mean that women are in some way transforming into a more masculine image. The conclusion would then be like some in church history who argued that in order for women to be saved they must become men. Our recreation into the image of Christ does not mean that we all become male, because this transformation is into the Son-image, which has no sexual ramifications. Women are not less able to become like Christ because he is male. They do not reveal him less. In Hebrews 2:6-18, the significant section on the full humanity of Christ, the writer states that Christ was made like us in every way. And in the sanctification process we are to become like him. If this image has any association with maleness, women have a permanent impediment in sanctification and imaging Christ.

We have argued that we cannot predicate masculinity to the Son-image, and our representing and reflecting Christ has nothing to do with being male or becoming more masculine.

Complementarians are continually careful to state that God is not ontologically male, and that the use of “Son” is not sexist. Nevertheless, it appears that complementarian thinking about maleness intrudes into image. This occurs on a number of levels. Hurley, for example, argues from Ephesians 5:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 11 that a woman does not image God or Christ in her relationship with her husband (Hurley 1981: 173). Patterson in agreeing with Hurley’s position, writes: “Of course, this particular imaging used by Paul to describe how the man and woman relate does not in any sense negate the woman’s [sic] being in the image of God *in other ways*” [italics

mine] (Patterson 1997: 152). Hurley concludes “there need be no implication whatsoever that women are not **the image of God in *other senses***” [italics his] (Hurley 1981: 173). Given that a wife’s relationship to her husband is generally substantial, permanent, and over many years, in a major area of her life she does not image Christ. Is she being recreated in the image of Christ and expressing that recreation solely outside of her marriage relationship? This position implicitly imputes masculinity to **the image of God or image of Christ**, for at least in her relationship at home, and presumably at church, this wife, in contrast to her husband, does not image Christ. It is a formulation that runs contrary to her creation and recreation in Christ. It clashes with the New Testament directive for **all** to imitate and become like Christ, the call for women and men to become mature and attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13). Not all complementarians would formulate the distinctions in this manner. Frame argues that women are fully in the image of God, yet in church and family, women image God in his submission, and men image God in his authority (Frame 1991: 227-28, 230, 232). But is this not saying something similar, that men and women (in church and family) image God in different ways. Presumably, only outside of marriage and church do women reveal the “authority” aspect of the image. It leads to the question whether a man in his marriage ever images God in his submission? Although stating that men and women image God, Frame writes: “As vassal lord, Adam is to extend God’s *control* over the world (‘subdue’ in Genesis 1:28). He has the right to name the animals, an exercise of *authority* in ancient thinking (Genesis 2:19ff.; cf. 2:23; 3:20, where he also names his wife!). And he is to ‘fill’ the earth with his *presence*” (Frame 1991: 231).

We also refer to section 1.1.1, where it is argued that not only in his humanity but also in his maleness a priest or elder is representational of Christ. Our position is directly contrary to this view that a male better or more fully represents Christ. We have argued that maleness has nothing

to do with representing and revealing Christ. Christ as the Son-image is the pattern into which both men and women are created and recreated. The Son-image fully reveals the glory of God to us. If maleness is a necessity for the Son-image to reveal God, it imputes maleness to God, and therefore maleness becomes a necessity for us to fully reveal God. If it necessary for elders or priests to be male in order to fully represent Christ, then it becomes a necessity for women to become more masculine or remain less Christ-like. It is hard to see how such a position does not bring maleness into image and therefore divine being, an outcome that all positions explicitly disallow. Finally, complementarians also make the connection between maleness and the name “Son,” so that a male incarnation is in some way revelational of God’s character (1.1.2). The male incarnation is not cultural accommodation, and has to do with profound religious truths and the ways things are. There could not have been a female incarnation even if there was an original matriarchal society (Kassian 1992: 146). And in speaking about the masculine imagery for God, Waltke writes: “His representations and incarnation are inseparable from his being” (Waltke 1995: 37). Our position is that there is a connection between Son and maleness on a redemptive-historical level, but maleness does not apply to eternal sonship. As Son-image, and Son-God, there is not a connection with maleness. There is nothing intrinsic to God’s being that necessitates a masculine incarnation. The reason lies elsewhere.

In light of our recreation into the image of Christ, it is important to affirm that the foundation for this salvation is Christ’s eternal sonship. We argued that as Son-God and Son-image, maleness cannot be predicated of eternal sonship. It is this eternal sonship, however, which is the foundation for Christ’s priestly work. As Son-God he is holy, blameless, and pure—the basis for bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). The “sons” who are brought to glory include men and women. As eternal Son, he is fully able to save his people—both women and men—who are

recreated into his image. Complementarians argue that a representative can save everyone, that a male saviour can save women. This is correct, but if maleness is foundational to this representation and salvation, then women are excluded. The reason is that it brings maleness into eternal sonship, which is the basis for Christ's priestly work. Once this happens, historical incarnate maleness becomes inextricably tied with eternal maleness, and therefore excludes femaleness. Nevertheless, maleness is not part of eternal sonship, so Christ's maleness does not undermine his priestly role and his representation and salvation of women.

As Son-prophet and Son-priest, Christ's revelation and work of salvation are inevitably linked, each established in eternal sonship. Can Jesus' maleness be ontologically necessary for revelation but not for salvation or vice versa? Such a contrast conflicts with Christ's eternal sonship, which forms the foundation for his priesthood *and* prophetic role. We conclude that to claim that maleness is necessary for one, in fact brings maleness into the other. To make maleness foundational for the Son's prophetic role incorporates maleness in that foundation which is eternal sonship. Once maleness is in that position, it becomes the basis for Christ's priestly role, since his priesthood is also based in eternal sonship.

3.3.6 Christ and Sophia

3.3.6.1 Introduction

Many non-complementarians use Sophia imagery to argue for a non-androcentric christology (1.2.3.2.b & 1.3.5.6). The use of Sophia imagery raises a number of concerns, which we now need

to address: What is the significance of the connection between Christ and Wisdom? Does this connection expand our view of Christ and move us towards a non-androcentric christology? In terms of the flow of our discussion, does “Sophia” bring a balance and corrective to “Son”? In our biblical-theological approach, there are two main areas of consideration: the figure of Wisdom in Proverbs and the use of Logos in John’s prologue.

3.3.6.2 Wisdom in Proverbs

It is sometimes argued that the feminine gender of חָכְמָה or σοφία has theological significance; that we can derive interpretative conclusions about thought structure from grammatical structure.

James Barr has addressed this abuse of grammatical gender (Barr 1961: 39-40). The fallacy of this argument is easily demonstrated by comparing the gender of the word in one language with its gender in another language. We agree with Barr that at times, gender in language corresponds to the actual difference between male and female, but in other cases, it does not. Barr concludes:

“The phenomenon of grammatical gender is logically haphazard in relation to the real distinctions between objects or to the distinctions thought to exist between them” (Barr 1961: 40). Waltke concurs: “Modern linguists agree that grammatical gender serves only in part to denote sexual differences among animate beings. The primary function of various systems of gender is syntactic; gender is one of the *concord systems* that connect related words within a sentence” (Waltke & O’Connor 1990: 99).

The essential argument from Wisdom, however, is that Wisdom is intentionally portrayed as a woman. Johnson is concerned about the “significance of the gender of personified Wisdom” (Johnson 1985: 262). The connection is made between (1) Christ as the Wisdom of God, (2)

Wisdom portrayed as a woman, and (3) Wisdom, in some instances, has divine attributes. The argument rests on the relationship between these three points. Johnson is aware of a number of different interpretations given to the figure of Wisdom, and that not all fit with her thesis, although her preference is for Wisdom as a personification of God (Johnson 1985: 271-76). Nevertheless, our concern particularly relates to the relevance of *feminine* Wisdom. The question is: why was such an important figure portrayed as a woman?

Waltke cites the work of Karl Brugmann who argued that “when either [primitive people or poets] personified a lifeless concept into a living being, it was the grammatical form of the noun that, through the psychological impulse of analogy, . . . decided the definite direction of the gender—whether it should be masculine or feminine. . . .” (Waltke & O’Connor 1990: 100). The example which Waltke provides to confirm this in certain cases is חָכְמָה, where Hebrew poets have personified the noun, according to gender, into Lady Wisdom, hostess (Prov 9:1-6), sister (Prov 7:4), and mediatrix (Prov 1:20-33) (Waltke & O’Connor 1990: 100). We would add guide (Prov 6:22) and child (Prov 8:22-31).

Although Brugmann was speaking about Indo-European languages (Ibrahim 1973: 34, 92-93), it is suggestive and the sage may well have pictured חָכְמָה as a woman based solely upon the grammatical form of the noun. As noted, there is no definite link between gender and thought structure, thus חָכְמָה, being a feminine noun, does not necessarily correspond to an external reality in the Hebrew mind. The sage, however, could have easily portrayed חָכְמָה as masculine. The question still remains: why, for such an exceptionally important figure, was חָכְמָה intentionally developed as a woman?

We offer another reason why חכמה was personified as a woman, and this relates to the sage's purposes in the book of Proverbs. This is observed in reference to: (1) the contrast between the adulterous wife and virtuous wife, and (2) the striking similarity between wisdom and the virtuous wife. This may be represented as follows:

The Adulterous Wife

1. She is found everywhere (7:11, 12).
2. She left her husband (2:17).
3. She lies (30:20).
4. Her house leads to death and is spiritually deficient (2:18; 7:27; 9:18).
5. She is unwise and devoid of understanding (5:6; 9:13)
6. She is beautiful (6:25).
7. She is manipulative (7:10).
8. She is immodest and proud (7:11; 9:13).
9. She is a trap (23:28).
10. Her speech is corrupt (5:3-4; 6:24; 7:5, 21; 22:14).
11. (She is a curse and like decay in her husband's bones (12:4)).
12. (She is quarrelsome and bad tempered (21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15)).
13. She will take everything you have (5:10; 6:26).

Wisdom

1. Wisdom is a crown of splendour (1:9; 4:9).
2. Wisdom is a gift of God (2:6).
3. Wisdom is pleasant to your soul (2:10).
4. Will protect you from adultery (2:16; 6:24; 7:5).
5. Wisdom brings honour (3:4; 3:35).
6. She is more precious than rubies (3:15; 8:11).
7. All her ways are pleasant (3:17).
8. You will have no fear of sudden disaster (3:25).
9. Whoever finds wisdom receives favour from the Lord (8:35).
10. Wisdom provides truthful teaching (4:2).

The Virtuous Wife

1. She is difficult to find (31:10).
2. She is faithful to her husband (31:11).
3. She speaks the truth (31:26).
4. Her house leads to blessing and is spiritually abundant (31:11, 28).
5. She is wise (31:26).
6. She is not necessarily beautiful (31:30).
7. She is trustworthy (31:11).
8. She is modest and humble (31:25; 31:30).
9. She brings freedom (31:11).
10. Her speech is pure (31:26).
11. She is a blessing and her husband's crown (12:4).
12. She is kind and pleasant (31:10-12, 28).
13. She is worth more than money can buy (31:10-11).

The Virtuous Wife

1. She is her husband's crown (12:4).
2. A wife is a gift from the Lord (18:22).
3. A wife is pleasant to the soul (31:11, 28).
4. She will protect you from adultery (5:15-19; 31:11, 28-29).
5. She brings honour (31:23, 31).
6. She is worth far more than rubies (31:10).
7. All her ways are good and pleasant (31:12, 15, 20, 28-29).
8. She prevents sudden disasters (31:11, 21).
9. Whoever finds a wife receives favour from the Lord (18:22).
10. She gives faithful instruction (31:26).

Wisdom and the virtuous woman are equated in Proverbs 9:1-6. Similarly, Folly and the adulterer are equated in Proverbs 9:13-18. In the book of Proverbs the female personification of חכמה fits the intention of the sage in contrasting Wisdom with Folly and the numerous similarities between the excellent wife and Wisdom, who are both set in opposition to the adulterous prostitute and Folly. For instance, in Proverbs 9 both Wisdom and Folly offer meals (Prov 9:2, 17) although one is meat and wine, the other bread and water. Both make calls from the high places (Prov 9:3, 14), and to the simple (Prov 9:4, 16). One brings life, the other death (Prov 9: 6, 18). Both have houses, yet one is seven-pillared, the other a cemetery (Prov 9:1, 14, 18). So not only is Wisdom portrayed as a woman, but also Folly. She is the exemplar of anti-Wisdom; her character being one of corrupt speech, deception, and lack of knowledge and understanding. Her house is nothing less than a doorway to the grave. We can readily make the connection between her and Satan, who is the father of lies (John 8:44), deceives the world (Rev 12:9), had the power of death (Heb 2:14), and whose goal is the destruction of humanity (1 Pet 5:8). Even though this personification is of secondary importance to Wisdom, no implications, however, may be drawn from the female gender of Folly. Boström writes: “[I]t is quite possible that one of the main reasons for presenting wisdom in personified form was as a literary and moral counterbalance to Lady Folly who is associated with seductive women and a self-destructive life-style. If this is the main reason for the personification of wisdom in these passages, then one should be extremely careful not to inject too much theological content into what may well be a purely literary phenomenon” (Boström 1990: 58). Overall, these female personifications relate very well for the sage’s purposes. Thus, the feminine figure of Wisdom (and Folly) in Proverbs may be understood as poetic imagination rather than an ontological reality.

What then about the claim that Jesus is directly identified with this female figure in Proverbs? At certain points this identification cannot be made, like in Proverbs 8:22-31. Many agree, following LXX, that Wisdom is described here as created or begotten. Zimmerli argues for Yahweh who “created wisdom at the very beginning, as the first of his works, and how she was present as his darling at creation and played in his presence” (Zimmerli 1993: 39; also, Crenshaw 1982: 97). Regarding the meaning of קָנְנִי (Prov 8:22), McKane favours “beget” rather than “create” (McKane 1970: 352-54). Boström also agrees: “The most significant argument supporting the translation ‘create’ here is the vocabulary of the immediate context, especially the parallel verbs נָסַד (ni) and חוּלַל (polal) of verses 23 and 24, and the extensive usage of temporal phrases which indicate that at the very beginning of time something occurred in relation to wisdom, which ‘acquire’ does not convey with sufficient force” (Boström 1990: 54). The word “child” (Prov 8:30) lends further support to this interpretation, although verse 30 hinges on the meaning of אָמוֹן. Reading “darling child,” following MT rather than “master craftsman,” ties in with the context. In addition, in verse 23, עוֹלָם should preferably be translated according to its usual meaning when referring to the past, that is, referring to the “distant past” rather than “eternity.” So for example, in Micah 7:14, עוֹלָם refers to the time when Israel entered and enjoyed the land, the fertile areas of Gilead and Bashan. And in Micah 5:1 (5:2 English), עוֹלָם refers back to Bethlehem and the house of David with the beginnings of the Davidic covenant. Hence, Christ’s human origins extend back to the house of Jesse.

Proverbs 8:22-31 portrays a child delighting before Yahweh, one who was given birth in the distant past. This child is one of the many personae of Wisdom in the book. Therefore, a direct identification of this personification with Christ is problematic. A comparison of this passage and our discussion on sonship shows a departure in important respects. The Son-God was not created,

nor was he given birth. He was from eternity and not the distant past. The Son, not *a child*, was at the Father's side (John 1:18).

We conclude that no theological significance can be derived from the gender of חָכְמָה. The personification of Wisdom may be understood as a development from the gender of the noun, and relating to the sage's purposes in Proverbs. Moreover, there are sufficient reasons why a passage like Proverbs 8:22-31 should not directly be applied to Christ. The connection is rather *indirect*, so we question the unconditional identification of Jesus with the feminine figures of Wisdom in Proverbs. Without doubt, Christ is the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24), but this description is not a direct correspondence with female personae, such as found in Proverbs 8:22-31. Nevertheless, as an indirect connection, it is relevant for our topic. The fact that Wisdom in some places has divine attributes, and that Wisdom is portrayed as a woman, adds to the argument that God is not male. Applying this to Christ, we note again that Christ, as eternal Son, is not male and that maleness cannot be attributed to his eternal divine nature. The reason why Wisdom can be personified as female is because God is not male. Johnson wishes to use the figure to break down the "necessary ontological connection' between the undoubted maleness of Jesus' historical person and the supposed maleness of the predominant Christian image of God closely associated with his historical appearance" (Johnson 1985: 289). We have little argument with this since we have approached a similar concern from a different angle, namely refusing to carry over certain elements from redemptive history, like maleness, into eternal sonship. Overall, it confirms what we have already concluded, that there is no ultimate necessity in God's being for a masculine incarnation.

3.3.6.3 John's Prologue

Many scholars have found a relationship between σοφία and λόγος. It is argued that the closest parallels with the prologue are to be found in sapiential literature (Schnackenburg 1990: 234-36, 257-59, 481). Furthermore, as many (for example, Jeremias, Bultmann, Schnackenburg, and Käsemann) make reference to John's supposed use of an urprologue—an early Christian hymn or poem—many non-complementarians develop this idea further and argue that John is adapting a prior hymn to σοφία. This position claims that σοφία is clearly seen in John's prologue, lending itself to a non-androcentric christology.

Rendel Harris raised the possibility early in this century as to whether σοφία is an alternative title to λόγος and prior to it (Harris 1917: 3). He argues that the prologue developed from Proverbs 8 and Jewish sapiential literature. So in substituting σοφία for λόγος in the prologue, Harris notes the basic similarity with Prov 8:22-30. In developing his argument, he finds further similarities between Proverbs (LXX) and the prologue, concluding that λόγος is a substitute for σοφία from a prior source. Harris believes that this can be demonstrated since Jesus is identified not only with σοφία but also with λόγος. He writes: "Thus behind the Only-Begotten Son of God to whom John introduces us, we see the Unique Daughter of God, who is His Wisdom, and we ought to understand the Only-Begotten Logos-Son as an evolution from the Only-Begotten Sophia-Daughter" (Harris 1917: 13). In other words, behind John's λόγος christology there lies a prior σοφία christology.

Hartmut Gese has argued in a similar manner but with more development (Gese 1977). He also finds a direct connection between the prologue and Old Testament statements on wisdom (Gese

1981: 51-52). Gese provides many parallels between σοφία and λόγος, namely: pre-existence, divinity, cause of life, creator of all, agent of revelation, one who seeks to live with people, and one who is rejected by some yet through whom others may become “children of wisdom.” At the end of the λόγος hymn (John 1:18) Gese finds a description of wisdom on God’s lap, the ἡνίκα (child) known from Prov 8:30 (Gese 1981: 31, 54). For Gese, in John’s prologue wisdom theology is matured and fulfilled.

While acknowledging that many writers use sources and not denying the possibility of an urprologue, a recreation of an urprologue is fraught with difficulties and tends to neglect the intent of the author.²⁴ The urprologue may well have been a hymn to λόγος, or even if John did use a hymn to σοφία, he used the word λόγος *not* σοφία, so John’s intended meaning should be taken from the word used, not from what he possibly did not use. The exegesis of the prologue is not dependent on a reconstruction of a prior hymn. Like all words, in determining the meaning of λόγος in John 1:1-18 care should be taken: (1) to recognize that context basically determines the meaning of the word (Silva 1983: 139), (2) to take account of the semantic domain of the word²⁵, and (3) not to confuse the word λόγος with a theological concept, that is, overload the word with theological meaning (Silva 1983: 106-08; Poythress 1987: 74-79).

²⁴ Nigel Turner writes: “We must leave the question [of sources] open, concluding that if the evangelist used written sources, their distinctive character is not discernable through the finishing work which he or a subsequent editor accomplished on his material.” (quoted by, Poythress 1984: 356, n. 8).

²⁵ For instance, in Louw and Nida (Louw & Nida 1988: 153, 225), there is no synonymy or hyponymy in the semantic domains of λόγος and σοφία. It is possible that illegitimate jump has been made between σοφία and λόγος, and that the connection has been made by importing the theological concept of “wisdom” into the word λόγος — a process that overloads the word with theological meaning.

Apart from these concerns, the main argument for a connection between wisdom and John's prologue depends almost entirely on parallels (for example, Scott 1992: 94-115). With John's Gospel, this approach has its difficulties because of the universal character of Johannine vocabulary. Carson notes that one of the reasons why people are able to find numerous parallels between John and other literature is because John's vocabulary may be found in almost any religion (Carson 1991b: 59). Carson refers to Robert Kysar who has demonstrated this problem of parallels by comparing the work of Dodd and Bultmann where they try to determine the background of the prologue (Kysar 1970). In their use of 320 references of primary literature outside the New Testament, only 6% of the passages cited are used by *both* Dodd and Bultmann. Although this critique applies specifically to non-Christian influences, the danger is present in finding biblical parallels. The parallels offered by non-complementarians are by no means *unique* to wisdom literature.

John's significant use of the Old Testament is well known and documented (for example, Freed 1965). Despite the parallels offered for Wisdom, an argument can be made for the significant influence of the creation narrative of Genesis 1 on the prologue. The opening words of the prologue Ἐν ἀρχῇ (repeated in verse 2) connect us with the בְּרֵאשִׁית of Genesis 1:1. The connection of verses 1-5 with the Genesis 1 account is further observed in (1) John's use of similar words, such as: θεός, φῶς, and σκοτία; (2) his probable replacement of the expression בְּרֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶחַת הָאָרֶץ with the phrase δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο in verses 3 and 10 (Borgen 1972: 119); and (3) in his development of parallel concepts. There is a development from the physical darkness (Gen 1:2) to the spiritual darkness of unbelief that has not overcome/understood (a possible dual meaning of κατέλαβεν) the light of Christ (John 1:5). The theme of light develops from the creation of physical light to the light of Christ as primarily seen in

his person and work, his discourses and signs. We say “development” because “darkness,” like “waters,” in Genesis 1:2 would also have a negative connotation for an Israelite. There is also the development from the creation of physical life (Gen 1:1-31) to the bringing of spiritual life (John 1:4)

In Genesis 1, creation is attributed to God’s word by the recurring statement, “and God said.” It is the word of God that created the heavens and earth, that brought forth light, and that created life including humanity. Similarly in John’s prologue, creation is attributed to the λόγος (v. 3, 10) who was in the beginning with God (v. 1, 2). It is apparent that John, in his use of λόγος, connects it with the word of God in Genesis 1. John uses λόγος as a verbal echo back to God speaking in Genesis 1:3-29 (Louw & Nida 1988). Thus John’s λόγος is to be translated “Word.” So in connecting Christ with the creation account, John develops from the first Genesis to a second Genesis, from the first creation to a new creation, that is, the coming of the λόγος into the world is an event as momentous as the original creation. Thus, Cullmann concludes that the connection back to the creation narrative of Genesis is so important for John that any other connection is only of secondary importance (Cullmann 1963: 262).

Readers would have recalled the Genesis account. There are, however, other Old Testament parallels, like the ministry of Moses, the tabernacle, wilderness experience, law, and *shekina* presence. Compare, for example, Exodus 33:7-23 and John 1:14, 17, and 18. The readers also may well have taken the prologue to refer to Wisdom, although this point is disputed. Carson writes: “. . . the lack of Wisdom terminology in John’s Gospel suggests that the parallels between Wisdom and John’s Logos may stem less from direct dependence than from common dependence on Old Testament uses of ‘word’ and *Torah*, from which both have borrowed” (Carson 1991b: 115-16).

This may be true, yet an author may draw heavily from one aspect, that is, more the concept than the terminology. Alternatively, perhaps the similarities between the prologue and wisdom literature arise because both go back to creation. Numerous biblical parallels are apparent, so we grant that wisdom is included in the parallels. But as one among several parallels, there is not a *unique* relationship. Thus, our conclusion remains the same as we ended our discussion on Wisdom in Proverbs. More problematic is the claim that John essentially changed an urprologue to Wisdom, and gave it an androcentric twist. John's use of λόγος should be interpreted in the context that we have. To use σοφία to balance out any masculine inferences of λόγος is unnecessary. We have already argued that no theological significance can be drawn from gender, and this includes John's use of the masculine noun λόγος. Finally, using the relationship between Jesus and Wisdom to call Jesus "Sophia" or "Daughter" instead of "Son" is a considerable and far-reaching step, which deserves separate consideration.

3.3.7 Christ as "Daughter"?

May we speak of Christ as "Daughter"? Given that God is beyond sexuality, and that Jesus is the Wisdom of God, is it legitimate to speak of Christ as "Daughter," and in so doing emphasise that Christ is not male in his eternal being? With the tendency to opt for polar positions regarding sonship, an approach from above will say, "no," because "Son" is a name in its most original sense. An approach from below will say, "yes," because "Son" is a name solely arising from the cultural situation.

Our judgement is that certain elements of sonship such as the full divinity, image, and a relationship of love, are to be applied to eternal sonship. The question arises whether these

elements can equally be applied to an eternal Daughter. Even if subordination and obedience are taken back, the question still remains. May we change the divine name “Son” to “Daughter” without losing any meaning, and as it is argued, gain meaning by emphasising that God is not male? We offer some reasons why this should not be done.

3.3.7.1 Redemptive-historical ties and the Son’s continuing ministry

While it is true that what we have said of eternal Son—equality, image, love—in modern Western culture may be attributed to a Daughter, eternal sonship is integrally and inextricably connected to the fullness of sonship in the redemptive context. The redemptive-historical sonship of Christ is to be understood in many different ways, relating to: firstborn, heir, Israel, incarnation, prophet, priest, king, obedience, suffering, subordination, baptism, resurrection, exaltation, image, and equality with God. Although many do not carry through to eternal sonship, they are part of the historical context. For instance, in this setting, Christ was incarnate male, so “Daughter” has no connection to the historical incarnation. A similar point can be made regarding Christ as firstborn, king, prophet, and priest. For this reason, “Son” cannot be changed to “Daughter,” without radically disengaging from redemptive history, resulting in a Christ who is separated from the historical Jesus. Jann Aldredge-Clanton admits: “Referring to Christ exclusively in the masculine gender keeps the focus on the historical Jesus. A Christ who is exclusively ‘he,’ ‘king,’ ‘son,’ ‘master,’ ‘brother’ cannot be the Christ who is alive in the world today” (Aldredge-Clanton 1995: 4).

But it may be asked: have we not made a decisive break with redemptive history by claiming that eternal sonship does not relate to maleness? Does not a substitution of “Daughter” just further

emphasise what already has been argued? Of course, we do claim that aspects like maleness, humanity, subordination, and obedience are not part of eternal sonship; however, we do not change “Son” to “Master,” or to a different analogy to emphasise that he is not *eternally* obedient or subordinate. In speaking of eternal sonship we have primarily addressed the *pre-existence* of Christ, that as Son-God and Son-image, there is not an ultimate necessity to his maleness. What is significant, however, is that *post-incarnation* there is a decisive change. In redemptive-history, elements such as humanity, maleness, subordination, and priesthood are all related to sonship. There are other factors. A number of these historical aspects of sonship continue. Some, like suffering do not, but many do continue. Considering the relationship between sonship and priesthood, his work as Son-priest *presently* continues (Heb 8:1). He remains our permanent Son-priest, interceding for his people (Heb 7:24-25). He continues to be the Son-king who is reigning until all things are under his feet (Heb 2:8-9; cf., 1 Cor 15:25). And, although we have argued that Christ is not eternally subordinate or obedient, this obedience of the Son does manifest itself at the end of history (1 Cor 15:28).

There are also numerous prophecies, typologies, analogies, and relationships that relate to sonship or a male figure: (1). There are prophecies relating to the coming Messiah (Isa 9:6-7; Zec 9:9), suffering Servant (servant songs of Isaiah 40-66), Prophet (Deut 18:15, 18; Acts 3:22; 7:37), and Son of man (Dan 7:13-14), which are all fulfilled in Jesus. (2). There is the correspondence between Christ and Adam, so as second Adam, Christ answers Adam’s sin (Rom 5:12-21) and the eschatological goal of creation (1 Cor 15:42-49). (3). An analogy exists between Christ as the bridegroom and the church as bride (Matt 25:1-13; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:34-35; Rev 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17). (4). There is the unique relationship between the Son and Father portrayed throughout the Gospels, and particularly apparent in John’s Gospel (for example, John 5:17-47; 17:1-26). (5). A

consequence of our union with Christ, is that everything that is Christ's becomes ours, including his Father. Being "in Christ," we have every blessing (Eph 1:3), such as hope (1 Cor 15:19), redemption (Rom 3:24), freedom (Gal 2:4), heavenly reward (Phil 3:14), holiness (1 Cor 1:30), forgiveness (Eph 4:32), and joy (Phil 1:26). Every blessing of the gospel comes through our union with Christ—our adoption, justification, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification. So, in Christ, we become sons (Gal 3:26) and God becomes our Father. Thus, we are instructed to pray to our Father (Matt 6:9), and the Spirit of Christ in us calls out "Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6).

In the biblical material, sonship is tied to virtually every aspect of christology. We have argued that sonship is a broad and foundational concept for understanding christology, even more comprehensive than the common division in systematic theology of the work of Christ into prophet, priest, and king, or the division of the person of Christ into divinity and humanity. In addition, there are further analogies, prophecies, typologies, and relationships that relate to sonship or a male redeemer. Therefore, to change to a "Daughter" makes a definitive and critical break with redemptive history and the Son's *continuing* work.

3.3.7.2 The resurrection

Foundational to Christianity is the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:12-20). As Son, Christ is the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18; Rev 1:5). This aspect of Christ's sonship also continues. He is presently the firstborn from the dead. Furthermore, although the significance of the resurrection is not that he has a *male* body, his earthly body is now glorified. After the resurrection, the disciples recognise enough for us to say that Christ, at the very least, has masculine and Jewish characteristics. The two Mary's instantly recognise Jesus (Matt 28:8-10). There is sufficient

continuity for Jesus to eat (Luke 24: 36-43) and still have wounds (John 20:24-28). Although, we know little about glorified existence and these passages do not emphasize maleness or Jewishness, it is suggestive. Given the recognition of Jesus after the resurrection, it presents some awkwardness in changing to Daughter. As such, the pronoun, “she” still should not be used of Christ. Even Jewett, who changes pronouns in reference to God, acknowledges that we can only adopt a masculine pronoun for Jesus (Jewett 1991: 46).

Given all these ties in section 3.3.7.1, it is apparent that non-complementarians cannot attempt such a thorough revision of the text. Their main concern, however, appears to lie not in modifying the biblical text. Their interest is rather calling Christ “Daughter” in a new cultural situation where a daughter has all the rights, privileges, and opportunities of a son. Nevertheless, what we have seen is that even in this new cultural situation, Christ presently continues his work as Son-king and Son-priest, and is the firstborn from the dead. Even if sonship is entirely cultural there was still a masculine incarnation and a bodily resurrection. There is no apparent way around the particularity of the incarnation and resurrection. To claim that we can only refer to Jesus as male in his earthly ministry denies the present ongoing situation. Given this situation, the debate over Christ’s sonship is different from the concern relating to our sonship. When Scripture speaks of all believers as “brothers” or “sons,” a convincing argument can be made that this should be translated “brothers and sisters” or “sons and daughters.” This point is conceded by some complementarians (Carson 1998: 130-33, 155-56). In such cases, Scripture includes both female and male; but in referring to Christ, the title “Son” is directed to one who was incarnated male, bodily resurrected, and who continues his ministry as Son.

3.3.7.3 Who is Jesus?

One reason for the proposed change is to emphasise that God is not male, and to counter those who have brought masculinity into the being of God. The criticism is often justified, but the solution is not. Although eternal sonship does not have masculine connotations, the solution to the difficulty does not lie in postulating a Daughter, but instead to emphasise that eternal sonship has no sexual connotations. The solution is to accentuate, as we have concluded, that Christ's maleness is not part of eternal divinity, and that maleness is not foundational for his redemptive work. In fact, the proposed solution of "Daughter" is not going to work given all these ties we have considered. Precisely because of these connections, a change to Daughter is not in any significant manner going to balance out the sexual scale. If eternal sonship is viewed to have sexual connotations, supplemental imagery like "Daughter" will not counterbalance. Here Post-Christian feminists have a point: the nature of the text does not allow for dual imagery. Even granting that this is in a particular culture, and hypothetically, God could have done differently, there are still a myriad of theological ties and related analogies within the material. The answer that eternal sonship is not sexual is unsatisfactory to Christian and Post-Christian feminists. Nevertheless, we have seen that they *also* sexualise the analogy, hence part of their continuing difficulty with its use. Conceivably, in time the analogy "Son" will lose its perceived oppressive character, like "master" and "slave" in a previous age.

In conclusion, the use of "Daughter" is a movement beyond the redemptive context to speculation and other categories that somehow give us a deeper reality apart from Scripture. Instead of a solution, it creates fogginess about who Jesus is. Alternating between "Son" and "Daughter" creates an image that has no earthly correspondence, a vacuous and puzzling image we cannot

relate to ourselves, our world, or the Scriptures. As the Scriptures will have to be read through a complex hermeneutical grid, it raises the question as to whether intimate fellowship with Christ is even possible.

3.3.8 Conclusion

In discussing the implications of eternal sonship, we concluded that masculinity is not an aspect of eternal sonship. Complementarians who make the connection between Jesus' maleness and eternal sonship have brought sexuality into divine being. As Son, he is God, and as such, sexuality may not be predicated of him. As Son-image, he is the archetype from which both men and women are created and recreated. As this eternal sonship is the foundation for his priestly work, he is fully able to save all his people. As eternal sonship is the foundation for his prophetic work, he is fully able to reveal God to us. Thus, revelation and salvation is theoretically possible apart from a *male* redeemer. Eternal sonship is therefore not oppressive of women nor does it exclude women from salvation. Since God is not male, a figure like Wisdom may be personified as a woman, and related to Christ. Nevertheless, having argued this, we affirm that for non-complementarians to speak of "Daughter" is not only unnecessary but also creates confusion regarding the person of Christ and engenders an absolute separation with redemptive history. We have also argued that certain aspects of sonship in redemptive-history like subordination, derivation, or obedience may not be carried back into eternity. From a complementarian standpoint, if subordination is taken back, it conflicts with the male incarnation. If it is not, then innertrinitarian relations cannot be used to justify an equal but subordinate construction.

3.4 Jesus' Maleness and Creation

3.4.1 Approaching the Centre

If Jesus' maleness is not based on divine being nor is foundational for the gospel, what can we say about his maleness? If complementarians cannot argue for a male incarnation based on eternal sonship, they have to qualify the reason for the male incarnation. If, as we have argued, maleness may not be predicated of eternal sonship, complementarians have to base the male incarnation on God-ordained created order, the way God established the world, marriage, and redemptive history including Israel's cultus and the Church. In doing so, the male incarnation is no longer revelational in an unqualified sense. Non-complementarians, however, cannot consistently maintain a merely cultural approach. They have argued that in Jesus there is a "kenosis of patriarchy." This means that in the incarnation, masculine dominance is placed under judgment, for Jesus is humbled as a male. Non-complementarians cannot argue that the masculine incarnation was only cultural while also claiming that in becoming male, Jesus usurped patriarchy—thus giving theological reasons for a masculine incarnation. If, in the incarnation, Jesus reveals himself as non-hierarchical, and so undermines traditional male roles, he still reveals something about God—even if it is God's accommodation, subversion, and judgement of patriarchal culture.

All agree that God is not male, and that given the culture, Christ could not have been incarnated as woman. We have reached a position of qualified necessity, although the reasons given are different. So the vexing question is this: Did Jesus become male because of ANE culture, or because of God-ordained culture and ongoing God-established role distinctions. In other words, is Jesus'

maleness a result of an accommodation to a patriarchal society consisting of *culturally* defined role distinctions, or is it related to God-established roles and a created order which includes male leadership up to this present age? To put the question yet another way: is this patriarchal culture provisional or permanent? If it is provisional, then the maleness of Christ moves to the cultural side of things. The male incarnation would rather then be more cultural accommodation. Jesus was then male because a woman, according to that culture, was not allowed to teach and have authority. Some aspects would still be revelational, like God declaring through the incarnation that he opposes patriarchy. If, however, the patriarchal culture is God-ordained, Jesus' maleness moves to the revelational side, although not to an ultimate necessity where his maleness is taken back into divine being. Jesus was then male because a woman is divinely commanded not to teach or have authority. As male, Jesus then reveals the authority and Lordship of God reflecting the created order. As male, Jesus follows the headship given to Adam at creation, and the way Israel and the church were established. Some aspects to the male incarnation would still be cultural, like culturally defined male roles, clothes, and traditions.

3.4.2 Unchangeable Created Order or Cultural Accommodation?

3.4.2.1 Introduction

What would happen to the nature of God, the gospel, or the created order if Jesus was not male? We have argued that eternal sonship, which speaks of the nature of God and forms the foundation for the gospel, has no maleness associated with it. What remains is a discussion concerning the created order. Was Jesus male because of God-ordained culture, or was his maleness a cultural accommodation to sinful patriarchal culture? A not entirely different question is: Did Jesus have

to be a Jew? The answer is surely qualified. There was an established Israelite covenant community, and so Messiah had to be a Jew, from the line of Judah and David. Conceivably, God could have done it differently, and chosen the Chinese or Egyptians. There was no inherent reason in Israel why they were chosen. It was Israel's error to assume that God had chosen them because they were worthy of this choice, and deserved God's covenantal mercy (Deut 7:6-8). McGrath writes: "The fact that Jesus was male, the fact that he was a Jew, the precise nature of his teaching - all these are secondary to the fact that God took upon himself human nature, thereby lending it new dignity and meaning" (McGrath 1991: 295). Nevertheless, it is granted that our concern is more foundational. There is an extensive debate over the created order, an order that makes distinctions between male and female, not between Jew, Chinese, or Egyptian.

So is Jesus' maleness related to:

1. An abiding ordinance of male headship beginning in creation, and continuing through the New Testament and church period until the consummation?
2. A creation structure of male headship (as understood by Paul, for example in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, although not explicitly taught in Genesis 1-3), but open to transformation?
3. Cultural accommodation to a sinful (in contrast to God-established) patriarchal culture?

The first option is the complementarian position, where Jesus' maleness is connected to a God-ordained culture where authority is given to Adam. It is an abiding situation for the first creation, and as such, Jesus' maleness reflects this situation. The third option is the non-complementarian position, where Jesus' maleness is essentially God's accommodation to sinful patriarchal culture. Jesus' maleness is not based on a created ordinance of male headship. The second option, as far as

I know, has not been suggested. This position would grant a creation structure of male headship but allow for a transformation of this structure, along the lines of the Sabbath.

3.4.2.2 Differing perspectives, emphases, strengths, and weaknesses

In answering this question, we need to pick up from our discussion in chapter two concerning slavery and the Sabbath. One of our observations was the approach of the various positions from differing perspectives. Considering various positions in our debate, generally speaking, it may be said that complementarians focus on the normative (1.1.2), biblical egalitarians on the situational (1.2.2), and Christian²⁶ and post-Christian feminists on the existential²⁷ (1.4.5). Considering these perspectives, Frame notes that the three interrelate in our interpretation. One informs and corrects the other in a hermeneutical spiral. Frame writes: “We come to know Scripture through our senses and minds (self) and through Scripture’s relations with the rest of the world. But then what we read in Scripture must be allowed to correct the ideas we have formed about these other areas. Then as we understand the other areas better, we understand Scripture better” (Frame 1987:

²⁶ Although we have no particular section under Christian feminism to reference this, they do claim that experience is the starting and ending point of theology and hermeneutics. Ruether writes: “Human experience is the starting point and the ending point of the hermeneutical circle. . . . Systems of authority try to . . . make received symbols dictate what can be experienced as well as the interpretation of that which is experienced. In reality, the relation is the opposite. If a symbol does not speak authentically to experience, it becomes dead or must be altered to provide new meaning” (Ruether 1983: 12-13). Likewise, Schüssler-Fiorenza argues: “A feminist critical interpretation of the Bible, I would therefore argue, cannot take as its point of departure the normative authority of the biblical archetype, but must begin with women’s experience in their struggle for liberation” (Schüssler Fiorenza 1984: 45; also, Schüssler Fiorenza 1985: 128).

²⁷ For the categories of “normative,” “situational,” and “existential,” I am indebted to Frame (1987: 73-75, 89-90).

89). To the extent that each position excludes the other reality, it is guilty of reductionism—a negation in certain areas. We are proceeding on the biblical assumption that norms, situation, and experience interrelate and do not ultimately contradict; that God’s word, world, and image correlate. Given these differing perspectives we expect to see imbalances in each position. For those who emphasise the situational and existential we would expect to see a reduction or negation of norms. Given those who emphasise the normative we would expect to see a reduction or negation of culture and experience.

We have claimed that the complementarian position, generally speaking, has toned down social-historical and experiential factors. They imply that some passages are *beyond* culture, and inadequately deal with the inhumane treatment, torture, and ridicule of women through history and including the present day. Without significantly challenging the terrible history of the church in its treatment of women, the position leaves itself open to the criticism that it does not speak to our world or experience. With this lack, complementarianism finds itself at variance with the modern world. It faces the danger that the gospel will become unnecessarily offensive to the world, especially concerning those who apply their position beyond church and family. In claiming to begin with Scripture, complementarians sometimes give the impression that their experience or situation does not influence their interpretation. Christian and post-Christian feminists may be more self-conscious in this regard. When claiming to begin with experience, they are acknowledging the impossibility of interpretation without taking into account one’s life, race, sex, culture, and class. It is also recognised by complementarians that “there is a growing consensus within the Church that rejects male government” (Waltke 1995: 36; also, Schreiner 1995: 106-07). Complementarians acknowledge that they are even at odds with the majority of the church. In addition, one also finds statements like those that Schreiner made to a friend adopting a non-

complementarian position on 1 Timothy 2:9-15: "I would like to believe the position you hold. But it seems as if you have to leap over the evidence of the text to espouse such a position" (Schreiner 1995: 106). Here is a tacit admission that the interpretation of some complementarians runs contrary to their *own* experience and situation²⁸.

By over-emphasising experience, Christian and post-Christian feminists, however, find themselves at odds with Scripture. They make it clear that it is not just patriarchy that offends them, but a host of traditional attributes of God, such as his omnipotence, freedom, aseity, providence, and Lordship (Hampson 1990: 151-52). Some feminist theologians consider these attributes belonging to a former age. According to McFague, we now live in an age "in which we must exist with the knowledge that we can destroy ourselves and other forms of life. We prefer to live in a bygone prenuclear age, when God, the mighty King and benevolent Father, was in charge of the world" (McFague 1987: 14). In constructing a "theology after Auschwitz," the call is to go beyond a belief in the presence of God. They also depart from traditional views on revelation, sacrificial atonement, morality, Christ, and sin. So Sölle writes: "The Christian assumption that we recognize God most clearly in this figure of someone tortured to death goes completely against our fixation on power and domination" (Sölle 1990: 186-87). Moreover, in their quest to remove dualisms such as spirit-matter and male-female, Christian feminists take it further to remove dualisms of good-evil, light-darkness, and divinity-humanity (Brock 1980: 322; Heyward 1990: 196). The negation of the normative often leads to a position of autonomy, a hermeneutic of suspicion, and a construction of a new morality. The new morality reaches its full expression in

²⁸ In connection with pro-slavery, note the statement by Hopkins: "If it were a matter to be determined by my personal sympathies, tastes, or feelings, I should be as ready as any man to condemn the institution of slavery; for all my prejudices of education, habit, and social position stand entirely opposed to it" (Hopkins 1969: 6).

post-Christian feminism. By minimising the norms of Scripture, the justification for morality is undermined. One wonders, for example, concerning Hampson, given her basis in experience, whether her “good” is reduced to personal opinion or even broader social consensus? In other words, given her basis, how does she justify whether something is good or evil? The problem also arises regarding her view that nothing can interrupt the causal nexus of history. Surely, with a supernatural world-view, there is no difficulty. In fact, in a Christian world-view, God guarantees and upholds the causal nexus. We can ask Hampson, how does her position guarantee this causal nexus of history and the regularity of the universe? In other words, given her position how can she speak of the regularity of the world? In stressing experience, Christian and post-Christian feminist positions tend to depreciate Christian norms. Yet, the church collectively is not going to give up believing that God is good and present in our world. As Hampson agrees, the church is not going to part with its text.

Biblical egalitarians have a particular focus on the situation or culture (both ANE and modern). Given this focus, we also find them negating some of the norms of Scripture. A few egalitarians like Jewett and Mollenkott have a dichotomous view of Scripture and of Paul himself—the view that Paul at times taught out of his patriarchal socialisation, but in other places taught out of his gospel understanding. The notion that there was a confusion or contradiction in Paul’s thinking is unsatisfactory, and few biblical egalitarians have adopted this as a viable alternative. A less radical split in Paul’s thinking is seen in Longenecker’s approach where Paul, even in the same pericope, can argue for subordination from creation, and for equality from redemption. Longenecker writes: “At the heart of the problem as it exists in the Church is the question of how we correlate the theological categories of creation and redemption. Where the former is stressed, subordination and submission are usually emphasized—sometimes even silence; where the latter

is stressed, freedom, mutuality, and equality are usually emphasized. What Paul attempted to do in working out his theology was to keep both categories united—though, I would insist, with an emphasis on redemption” (Longenecker 1984: 92). Longenecker’s distinction between creation and redemption is valuable, but must be tethered by other concerns of exegesis, theology, and hermeneutics. His application of the distinction, however, seems to fall apart when we look at other issues. We noted that slavery is given a theological basis in the work of Christ, that is, *redemption* (1 Peter 2:18-21). The Sabbath is given a theological basis in creation (Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:8-11) and redemption (Deut 5:12-15). In fact, regarding our debate, Paul not only bases role differentiation in creation (1 Tim 2:13) but also in redemption (Eph 5:22-33). There is a tendency among biblical egalitarians to postulate novel approaches to certain texts: Paul was wrong (Jewett, Mollenkott), 1 Cor 14:34-35 is an interpolation and not authentic (Fee 1987: 699-708), the distinction between creation and redemption (Longenecker), or overly complex cultural explanations (Kroeger & Kroeger 1992). Although biblical egalitarians have attempted to provide alternative interpretations, it is significant that the majority of positions do believe that the so-called patriarchal texts are patriarchal, that is, they teach and require male headship. Complementarians maintain this. Christian feminists hold this, although they argue for an alternative normative tradition. Post-Christian feminists argue that these texts are patriarchal. In addition, even some biblical egalitarians, like Jewett, agree.

Apart from these weaknesses, complementarians and non-complementarians have unique strengths. In chapter two, we noted that the strength of complementarianism was its theological basis, and the strength of non-complementarianism was its transformation dynamic.

Complementarians have a firm position by arguing that God has established a creation order, and as long as the first creation continues, this order remains. Their strength also lies in the clear texts,

such as 1 Timothy 2:11-15 where Paul appeals to creation, and even the pre-fall situation. Their focus on the normative is also a strength for it maintains that everything cannot be reduced to culture, that there are abiding principles and morals that God has established, and that one cannot go beyond the text. As the complementarian position is strong, so is the non-complementarian position in different areas. The non-complementarian focus on broader principles like the image of God, love, freedom, and the impartiality of God has significant weight. If the complementarian strength lies in creation, the non-complementarian strength lies in redemption. Their emphasis on culture and experience is a strength, enabling them to speak more compassionately to this world and take significant account of the culture God spoke to and accommodated himself to.

Both sides have difficulties; the strength of the one is the weakness of the other. Is it possible to come closer together in this debate? As suggested in chapter two, each position is correct in its respective strengths. Similar to pro-slavery and pro-Sabbath, the complementarian position has a clear, firm, and strong theological basis. This should be recognised by non-complementarians. On the other hand, non-complementarians have a strong basis when appealing to broader principles. This also should be acknowledged by complementarians. Complementarians, because of their theological basis, need to recognise that others are not necessarily trying to bypass Scripture. Non-complementarians, because of their focus on situation and experience, need to recognise that complementarians are not necessarily being sexist when holding to their position.

We again affirm that complementarians are correct regarding the theological basis. Non-complementarians are correct regarding to the transformation dynamic. This is nothing less than accepting the strengths of each position. On the one hand, Christian and post-Christian feminists as well as some biblical egalitarians agree that texts like 1 Timothy 2:11-15 assign permanent

subordinate roles to women, and so concede that there is a theological basis. On the other hand, complementarians agree that God does not show favouritism and that all people are in the image of God, and so they also acknowledge the truth of the transformation dynamic. Therefore, the final question that remains for us is whether this theological basis permanently establishes patriarchy, or is there sufficient weight to the transformation dynamic to overturn male headship?

3.4.2.3 The weight of the transformation dynamic

From our discussion in chapter two, we conclude that (1) complementarians cannot *per se* reject a hermeneutic that emphasises transformation; since they use a transformation dynamic to maintain that slavery is wrong. (2) They cannot *per se* reject a transformation of a creation ordinance or structure, since they concede a modification or abolishment to the Sabbath. (3) Their position is not necessarily unchangeable, as the Sabbath with a stronger theological basis underwent modification. (4) Complementarians concede that certain aspects regarding women roles in the Old Testament have been transformed in the New Testament. (5) They have also modified the traditional church's teaching regarding the inferior status of women, and many now limit male headship to church and family, thus conceding that even regarding our debate, some post-New Testament transformation is necessary. Furthermore, some grant that commands in Ephesians 5:31-33 and 1 Timothy 2:12-13, could be transposed by "weighty hermeneutical considerations." (Yarbrough 1995: 192).

The error of pro-slavery and pro-Sabbath was to presume that the theological basis permanently established the institution. Complementarians assume that their position is abiding. Have they made a similar error? Is there sufficient evidence to conclusively determine the question? As seen

in the debate over slavery and the Sabbath, the position that goes counter to the theological basis has difficulty in arguing for a change. Nevertheless, with slavery and Sabbath, what appeared to be established commands and institutions, can and should be transformed or abolished. So, what is the weight of this transformation dynamic, which includes principles of equality, love, and the impartiality of God?

If the transformation dynamic is of sufficient weight, we expect to find in the complementarian position irreconcilable difficulties relating to this dynamic. If it is not, we anticipate the position to remain consistent with the given principles. In the case of slavery, the principles of love, freedom, and equality (image of God) ultimately contradicted slavery and what was thought of slaves—that they were “equal but subordinate,” suited to their position, needed protection, were inferior, and that God had permanently consigned them to servitude.

3.4.2.3.a Creation and recreation in the image of God: the equalitarian principle

The fundamental and perhaps most important element of the transformation dynamic is the image of God and its implied equalitarian principle. Historically, the church has argued that women are denied leadership because they are inferior. Apart from its clear error, it has a consistency: women are unable to lead because ontologically they are less capable than men.

Today, all positions affirm that men and women are created in the image of God, and neither is inferior. Complementarians, of course, affirm the full equality and leadership capability of women; but this equality is qualified by subordination of role. There is an “equal but subordinate” construction.

What is the basis for this subordination of women? Some complementarians, like Packer, argue that the subordinate role of women is grounded in her nature (Packer 1991: 20), so to depart from these roles is to put strain on the “nature of both men and women” (Packer 1991: 20). Elisabeth Elliot speaks of surrender as the essence of femininity (Elliot 1991: 398). And Piper argues that it is grounded in the heart of mature femininity (Piper 1991: 46-49). This subordination of role is established in who women are by nature. Complementarians divide over whether to apply this subordination of role universally, the majority limiting subordination of women to church and family. Now considering those who apply this subordination solely to church and family, we expect that for them subordination is not grounded in the nature of women. If women are subordinate by nature, we anticipate a universal application, since this would apply to every woman and in all situations. Nevertheless, those who limit the subordination of women to church and family regularly ground subordination in the nature of women. Knight applies role differentiation to church and family, but also speaks about leadership as a characteristic of maleness (Knight 1977: 9-10), and the ontological and ordained role of women (Knight 1977: 55-56). Waltke argues that church and family is to maintain male authority, yet he appeals to Goldberg’s thesis on the *universality* of male rule (Waltke 1995: 36). Similarly, Patterson argues that subordination only applies to church and family, and in this context, a woman’s subordination, like Christ’s, is *not* by nature, but voluntary (Patterson 1997: 124). Nevertheless, she agrees with Packer about the strain put on men and women if these roles are reversed. She argues that grace does not abolish *nature* but rather restores it, and that these *ontological* understandings are foundational (Patterson 1997: 150-51). Furthermore, she asks the question: “How is the woman’s *nature* [italics mine] affected by the Fall?” (Patterson 1997: 140). Her answer is that women now have corrupted subordination. Although limiting the application to church

and family, Patterson regularly speaks of a biblical theology of *womanhood*. David Knox argues in a similar manner:

But turning from the general social life, where men and women are equal, to those relationships of men and women in which the polarity of the sexes has significance, namely marriage and the home, we see both *in nature* [italics mine] and in Scripture distinctions which are never confused. Here the roles of male and female are quite distinct, cannot be reversed or interchanged and are not the same.

. . . Considered individually as members of society at large, both men and women reflect the divine attributes of authority, power and creativity. Both have authority and dignity, both have power, and both have creative initiative. But considered in their relationship, that is to say in the polarity of the sexes, the male displays greater authority (if only in the depth of his voice), greater power (if only in the strength of his biceps) and clearly his sole physiological initiative in procreation, that is, in creative initiative and causality”

(Knox 1992: 45-46)

Knox goes on to say that God is spoken of as masculine and incarnates as a male because, “he displays the male attributes par excellence . . .” (Knox 1992: 47). Again, Brown, in speaking about the role of women and men in the church, also speaks about an order of being (Brown 1995: 201, 206, 208), and created differences that cannot be changed (Brown 1995: 200). Finally, Schreiner argues that “Women are equal to men in essence and in being; there is no ontological distinction, and yet they have a different function or role in church and family” (Schreiner 1991: 128).

Nevertheless, he claims:

God’s order of creation is mirrored in the nature of men and women. Satan approached the woman first not only because of the order of creation but also because of the different inclinations present in Adam and Eve. . . . Women are less prone than men to see the importance of doctrinal formulations, especially when it comes to the issue of identifying heresy and making a stand for the truth. . . . What concerns him [Paul] are the consequences of allowing women in the authoritative teaching office, for their gentler and kinder nature inhibits them from excluding people for doctrinal error.

(Schreiner 1995: 145)

Although assigning a different function in church and family, Schreiner still writes: “there is a direct link between women appropriating leadership and the loss of femininity” (Schreiner 1991: 139, cf., 138). Complementarians routinely fall back to establishing the distinctions in church and

family upon woman's nature. In the end, it is nature that is the basis for a woman's subordinate position. Herein lies a significant problem.

(1). Why limit what is true by nature to only church and family? If all women are "equal but subordinate," why restrict the application? Either subordination is grounded in nature, and therefore applies universally, or it is not established in nature, and therefore one cannot refer to ontology. Complementarians regularly mention Goldberg's thesis, but why refer to this if you are limiting the application to church and family? Moreover, Goldberg argues that although males will predominate in hierarchical positions, there will "be an eradication of one-sex occupations" (Goldberg 1993: 115). This is precisely the point complementarians will not concede.

Complementarians also regularly refer to the homosexuality debate. One reason for their concern appears to lie in this very issue: that the subordination of women is grounded in nature, therefore for someone to deny male headship, is to minimize the distinctions between the sexes and thus open the door to homosexuality. Their apprehension arises from their founding of subordination in ontology. We agree that the differences between the sexes should not be minimized. Moreover, more recently, many Christian feminists concede this point. Katherine Zappone writes:

"[A]ttention to both biology and socio-cultural factors ought to be part of a feminist theological redefinition of human nature. This would mean that differences between men and women, and differences between women, shape the starting point of our theory building. What this requires of us, first and foremost, is the ability to move beyond the fear of 'difference' as an analytic category" (Zappone 1991: 92). Differences are not the essential issue, unless one of these differences of nature is women's subordination.

(2). If the subordination of women is grounded in nature, then it is not a mere subordination of role. It becomes a characteristic of being female, for subordination is inextricably connected with being. Significantly, complementarians not only find subordination in Genesis 2, but also in Genesis 1:26-27, a passage they use to establish the *equality* of the sexes. Ortlund writes: “There is a paradox in the creation account. While Genesis 1 teaches the equality of the sexes as God’s image-bearers and vice-rulers on the earth, Genesis 2 adds another, complex dimension to Biblical manhood and womanhood. The paradox is this: God created male and female in His image equally, but He also made the male the head and the female the helper” (Ortlund 1991: 99). Yet, Ortlund argues for male headship in Genesis 1:26-27 where “man” is used generically (Ortlund 1991: 97-98). Similarly, Patterson finds the foundation for headship in Genesis 1:27 (Patterson 1997: 149, 159), although arguing for equality from Genesis 1 and complementarity from Genesis 2 (Patterson 1997: 155-58). So even the passage that complementarians use to justify equality is qualified. Having qualified Genesis 1:26-27, subordination is now applied to being. Questions now arise as to whether complementarians can legitimately argue that they only hold to a subordination of role or function. How can a subordination that is based in nature be only a subordination of role and not being? Furthermore, complementarians still insist that a woman’s submission is voluntary. Again, how can a subordination of nature be voluntary and not necessary? The question also arises as to how men, who by nature are to lead, can ever submit to any woman? How can men obey the general commands of submission (e.g., Rom 13:1, 5; 1 Cor 16:16; Eph 5:21, Jam 3:17, 1 Pet 2:13; 5:5), if by nature, they are to lead but are relating to a woman in authority or to one who is older? Finally, if the subordination of women is grounded in nature, why claim that women are capable of leading? Groothuis has noted a problem with this formulation. She writes:

What determines the fittingness of male authority and female subordination? Nothing less than the “underlying nature” of the male and the female. A man is fit to lead by virtue of

his male nature. A woman, by virtue of her female nature, is not. Yet, traditionalists insist, a woman is perfectly competent to lead a man; nonetheless, for her to do so is for her to act in opposition to her true nature. It seems that a woman is, by nature, at the same time fit to lead and unfit to lead. She has the natural ability to do so, yet it is somehow unnatural for her to do so.

(Groothuis 1997: 75)

To establish female subordination in nature leads to the tension noted by Groothuis, that women are able to lead, commanded not to lead, yet again, it is against their nature to lead.

(4). Given the complementarian position, what will happen in the consummation? If female subordination and male leadership is by nature, it follows that this structure is an eternal structure, unless one argues that in the consummation there is a significant change of being. In addition, as seen in section 1.1.5, complementarians do not stop at creation to secure their position, but establish it in the Trinity. How then can male headship be established in male nature and the being of God, and yet only be applicable in this present age? If it is by nature, and grounded in God's being, how can there be a change at the consummation? Most complementarians, however, maintain that the present age structure will be abolished (2.2.2.13), but it is difficult to justify such a change if the present structure is based in ontology—male, female, and divine. Nevertheless, in agreeing that the current situation of male headship will be abolished in the consummation, complementarians have in principle conceded that leadership is not inherent to maleness, which runs counter to their claims. More consistently, Letham argues that male headship is grounded in creation and in the nature of God, and so he writes: “Consequently, there are grounds for assuming that this relation of order within equality will remain permanently as man images God throughout eternity” (Letham 1990: 74). There is, however, in the consummation, neither marriage nor giving in marriage (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35). The church will be perfected and unified under one head who is Christ (Eph 1:10; Rev 21:1-27). If these structures

remain, we can imagine a Sadducee argument: in the resurrection, a woman who had seven husbands, to whom does she submit?

(5.) A final point concerns the insistence of complementarians that their “equal but subordinate” construction does not mitigate the worth of women. In other words, assigning a subordinate role to women does not detract in any way from her dignity and value. When questioned about the worth of women, complementarians reply: “*There is no necessary relation between personal role and personal worth. Feminism denies this principle. Feminism insists that personal role and personal worth must go together, so that a limitation in role reduces or threatens personal worth. But why? What logic is there in such a claim? Why must my position dictate my significance? The world may reason that way. But doesn’t the gospel teach us that our glory, our worth, is measured by our personal conformity to Christ?*” (Ortlund 1991: 111-12). Paige Patterson also writes: “Equally obvious is it that role assignments and submission to various authorities are demanded in Scripture with no essential estimate of worth or value implied for the one in authority or the one who is subordinate” (Patterson 1991: 257). In addition, it is argued that this subordination of women in church and family is voluntary, not coerced (Patterson 1997: 124, 206; Knight 1991: 177). For complementarians, subordination does not imply inferiority, because all are called to subordinate positions—under magistrates, church leaders, and parents. Such calling, however, does not imply any superiority of the civil government, church leadership, or parents. Similarly, Frame argues that subordination does not impinge on a woman’s worth or ability to image God, for men are also placed under authority, Jesus placed himself under authority, and in submission, we reveal God (Frame 1991: 228). Finally, Litfin argues: “Submission of wives to husbands is no more logically inconsistent with ontological equality than is the submission of citizens to elected

officials. The one may be more palatable to the contemporary Western mind than the other, but neither one is more logical than the other” (Litfin 1979: 265).

By responding in this manner, complementarians have minimised the problem. Their argumentation may be used to justify the subordination of a race, nationality, or class (slaves, Africans, or untouchables)—that their subordination does not detract from their capacity to image God, for everyone is under authority including Jesus in his incarnation. It can be argued that in their subordination they image God so it is a position of high value, that there is no necessary connection between their role and personal worth, and that it is voluntary in the sense that God does not coerce their subordination. The problem, however, is the legislation. Even if we grant that some non-complementarians overemphasize “equality,” and that people are not equal in many ways having differing abilities, the essential issue relates to legislation based on gender, race, class, or nationality. The matter of contention is not whether we image God in submission or rule. The question is whether this subordination based on gender contradicts the equalitarian principle. Complementarians have not answered the dilemma that apparently faces them: does *legislated* role *based* on gender and personal worth go together?

It is true that role does not dictate worth. To be a president or a servant does not dictate worth, that is, the servant is not worth less than a president. He is not inferior or expendable. The point that is frequently glossed over is whether *requiring* a person to be a servant would be *indicative* of his worth? Why would one mandate such an action? It appears to imply some intrinsic characteristic that makes the person better suited for servanthood. It would be an ontology that fits the ethical requirement of service. To reply, for example, that citizens although of equal worth still have to submit to the government is to minimise the issue at stake. It is a minimisation

because any citizen is *permitted* to be in government leadership. On this basis, the requiring of submission of children is understandable for although they image God, by virtue of youthful nature they are unwise and in need of instruction, leading, and discipline (cf., parental teaching in Proverbs). It seems that the essential point is not authority structures *per se*, or differing roles, or differing capabilities. It is what is permitted or denied based on gender. It is not the requirement to submit, but the requirement to submit based on being, so that by nature you are confined to being led. The slavery debate demonstrated that although equality was held in principle, in practice the slave was considered suited to his position. With slavery, the problem was not subordination as such, but subordination based on being. Such argumentation for slaves is now considered racist.

Smith writes:

In short, racism from the Christian standpoint is a response that violates the equalitarian principle implied in the biblical doctrine of the *imago Dei*. If, for example, a person regards another race as an inferior member of the human family and seeks to deny it an equal opportunity for growth and participation in the common life, he is a racist. Racism is two-directional in its evil expression. On the one hand, it impeaches the impartiality of God and, on the other, it breeds social discord.

(Smith 1972: viii)

Everyone would agree with Smith's statement. Why then do complementarians disagree with applying this to our debate? An "equal but subordinate" construction if applied to race, class, or culture, would be rejected as discriminatory. We suggest a reason. What we have said about person and worth, clearly conflicts with the equalitarian principle, *unless* one has already grounded subordination in ontology. Complementarians do not apply a statement such as Smith's, because if it were applied to sex, the sexual differences inherent to creation would be minimised. In their position, differing race, class, or culture is not founded in nature, but the subordination of women is. Is the reason complementarians fail to see the relevance of statements like Smith's because they maintain that women's subordination is inherent to their nature? So although holding in principle to equality, they view women as suited to subordination? It would

appear so, given the manner of their answer to the problem of person and worth. Because women are *suit*ed to this position, there is no problem in *assigning* them this position. In other words, complementarians can claim that women are not worth less because of their position, because foundational to their view is that it is women's nature to be subordinate.

In our discussion, we have seen various qualifications:

God is not male, but . . .

Christ is equal with the Father, but . . .

Women are equal, but . . .

Complementarians affirm that God is not male, but there is a tendency to take over maleness into divine being. Although imputing maleness to God is denied, there are numerous troubling inconsistencies. By saying that maleness has to do with profound religious truths, the way things are, that God displays male attributes *par excellence*, and that God's being and incarnation are inseparable, contrary to their claim that God is not male, many complementarians implicitly impute maleness into the character of God. Similarly, in our discussion, we saw the full equality of the Son affirmed, but differing degrees of subordination are taken into eternal sonship. With women, equality is affirmed, however, there are statements which conflict. Women are viewed as not equal in certain respects: her ability to image God is often substantially qualified (3.3.5.4), her subordination is established in being, and she is denied leadership roles (at least in church and family).

As in the slavery debate, the transformation dynamic exposed irreconcilable problems in the pro-slavery position, likewise this dynamic raises serious concerns with the complementarian position. The dynamic, and in particular the equalitarian principle, may be used to demonstrate contradictory assertions in the complementarian position. If these are irresolvable, it is indicative that there is sufficient weight to the transformation dynamic to overturn male headship. In other words, it demonstrates that the theological basis of complementarianism does not permanently establish patriarchy. It shows that the New Testament was not ultimately establishing these commands in the nature of men and women, but giving the various commands to men and women a theological basis—a basis that is open to transformation.

3.4.2.3.b Principle of gospel love

The law of love and the golden rule are essential to the transformation dynamic. In our discussion of slavery, we saw that both pro-slavery and complementarianism incorporate love into their system (2.2.2.6). In other words, complementarians do not believe that love transforms complementarianism, and they consider love to be fully compatible with their position. It was, however, argued by abolitionists that a rigorous application of Paul's commands to masters and slaves in a passage like Ephesians 6:5-9 would abolish slavery (2.2.3.2). In other words, if what Paul commanded was consistently applied, the institution of slavery would be abolished. We agree with Clowney who argues that love does not change marriage, unlike slavery, in its essence (Clowney 1995: 228). Our question is whether love can change the structure *within* marriage. We are interested in the outcome when the commands Paul lays down in Ephesians 5:22-33 are thoroughly applied. Complementarians stress the irreversibility of roles in this passage based on the comparison between Christ and the church. We note that this reasoning could also be used

against the abolitionist use of Ephesians 6:5-9, that Paul describes irreversible roles for master and slave, especially by speaking of God as Master (Eph 5:9). Nonetheless, our concern is not so much whether Paul gives different commands to husbands and wives, but what is the practical outworking. This is not merely a pragmatic argument, since meaning and application are inextricably related. For the sake of argument we grant the complementarian interpretation of this passage, that Paul is giving different commands to husbands and wives, the husband compared with Christ, the wife with the church. We also concede their position that the mutual submission of Ephesians 5:21 does not override what Paul states subsequently.

How do complementarians define headship and submission in this passage? Knight writes:

Paul's direct command to husbands is to 'love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . .' (verse 25). This is clearly how the apostle demands that the husband exercise his leadership in everything as the head over his wife.

. . . In his leadership role as head, he seeks to lead by giving of himself to his wife in ways analogous to how Christ gave Himself to His bride.

(Knight 1991: 171-72)

Clearly, Paul is not stating that as head, the husband is like Christ in every respect, which would be idolatrous. Paul qualifies and limits the extent of the analogy. He defines what he means by headship: it is one of love and not rule (Patterson 1997: 201). Complementarians agree that this love of the husband is "a giving of oneself for the benefit of the other" (Knight 1991: 172). As head, the husband is to love in a suicidal manner. It is a complete giving of himself, a calling to *die*. In dying, he gives up his life, including his desires, will, ambitions, control, interests, reputation, and pleasure. It is a call to all-embracing (Eph 5:29) and ministerial (Eph 5:26-27) love for his wife. It is a continual love with the goal to serve another. Now how do complementarians view a wife's submission? Patterson describes submission as the abandoning of one's rights, desires, and energies (Patterson 1997: 210). It "denotes humility, selflessness, helpfulness, respect, and honor, .

..” (Patterson 1997: 220). This biblical submission is defined by the example of Christ, who “never considered Himself, His rights, and His will (John 5:30)” (Patterson 1997: 219). The wife is called to submit as the church submits to Christ. This submission is also all embracing (Eph 5:24) and ministerial, since in being submissive she is being a “helper.” It is where the wife yields her will for the good of her husband. It is a total yielding of her life, including her desires, will, ambitions, control, interests, reputation, and pleasure. In fact, this submission follows the example of Christ’s love in giving up his life. Patterson writes: “In marriage, the wife voluntarily becomes a helper to her husband just as in redemption Jesus Christ chose to humble Himself to die on the cross during His incarnation” (Patterson 1997: 206). What then is the difference, when the commands are practically applied? Of course, complementarians will claim there still is a difference in that the husband *initiates* this love. Although, essentially, one wonders whether at this point the distinction is semantic, as both give up their lives, both are initiating and responding.

Piper and Grudem acknowledge: “Husbands and wives will often yield their own preferences to make each other happy. That is the way love is” (Piper & Grudem 1991a: 414). And Foh writes: “Because the wife’s submission to her husband is an expression of the mutual submission of all Christians to one another, it is easy not to distinguish it from the command to the husband to love his wife, which is also an expression of mutual submission. In practice the two duties resemble each other” (Foh 1980: 197). Practically speaking, “love” and “submit” become synonymous. The heart of the gospel is loving submission or submissive love. Philippians 2:7-8 describes the submission and love involved in Christ giving up his life. Christ therefore becomes a model for our submission and love (Phil 2:3-4). On a practical level, Mike Mason writes:

The reclaiming of submission as the heart of love, and particularly of married or covenant love, is without doubt the single most demanding, dangerous, and important task that Christian couples have before them in the modern world, or in any age. It is a task that runs completely counter to an enormous weight of worldly thought and rhetoric, to say

nothing of contradicting some of our most powerful and natural inner drives. For where the task must begin is with a willingness to abandon the self, in fact to throw over the whole egotistical project of selfhood in favor of identification with others, letting go of the old self

for the sake of the brand new and better thing which can only be forged in the fire of self-abnegating love.

(Mason 1985: 154)

On an exegetical level, this is the position advocated by Andrew Lincoln. His commentary on Ephesians adopts a complementarian understanding of the text, that is, Paul is teaching complementary roles of husband loving and wives submitting (Lincoln 1990: 367-80).

Nevertheless, when considering the practical outworking, Lincoln argues:

Instead of assigning love to the husband and submission to the wife, a contemporary appropriation of Ephesians will build on this passage's own introductory exhortation (v 21) and see a mutual loving submission as the way in which the unity of the marriage relationship is demonstrated. Indeed, Ephesians itself elsewhere asks both love (cf. 5:2) and submission (cf. 4:2) of all. Both wife and husband can look to Christ as the model for the sacrificial kind of love required (cf. 5:2). In this way, submission and love can be seen as two sides of the same coin—selfless service of one's marriage partner.

(Lincoln 1990: 393)

There is sharp disagreement over Ephesians 5:21-33, yet in practice the positions may be closer than realized. It may be argued, based on the *complementarian interpretation* of the passage, that marriage undergoes a transformation, becoming a mutually loving and submissive relationship. Marriage then becomes a relationship where both partners lay down their lives for the glory and good of the other. As love and submission become synonymous, the so-called irreversible roles loses their force. If this is the case, love has transformed a key complementarian text.

3.4.2.4 Conclusion

In considering two aspects of the transformation dynamic, namely image of God and love, we conclude that this dynamic may be used to give biblical justification to an abolishment of the “equal but subordinate” scheme. The New Testament lays down principles, even within key complementarian texts, which when applied bring about the transformation of patriarchy. We asked the question: Is Jesus’ maleness related to: (1) an abiding creation ordinance, (2) a creation structure of male headship, as taught by Paul, but open for transformation, or (3) cultural accommodation to a sinful patriarchal culture? Our tentative conclusion is to posit position two. This grants the strong theological basis of the complementarian position. It also incorporates the substantial transformation dynamic of the non-complementarian position. There is a creation structure, but there is also transformation. The result is that Jesus’ maleness is revelational of the Old Testament cultus, the various types, as well as the Old and New Testament authority structures. These structures, however, are open to transformation, and as such are not of the *nature* of things. As open to transformation, there is something to be said of Christ’s maleness critiquing patriarchy. As male, he provides the supreme example of love and submission.

3.5 Conclusion

Jesus’ maleness is not revelational in an unqualified sense; neither is it only cultural. As eternal Son, maleness may not be predicated of him. We have seen how the maleness of Christ is neither grounded in the being of God nor is it foundational for the gospel of redemption. Therefore, revelation and salvation are possible apart from a *male* redeemer. Rather, the masculine incarnation is related to the historical situation. Regarding the created order, we advance the view that Christ’s maleness does relate to a created order as understood, for example, by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, although we are not persuaded that Genesis 1-3 unambiguously teaches this

structure. Nevertheless, we have argued that this situation is open for transformation. Therefore, God did have theological reasons for this masculine incarnation, not only relating to creation but also to the transformation of patriarchy.

The danger facing complementarianism is to impute maleness into divine being, and in so doing, reduce the glory of God to created things, fall into idolatry, and jeopardize the worth and salvation of women. The danger facing non-complementarianism is to make everything cultural, and in so doing, undermine divine revelation, morality, and the gospel message of salvation. By focusing on the norms complementarians find themselves increasingly at odds with the culture and experience. By beginning with culture and experience, non-complementarians find themselves at variance with the norms of Scripture. In trying to accommodate their experience and situation, they tend to adopt a dualistic approach to Scripture, or postulate unsatisfactory interpretations of certain texts, especially 1 Timothy 2:11-15. The church is moving towards women in leadership, a fact recognised by complementarians. The solution appears to lie, not in adopting either approach, but assimilating the strengths and rejecting the weaknesses of both. This means adopting the truth of the theological basis, and rejecting attempts to work around it. It also involves adopting the transformation dynamic and rejecting the “equal but subordinate” scheme as contrary to the ontological Trinity, the image of God, and the spirit of the gospel. Unlike slavery, the church is still in the midst of this debate. As observed, the slavery debate was not finally decided by biblical argument, but through the eventual change of culture and the conscience of the church, slavery came to be viewed as inherently contrary to Christianity. Similarly, it is quite possible that this will happen regarding this debate, and that the complicated issues will not finally be solved through theological, exegetical, and hermeneutical debate. Both positions have a firm basis as well as difficulties to explain. In addition, there are entrenched

presuppositions that dictate the course of interpretation. Goldberg is probably correct in saying that all professions will open up to both sexes. Long-held views about the limited roles, capabilities, and strength of women are being eroded. If this continues, to view women as subordinate in any manner will become unacceptable to the whole church. The important concern about controlling the hermeneutical principle of the transformation dynamic will then become less troubling. In time, the analogies “Son” and “Father” will lose their so-called oppressive nature. They will remain in use, for the church has and will never depart from its text. We conclude that in the incarnation, God honours both sexes, a position reaching back to Augustine (Oden 1989: 117)—by being born male of a woman (Gal 4:4).



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