Chapter 2

The imago Dei and the Trinitarian God

Introduction

This chapter compares the modus operandi of language about God with the modus operandi of the imago Dei. Chapter 1 explored the possibility of meaningful language, in terms of its symbolic reference and sacramental meaning that gives credence to what is said. The covenant between word and world (i.e. symbolic reference) ensures that there is something in what we say (i.e. sacramental meaning). According to C. S. Lewis, the language of religion is similar to poetic language, since both make use of metaphor. Poetic metaphor has to be met half-way, says Lewis, if the language in question is to have any meaning.\(^1\) The possibility, described as ‘meeting half-way’, accords with the conception of a covenant, on agreed terms of encounter, between word and world. In the case of language about the things of God, the assumption broadens to include a covenant between human language and the transcendent world, i.e. a world beyond the present experience of humanity.

This chapter continues the argument that it is possible, in however limited a sense, to meet God half-way, to be in dialogue with God in effect. But if it is possible to be in dialogue with God, the transcendent world is no longer completely transcendent. As noted in the General Introduction, Lewis describes male and female ‘not merely as facts of nature but as the live and awful shadows of realities utterly beyond our control and largely beyond our direct knowledge’.\(^2\) To say that male and female are ‘shadows’ of transcendent realities is to indicate that they offer a kind of access to what would

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2. Lewis, ‘Priestesses in the Church?’, p. 94.
otherwise be unknown. This kind of access is termed metaphorical or symbolic. The understanding that gendered humanity is a ‘shadow’ of the things of God illustrates the relevance of the *imago Dei* to the *modus operandi* of religious metaphor.

Following Steiner, Chapter 1 contrasted ‘covenantal’ linguistics with ‘non-covenantal’ linguistics. Stéphane Mallarmé’s denial of access to the ‘perfectly inaccessible “truths” of substance’ in the external world leads to his statement that to ask of the word ‘rose’ that it stand in lieu of the botanical phenomenon is ‘to encrust language with falsehood’. This is non-covenantal linguistics. Following Lewis on the way metaphor works, I argued that it is no good holding a dialectical pistol to the head of language and demanding how the word ‘rose’, could refer to a botanical phenomenon. Non-covenantal linguistics, current in deconstructionist thought, would conclude that language has no reference to external reality on the ground that absolute meaning is not to be had at linguistic pistol-point. Steiner writes that ‘radical doubts, such as those of deconstruction and of the aesthetic of misreadings are justified when they deny the possibility of a systematic, exhaustive hermeneutic’. He adds, however, that ‘between this illusory absolute…and the gratuitous play, itself despotic by its very arbitrariness, of interpretative non-sense, lies the rich legitimate ground of the philological’. It is the rich legitimate ground of the philological that forms a substrate for the terms on which the *imago Dei* is proposed.

How the legitimate ground of the philological might apply to language about God is canvassed in some detail in the Thomist doctrine of analogy. E. L. Mascall reports: ‘It is ... important to recall what the function of that doctrine is. It is not to furnish us with

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3 See Steiner, *Real Presences*, pp. 95-96.
4 Steiner, *Real Presences*, p. 163.
knowledge of God, but to explain how we come to have it’. Given revelation and the possibility of apprehending God, says Mascall, the question arises as to how it comes about that this apprehension can be expressed within the limitations of human language. He goes on to remark: ‘If the doctrine of analogy can explain how this is possible, so much the better; if it cannot, it is the doctrine of analogy that is discredited, not our knowledge of God’. According to Mascall, the doctrine of analogy assumes a linguistic meeting-ground between divine revelation and human apprehension of it; it then attempts to describe the operation of this interface. As will be seen, despite a claimed resemblance to the Thomist He Who Is, Elizabeth A. Johnson’s proposed SHE WHO IS as a term for God, appears to abandon Thomist assumptions about language for God.

The Thomist doctrine of analogy is considered in the fourth section of this chapter, in particular the presuppositions behind it. Given those presuppositions, the thesis goes on to explore gendered language for God and its application to the *imago Dei*. This is to follow what Michael J. Christensen calls the ‘via analogia’, by which the visible world provides a source of language to speak about God metaphorically. God is not gendered *in the same way* that humanity is gendered any more than a woman, said poetically to be like ‘a red rose’, possesses petals. Nevertheless, such figurative language for God is understood to give some kind of picture of what God is like as the description of the woman as ‘a red rose’ is intended to give some kind of picture of what the woman is like.

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This chapter considers the way in which such likeness can operate, linguistically and visibly, in contrast with proposals that run counter to it. The question of whether a woman is in the image of God was raised in the early church, alongside questions about Christ’s divine and human nature.\(^7\) The traditional answer has been in the affirmative but how she can be said to be *imago Dei* remains a subject of debate. This chapter considers three proposals in this regard. The first comes from Augustine of Hippo who, in order to include women in the *imago Dei*, posits an allegorized human capacity of mind as the image of God. The second is presented as an alternative to Augustine by his translator, Edmund Hill. The third, offered by feminist theologian Elizabeth A. Johnson, follows a method similar to McFague’s metaphorical models.

The chapter contends that a non-covenantal understanding of linguistic operation promotes a notion of religious ‘symbol’ or ‘metaphor’ that is self-contained or allegorical. The meanings of the terms ‘metaphor’, ‘symbol’ and ‘allegory’ are outlined in section A. The distinction between symbolism and allegory is considered for two reasons: firstly, due to its relevance to the claim that biblical metaphor is no more than a social construct and secondly, because proposals by Augustine and Johnson for the inclusion of women in the *imago Dei*, are argued to make use of allegory. The two proposals come from very different ecclesiastical periods. Section B outlines a history of allegory, in particular as it developed in Augustine’s era and beyond, and to apparent new usage in feminist ‘remythologizing’. Sections C and D appraise Augustine’s and Johnson’s proposals respectively. Section C also draws attention to the alternative reading of 1 Corinthians 11:3 offered by Augustine’s translator, that gendered humanity

\(^7\) See Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine’s Writing on Women*, pp. 54-58.
is made in the image of the *Trinitarian* God. Hill’s suggestion supplies the basis for the alternative proposal presented in this thesis.

**A. Visible symbol or allegory?**

The thesis argues that gendered humanity is in symbolic relation to the Trinitarian God as a candle is symbolic of Jesus as the Light of the world. This kind of thinking accords with the statement by Lewis that male and female are the live and awful *shadows* of higher realities. Lewis’s terminology is reminiscent of Hebrews 10:1: ‘[T]he law has only a shadow of the good things to come’. This shadowy existence offers a glimpse, albeit in the qualified sense implied by the term ‘only’, of the ‘true form of these realities’. A similar statement is made in Hebrews 9:24: the sanctuary of the tabernacle is said to be a *copy* of the true one. A biblical example of allegory, on the other hand, can be found in Galatians 4:24-31. Hagar and Sarah are likened to the old and new covenants. In this case, Hagar (as the old covenant) is not said to be a ‘shadow’ pointing towards Sarah (as the new covenant). Rather, the women are contrasted with each other. The picture of the women is based on a historical dichotomy between the two as slave and free. But the material representation of the two covenants in terms of the two women is, as Paul admits, an allegorical illustration. This section explores the distinction between symbolic likeness and allegory, in particular in relation to the *imago Dei*.

The use of allegory by the church is not new. But it needs to be clearly distinguished from figurative language that is understood to refer to an external reality. By the same token a concept of the ‘image of God’ that does not in some sense claim to represent the living God needs to be clearly distinguished from a concept of the *imago Dei* in its
orientation towards the living God. For McFague, as I understand her, the term ‘image of God’ operates within an extended ‘metaphor’ or model, with an orientation towards a constructed (or allegorical) picture of God. By contrast, Augustine assumes the orientation of the imago Dei as a ‘shadow’ or symbol of the living God. Nevertheless, he makes use of allegory in connection with his explication of the gendered imago Dei. The distinction between allegory and symbol is thus of key importance in relation to thinking about the imago Dei.

The concept of ‘symbol’ is relevant to the concept of the imago Dei on more than one level. First, as M. H. Abrams remarks: ‘A symbol, in the broadest sense of the term, is anything that signifies something else; in this sense all words are symbols’. This is to assume, contrary to a deconstructionist view, that words are able to signify something else, that the term ‘imago Dei’ is a meaningful term, that there is, in Steiner’s phrase, ‘a semantics of correspondence’. As indicated in Chapter 1, biblical language, whether metaphorical or not, would traditionally have been understood to carry this kind of symbolic reference. But the imago Dei does not carry symbolic reference only in the sense that all biblical language is understood to carry it. The imago Dei entails the notion that gendered humanity is also a visible symbol of the Godhead. This is to make the bold claim that there is some kind of symbolic likeness between God and humanity as male and female. Contrary to Stéphane Mallarmé’s denial of likeness between word and ‘truth’, linguistic reference is paralleled by embodied likeness in the case of the imago Dei.

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9 Steiner, Real Presences, p. 119.
10 See Genesis 1:26-27.
In ecclesiastical usage, a symbol is not uncommonly something that can be seen whereas a metaphor is something that occurs in language. But a symbol can also occur in language. M. H. Abrams writes: ‘In a metaphor a word which in ordinary usage signifies one kind of thing is applied to another, without express indication of the relation between them’. He also states that the term ‘symbol’ is applied to an object that ‘has a range of meaning beyond itself’. If the symbol is a literary rather than a visible one, the distinction from metaphor is not so very great. Abrams supplies the example of ‘the Good Shepherd’ for symbol but he could also have used this as an example of metaphor.

Pierre Grelot outlines the relation of symbol to metaphor in the context of theology:

A symbol does not describe the reality that it envisions and of which it gives a glimpse beyond the limits of natural understanding; rather, it evokes certain aspects of it, leaving the spirit to construct representations that, by intuition, will grasp something of the mystery evoked … It is a kind of developed metaphor that suggests realities inscribed in the understanding of faith.

It can be noted that ‘symbol’ is referred to here as a developed metaphor. McFague calls her ‘models’ extended metaphors but she does not mean by ‘model’ what Grelot means by ‘symbol’. Despite its etymology, McFague associates ‘metaphor’ with non-transference of meaning. To use Grelot’s terms, McFague’s metaphorical language about God constructs representations but, in her case, the power of the representations to refer to the living God is questioned. In Grelot’s definition of ‘symbol’, the idea of

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11 Cf. McFague’s observation that, for Ricoeur, ‘symbols’ are ‘non-linguistic bonds uniting us with the cosmos’ and that ‘the hermeneut’s task’ is ‘to interpret the multivalent, rich, ambiguous metaphors arising from the symbolic base of a tradition so that these symbols will once again speak to our existential situation’ (see Metaphorical Theology, p. 120).
12 See M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, p. 36.
13 Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, p. 95.
15 See McFague, Models of God, pp. xi-xii.
constructing representations is admittedly present but the focus is not on the constructed representations but rather on the reality of the mystery beyond such representations.

In an essay about women and the *imago Dei*, Rosemary Ruether raises a question about women’s ability to image Christ in the Roman Catholic Church: ‘If men can be “brides”, symbolically, why can’t women be symbolic “bridegrooms”?’ The pivotal word in her question is ‘symbolic’. Her question is of some importance in clarifying what is meant by the language of symbol and metaphor with reference to the operation of the *imago Dei*.

Ruether is asking why it is that only men are allowed to be priests in the Roman Catholic Church, while women are offered partnership with men in the ministry of the laity and are said to share in the general priesthood of the church. At first sight logic might appear to support the *quid pro quo*. But what is Ruether’s assumption? Does she understand ‘symbolic’ in terms of representing higher reality? When C. S. Lewis writes: ‘Only one wearing the masculine uniform can (provisionally, and till the *Parousia*) represent the Lord to the Church’, the word ‘represent’ has a very specific symbolic meaning, as in the sense of a copy or type ‘representing’ an original. Ruether’s question, if applied elsewhere, might sound something like this: if lions can represent the cat family, why can’t cats represent courage? We speak of lions as big cats; why don’t we use the phrase ‘as brave as a cat’?

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18 Lewis, ‘*Priestesses in the Church!*’, p. 93.
I do not propose to enter into the basis on which celibate men can be said to be symbolic ‘brides of Christ’ in the Roman Catholic Church. Attention is drawn to Ruether’s question to illustrate the ways in which different kinds of representation can become confused. To continue the analogy, men and women can equally represent the church as a social institution just as cats and lions can equally represent the cat family. This is not to conclude that women represent reality beyond the social institution in the same way as men. Further to the analogy, lions represent courage while cats (in their ‘nine lives’) represent indestructibility: in this case, symbolic representation between cats and lions is not interchangeable.

Ruether’s question impinges on this thesis because she is writing about the imago Dei. Quite apart from women’s inclusion or otherwise, Ruether does not appear to understand the operation of the ‘image of God’ in terms of mystical reference. She states:

Feminist theology starts with anthropology, rather than deducing male-female relations from an a priori definition of God. The definition of God as patriarchal male is presumed to be a projection by patriarchal males of their own self-image and roles, in relation to women and lower nature, upon God. Thus, it is not ‘man’ who is made in God’s image, but God who has been made in man’s image.

In other words, Ruether assumes that men do not image ‘higher reality’ but rather, that the ‘image of God’ is a humanly constructed representation. On this assumption, the question of how gendered humanity is in the image of a reality beyond the church as a social institution does not arise.

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Ruether questions the method that she attributes to traditional interpretation of the image of God only on the basis of its starting-point. She wishes to apply the same method from an alternative starting-point. Instead of the self-image of the ‘patriarchal’ male, Ruether proposes the starting-point of what she terms ‘a just and truthful anthropology’. She continues:

A feminist reconstruction of the images of God … starts by seeking a just and truthful anthropology. It then constructs images of God that will better manifest and promote the full realization of human potential for women and men. 21

On the assumption that the ‘image of God’ works in reverse, Ruether extends the method of projection more broadly. A ‘feminist reconstruction’ constructs not a single image but images of God.

Ruether moves here from considering the image of God to ‘images of God’, i.e. metaphorical language for God, but the two are linked, in particular if gendered metaphor is at issue. That she is proposing a significant change in understanding the operation of imago Dei is borne out by her remark about the feminist interpretation of it: ‘This ideological critique of the image of God idea in Scripture and Christian tradition changes fundamentally the nature of the discussion’. From this she goes on to describe how God can be ‘imaged’:

[Feminist theology] assumes that all of our images of God are human projections. God in Godself is beyond human words and images, only partly and metaphorically expressed in any images. The question is: what are worse projections that promote injustice and diminished humanness, and what are better projections that promote fuller humanness?22

This is, in fact, a twofold approach. God in ‘Godself’ is beyond human words and images, including, one would suppose, the claim that humanity is in the image of

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God. Ruether adds, however, that God is only partly and metaphorically expressed in any images, alluding to writings by Sallie McFague. The idea that God in ‘Godself’ is beyond human words and images is considered in the next section. The idea that all our images of God are human projections has implications for their supposed ‘metaphorical’ expression.

Ruether’s question hinges on the distinction between symbol and allegory, in particular as it applies to language about the imago Dei. Allegory follows a method of projection. In Ruether’s example offered above, ‘bridegroom’ stands symbolically, in the New Testament, for the risen Christ in relation to the church. According to C. S. Lewis, only those wearing the masculine uniform i.e. men can ‘represent’ the Lord to the church. Women cannot do so because they are not, in a physical sense, like Christ. But if ‘representing’ Christ is distinguished from symbolic likeness as of a copy to an original and is said to mean the projection of an idea (e.g. of equality) and if ‘bridegroom’ is the imaginary picture generated by the projection, women could, in this sense, be regarded as ‘bridegrooms’. This would be allegory.

Gay Clifford writes: ‘The authors of allegory invent objects to suggest the essentials of the concept they wish to explore.’ Chapter 1 noted that McFague’s type of ‘metaphor’ seems to move in an allegorical direction. At one point McFague denies that her metaphors illustrate a concept of love, which would be, as she says, ‘basically

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25 Lewis, ‘Priestesses in the Church?’, p. 93.
an allegorical direction’; instead she claims that they ‘project a possibility’ that God’s love can be seen through the screen of human loves.\(^{27}\) But if the projected possibility is mostly fiction,\(^{28}\) further clarification is needed to distinguish it from allegory. For McFague, the *imago Dei* is part of the projected possibility. As such, it is an invented object bearing an allegorical relation to the concept of a possibility that God’s love can be seen through human loves.

C. S. Lewis makes a clear distinction between the terms ‘symbol’ and ‘allegory’. He writes of ‘the fundamental equivalence between the immaterial and the material [which] may be used by the mind in two ways’:

On the one hand you can start with an immaterial fact, such as the passions which you actually experience, and can then invent *visibilia* to express them. If you are hesitating between an angry retort and a soft answer, you can express your state of mind by inventing a person called *Ira* with a torch and letting her contend with another invented person called *Patientia*. This is allegory.\(^{29}\)

Allegory does not point, as through a window, to a greater reality: it is a construct that generates its own picture, which reduces back to the immaterial fact, idea or emotion that gave it birth.

On the other hand access to a higher reality beyond the world of our senses can be obtained through symbol. Lewis goes on to say:

But there is another way of using the equivalence which is almost the opposite of allegory, and which I would call sacramentalism or symbolism. If our passions, being immaterial, can be copied by material inventions, then it is possible that our material world in its turn is the copy of an invisible world. As the god Amor and his figurative garden are to the actual passions of men, so perhaps we ourselves and our ‘real’ world are to something else. The attempt

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to read that something else through its sensible imitations, to see the archetype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism or sacramentalism.\(^{30}\)

Lewis describes the difference between ‘symbol’ and ‘allegory’ in terms of the relation of each to the viewer: ‘The allegorist leaves the given – his own passions – to talk of that which is confessedly less real, which is fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to find that which is more real’. Lewis then describes how the visible world might appear from the point of view of transcendent reality:

To put the difference another way, for the symbolist, it is we who are the allegory. We are the ‘frigid personifications’ ... the world which we mistake for reality is the flat outline of that which elsewhere veritably is in all the round of its unimaginable dimensions.\(^{31}\)

Lewis states that ‘symbolism’ of this kind ‘makes its first effective appearance in European thought with the dialogues of Plato’. He notes Platonic examples: ‘The Sun is the copy of the Good. Time is the moving image of eternity’.\(^{32}\) In *City of God* Augustine writes about the *imago Dei* in somewhat similar terms:

We do indeed recognize in ourselves an image of God, that is of the Supreme Trinity. It is not an adequate image, but a very distant parallel. It is not co-eternal and, in brief, it is not of the same substance as God. For all that, there is nothing in the whole of God’s creation so near to him in nature.\(^{33}\)

But having drawn attention to the *symbolic* likeness of the *imago Dei*, Augustine moves immediately to the need for a greater *spiritual* nearness to God: ‘but the image now needs to be refashioned and brought to perfection, so to become close to him in resemblance’. Further, Augustine discerns likeness to God, not in *embodied* humanness but in a human capacity of *mind*: ‘We resemble the divine Trinity in that we exist; we know that we exist, and we are glad of this existence and knowledge’.

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\(^{30}\) Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 45.

\(^{31}\) Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 45.

\(^{32}\) Lewis, *Allegory*, p. 45.

This thesis agrees that humanity is in the likeness of the Trinity but, unlike Augustine, would argue that ‘in the image of God he made them, male and female he created them’ indicates that gendered humanity offers a visible clue to what God is like. The argument has two parts to it. The imago Dei refers firstly to symbolic likeness between humanity and God. Secondly, there is an embodied aspect to the likeness. Augustine agrees with the first point but discerns likeness in a capacity of mind rather than body, especially insofar as the imago Dei applies to gendered humanity. In his attempt to include women in the imago Dei, Augustine emphasizes a spiritual approach to God. At this point Augustine resorts to allegory as is explored in section C below. The chapter now takes up the development of allegory and its use in the church.

B. Allegory and the Church

Allegory is normally associated with biblical interpretation in early church usage. In a wider context, allegory became a literary genre in late antiquity due to a philosophical movement towards monotheism and a consequent decline of belief in the pagan divine pantheon. The usage arose out of a philosophical crisis: the moral depravity of the old gods had become a source of embarrassment in academia. It is worth considering the development of allegory beyond this period, in particular due to an apparent revival of something like an allegorical method in contemporary feminist theology. This section outlines philosophical and literary trends in allegorical usage and their connection with the church.

34 See Lewis, Allegory, pp. 57 – 61.
35 Augustine, City of God. See Book II.
C. S. Lewis notes that in late antiquity, ‘the habit of applying allegorical interpretation to ancient texts naturally encouraged fresh allegorical constructions, and this method was freely practised by both pagans and Christians’. The philosophically educated included the patristic writers; allegory was one way to give meaning to Old Testament stories in particular. Robert M. Grant reports that Clement of Alexandria’s fourth or ‘philosophical’ method of interpreting Scripture ‘owes much to the Stoics and to Philo’ and that Origen, who taught philosophy as well as theology, ‘sets forth most thoroughly and adequately the principles of Christian allegorization’. Grant states that Jerome and Augustine attacked Origen’s use of the allegorical method but that ‘even those who attacked him most vigorously were often influenced by his thought’. Augustine comments on the early chapters of Genesis in this regard: ‘There is no prohibition against ... [allegorical] exegesis, provided that we also believe in the truth of the [Eden] story as a faithful record of historical fact’.

Such biblical interpretation occurred in what Lewis describes as an ‘allegorical period’ in literature. This, he says, was produced by two causes: ‘on the one hand, the gods sink into personifications; on the other, a widespread moral revolution forces

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36 Lewis, Allegory, pp.61–62.
39 City of God, XIII, 27. Unlike Gnostic interpreters, orthodox thinkers emphasized the historical and rational basis of Scripture. Allegorical interpretation commonly had a typological purpose: see Chapter 3.
40 See Lewis, Allegory, p. 62.
men to personify their passions.\textsuperscript{41} In the academia of late antiquity, pagan belief was explained allegorically: divine characters were understood as material projections of human qualities or of abstractions. Hence allegory and philosophy were connected.

Lewis notes:

During a period of religious controversy it is, indeed, the most obvious way of tuning primitive documents to meet the ethical or polemical demands of the moment. The Stoics, apart from their general doctrine of the gods as manifestations of the One, were always ready to explain particular myths by analogy. Saturn eating his children could be harmlessly interpreted as Time ‘bearing all his sons away’.\textsuperscript{42}

The ethical demands of the moment were occasioned by what Lewis calls ‘a profound change in the mind of antiquity’, accompanied by introspection and an awareness of internal moral conflict.\textsuperscript{43} Such conflict was seen in terms of ‘contending forces which [could not] be described at all except by allegory’.\textsuperscript{44} Consequently, says Lewis, allegory became a literary genre: allegory and a subjective element in literature go hand in hand from late antiquity onwards. This kind of allegory is still evident in \textit{Pilgrim’s Progress} published in 1678.\textsuperscript{45}

From a literary point of view, the old gods did not die even when allegory was abandoned as a popular literary genre. Lewis describes the revival of the old gods in

\textsuperscript{41} Lewis, \textit{Allegory}, p.63.
\textsuperscript{42} Lewis, \textit{Allegory}, pp. 61-62.
\textsuperscript{43} Lewis, \textit{Allegory}, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{44} Lewis, \textit{Allegory}, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{45} I omit C. S. Lewis, \textit{The Pilgrim’s Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism} (Glasgow: Font, 1977) from this history because it does not fit into what Lewis calls an ‘allegorical period’ in literature. The preface to the third edition of \textit{The Pilgrim’s Regress}, however, may serve to illustrate the nature of Romantic longing. The unfulfilled nature of ‘Sweet Desire’ in this life indicates to Lewis that fulfilment exists beyond ‘our present mode of spatio-temporal experience’ (see p. 15). He writes: ‘This Desire was, in the soul, as the Siege Perilous in Arthur’s castle – the chair in which only one could sit. And if nature makes nothing in vain, the One who can sit in this chair must exist’. On the other hand, it is possible to embrace ‘false Florimels’ (p. 13). Lewis locates a country called Trineland (meaning to feel ‘in tune with the infinite’) to the south of the Main Road on his Mappa Mundi. In allegorical terms, the inhabitants of countries south of ‘the Road on which alone mankind can safely walk’ are attracted by the ‘delicious tang of the forbidden and the unknown’ (p. 17).
the Romantic period. While no longer worshipped or employed to personify a moral 
struggle, the gods were enjoyed for their aesthetic qualities. By this stage, according 
to Lewis, ‘the gods must be as it were, disinfected of belief; the last taint of the 
sacrifice, and of the urgent practical interest, the selfish prayer, must be washed away 
from them, before that other divinity can come to light in the imagination’.

But here Lewis confines his interest to a particular literary fate of the old gods. As noted in 
Chapter 1, Jung describes another revival of a metaphysical world in the archetypes of 
the subconscious mind. Both Romantic and Jungian trajectories may be influential in 
some current feminist writing, as is considered below.

This brief history reveals some complexity in the notion of allegory in connection 
with philosophy and the metaphysical world. At first allegory is demythologizing in 
nature: myths about the gods are reduced to a philosophical idea. Paul Ricoeur 
describes two possible relations between myth and philosophical interpretation. On 
the one hand, says Ricoeur, it can be ‘a simple allegorical tie’ that reveals the truth

behind the myth:

This was what the Stoics did with the fables of Homer and Hesiod. The 
philosophical meaning rises victorious from its imaginative shell; it was there 
all armed like Athena in the head of Zeus. The fable was but an outer 
wrapping; stripped off, it is rendered vain. Allegory implies that the true 
meaning, the philosophic meaning, preceded the fable, which was only a 
second disguise, a veil deliberately thrown over the truth to mislead the 
simple.

On the other hand, says Ricoeur, speculative thought is in danger of ‘rationalizing 
symbols as such and thereby fixing them on the imaginative plane where they are

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46 Lewis, Allegory, p. 83.
47 ‘The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection’, The Philosophy of Paul 
born and take shape’. The result is what Ricoeur calls ‘dogmatic mythology’, which is the ‘temptation of gnosis’.  

Ricoeur, who is writing from the point of view of linguistics and philosophy, not literary history, omits the personification of human passions, which might be termed a second, more positive purpose of allegory. As noted above, Lewis writes: ‘If you are hesitating between an angry retort and a soft answer, you can express your state of mind by inventing a person called Ira with a torch and letting her contend with another invented person called Patientia.’ This kind of allegorical procedure would have been familiar to Augustine. Kim Power refers to his description of a mental struggle about a perceived need to marry:

When personified Reason suggested the desirability of a lovely well-educated wife … Augustine enigmatically asked: ‘And where should I dare hope for the like?’ To express his internal conflict, Augustine engaged in a dialogue with personified Reason. Similarly, the god Amor, alluded to by Lewis above, was understood, not as a god to be worshipped, but as a personification of human passion.

Lastly, what Jung terms a ‘rebirth of the Platonic spirit’ may herald a third type of allegorical usage. This kind of metaphysic is based, not on belief in a pagan divine pantheon, but on the detection of motifs in the likeness of the old gods in a subjectivist inner world. There is a possibility, however, that such motifs, if projected

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51 Lewis, Allegory, p. 45.
as ‘symbols for divine mystery’, may gain a certain credence in themselves.\textsuperscript{52} It is here that Ricoeur’s remark about \textit{dogmatic mythology} would appear relevant.

According to Ricoeur, there is a Gnostic trajectory in which ‘represented materiality’ is ‘transmuted into a pretended knowing where the letter of the image becomes solidified’.\textsuperscript{53} Such a trajectory need not apply only to \textit{pagan} motifs. Ruether, it would seem, attributes this kind of method to Christian tradition: ‘patriarchal’ males are said to have projected their self-image, in relation to women and lower nature, upon God with a resulting ‘definition of God as patriarchal male’.\textsuperscript{54} It should be noted, however, that while Christian tradition may have fostered this kind of ‘pretended knowing’ by default, feminist theology, as depicted by Ruether, employs the method of projection openly.

In the feminist trajectory considered in this thesis, it would seem that all three allegorical developments are present. The \textit{demythologizing} aspect is evident in Ruether’s description of a ‘patriarchal’ definition of God, which is unmasked as a projection of self-image by ‘patriarchal’ males. As will be seen, this thesis argues that Elizabeth Johnson’s SHE WHO IS operates as a \textit{personification} of ‘women’s experience’. Thirdly, Johnson’s proposal may open the door to the possibility of \textit{dogmatic mythology}. Johnson herself describes SHE WHO IS as a ‘symbol’, evidently using ‘symbol’ in the sense that McFague uses the term ‘model’, with no

\textsuperscript{52} Cf. Johnson, \textit{SHE WHO IS}, pp. 46-47.
\textsuperscript{53} ‘The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection’ in Reagan & Stewart (ed.), \textit{The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur}, p. 47. For Ricoeur, interpretation \textit{arises} from a pre-existing symbolic basis. In Gnosticism, the symbol is part of a construct, as Ricoeur points out: see Edwin Lewis Hahn (ed.), \textit{The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur} (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1995), pp. 472–473. McFague’s method of ‘remythologization’ appears to follow the latter course.
claimed reference to transcendent reality. But William Cleary has issued *Prayers to She Who Is*. 55

The ambivalence between a ‘model’ that claims to be no more than ‘mostly fiction’ 56 and a ‘model’ that may pave the way for dogmatic mythology is explored further in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis. But the feminist trajectory goes further than this. As noted above, ‘God in Godself’ is said by Ruether to be beyond all images as well as only partly and metaphorically expressed in any images. 57 McFague writes: ‘I do not know who God is, but I find some models better than others for constructing an image of God commensurate with my trust that God is on the side of life. God is and remains a mystery’. 58

This aspect of the unattainable ‘beyond’ is also present in the Romantic Movement in which, according to Lewis, the old gods become ‘that other divinity’ which comes to light in the imagination. A Romantic writer would in one sense treat the old gods lightly. But nostalgia pervades the trajectory, as in Keats ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’: 59

What leaf-fring’d legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady? …

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity.

Stéphane Mallarmé, writing later in the nineteenth century, has, according to Steiner, applied a sense of an inaccessible absolute to a denial of linguistic reference. The inaccessible absolute is still a pole of the deconstructionist conception, as will be

explored further in chapters 5 and 6. It is this retention of a Romantic haunting alongside a denial of symbolic reference that, in my opinion, characterizes the twin poles of McFague’s conception of a God of the via negativa and a God of the human model.60

Some, if not all, of these elements appear in Irigaray’s depiction of a visionary future of ‘general cultural mutation’ in which women would have a central role to play.61 She describes what appears to be an apotheosis of human rapport at ‘the horizon of sexual difference’:

And so, those who renounce their own will go towards one another. Calling on one another beneath all saying [dire] already said, all words already uttered, all speech [parole] already exchanged, all rhythms already hammered out… Giving, receiving themselves/ one another in the as yet unfelt/ beyond reason … So as to be reborn of it, invested with the telling [dire] of a forgotten inspiration. Buried beneath all logic. Surplus to any existing language … The abeyance of all signification, unveiling the trade that underlies it, and venturing beyond … In this opacity, this night of the world, they discover traces of the gods who have fled, at the very moment when they have given up ensuring their salvation. Their radiance comes of their consenting that nothing shall ensure their keeping. Not even being – that perimeter of man’s narrative. Nor God – that guarantee of the meaning or non-meaning of the whole?62

Here is both demythologizing and remythologizing of a most radical kind.

Demythologizing is applied to all linguistic signification, to God as ‘that guarantee of the meaning or non-meaning of the whole’ and even to ‘being’. Remythologizing appears in terms of salvation and rebirth.

Margaret Whitford writes:

Arthur Rimbaud also wrote poetry on the theme of eternity. His editor, Douglas Parmée writes that a version of ‘L’Eternité’ is to be found in Une Saison en Enfer ‘in which Rimbaud gives an account of his experiments in voyance and bids farewell to them’. See Twelve French Poets, 1820-1900, pp. 350 – 351. For Romantic precursors to deconstruction cf. Steiner, Real Presences, p. 94.


One of the horizons evoked by this text is the *parousia*, the second coming, or the advent of the divine … This horizon – the horizon of sexual difference – would open up the possibility of an undreamed-of fertility: a kind of re-creation of the world. *Parousia* should not simply be a utopian future, but the construction by men and women in the present of a bridge between past and future: ‘*we would be* the bridges’. This horizon is also described in *Ethique* as the third era: the age of the Spirit and the Bride, beyond the Old Testament (the reign of the Father) and the New Testament (the reign of the Son).  

Irigaray is not referring to these ‘ages’ in a Christian sense, since she demythologizes God as the guarantor of meaning. Rather the Christian terminology of ‘Father’, ‘Son’, ‘Spirit’ and ‘Bride’ would appear to be remythologized as ‘that other divinity’ which comes to light in the imagination.

The relation between the personification of human psychology and the metaphysical world is demonstrated differently by Augustine. In his day, characters like *Ira* and *Patientia* were recognized as personifications of states of mind. But, in the case of Augustine’s interpretation of the gendered *imago Dei*, the matter is more complex. Augustine does not begin with a state of mind. Rather, he begins with embodied humanity made in God’s image. He then unveils the *imago Dei* as a state of mind that is able to contemplate God before going on to ‘remythologize’ the state of mind as masculine, as will be seen. This last step could be said to have paved the way for a dogmatic mythology on male terms, as identified by Ruether. The next section considers Augustine’s proposal for the gendered *imago Dei*.

*C. Allegory of the masculine?*

Augustine is often portrayed as a misogynist. Ute Ranke-Heinemann sums him up as follows:

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This illustrious saint shaped the ideal of Christian piety more than anyone before or after him, and his negative attitude to women proved especially fatal … Possidius, for many years his friend and fellow lodger reports of him …, ‘No woman ever set foot inside his house, he never spoke with a woman except in the presence of a third person … He made no exceptions, not even for his own elder sister and his nieces, all three of them nuns’.

‘Such behaviour,’ she comments, ‘would suggest the man was psychically disturbed.’

By contrast, Prudence Allen is more positive. She maintains that Augustine, standing ‘in a watershed in the history of the concept of woman in relation to man’, was influenced in various, sometimes conflicting ways, by the Stoics, neo-Platonists and early church fathers. But, she points out, his meditations on the original creation and the final resurrection ‘led him to conclude that women and men are eternally distinguished by sex and that neither sex is naturally superior to the other’. Augustine’s understanding of the gendered imago Dei may be said to arise from an attempt to reconcile a seeming discrepancy between Genesis 1: 26-27 (in which both male and female are said to be made in God’s image) and 1 Corinthians 11:7 (which states that the man is the image and glory of God while the woman is the glory of man). His solution draws on philosophical thinking of his day.

Michael Azkoul describes Augustine’s understanding of ‘mind’ as ‘Platonic’. He outlines Augustine’s perception as follows:

The intellect, unlike the senses, is fed by two streams: from the soul and indirectly, from the world of phenomena. The intellect, stamped or ‘impressed’ with Divine Ideas, beckons us to contemplate the soul and the

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heavenly realm to which it is akin. When the intellect or reason concerns itself with the physical world, it produces ‘science’ (*scientia*); but when it searches the realm of the spirit, it uncovers ‘wisdom’ (*sapientia*). Inasmuch as both *scientia* and *sapientia* comprehend some aspect of the truth, they both, to some degree, require illumination. The higher we ascend on the scale of being, the greater the ‘light’ given to the soul.\(^{66}\)

Augustine applied this Platonic understanding of the human ‘mind’ to his interpretation of the gendered *imago Dei*.

At the time of the Christological debates and increasing devotion to Mary as *Theotokos*, ecclesiological attention began to centre on anthropology, including the question of whether women are in the image of God. Kim Power reports that the ‘problem of women’ stems from the ancient model of ‘masculine and feminine as symbols for superior and inferior capacity for rationality, morality, power and strength’.\(^{67}\) Philo had accepted this model, excluding women from his concept of full humanity.

Power describes how Augustine, inheriting this tradition, from Origen and Ambrose as well as philosophical sources, used the word *sapientia* for the masculine principle and *scientia* for the feminine principle. Augustine understood both men and women to have both principles of ‘mind’. The masculine principle allowed direct contemplation of, and eventual eternal union with, God. The feminine principle, being concerned with temporal matters, would pass away. Consequently women were understood to be in God’s image in having a lasting ‘manly mind’ in a woman’s body.\(^{68}\)

Augustine writes in the *City of God*:

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\(^{67}\) Kim Power, *Veiled Desire*, pp. 132-133.

Some people suppose that women will not keep their sex in the resurrection ...
For my part, I feel that theirs is the more sensible opinion who have no doubt that there will be both sexes in the resurrection.\(^6^9\)

But a controversial passage *The Trinity* would appear to indicate that women *per se* are not made in God’s image:

But we must see how what the apostle says about the man and not the woman being in the image of God avoids contradicting what is written in ... Genesis 1:27. It says that what was made to the image of God is the human nature that is realized in each sex, and it does not exclude the female from the image of God ...
So how are we to take what we have heard from the apostle, that man is the image of God, and so he is forbidden to cover his head, but the woman is not and so she is told to do so? In the same way, I believe, as what I said when I was dealing with the nature of the human mind, namely that the woman with her husband is the image of God in such a way that the whole of that substance is one image, but when she is assigned her function of being an assistant, which is her concern alone, she is not the image of God; whereas in what concerns the man alone he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman is joined to him in one whole.\(^7^0\)

Read as excluding woman from the *imago Dei*, except insofar as she accompanies her husband, Augustine has been discredited in the eyes of many feminist writers.\(^7^1\)

Standing against this perception, Kim Power and Augustine’s translator, Edmund Hill contend that ‘woman’ and ‘man’ are not meant here to be taken literally, but refer to functions of the mind.\(^7^2\) Augustine goes on to say:

*[T]here can be no doubt that man was not made to the image of him who created him as regards his body ... but as regards the rational mind, which is capable of recognizing God.*\(^7^3\)

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\(^{69}\) Augustine, *City of God*, XXII, 17.


\(^{72}\) Cf. Kim Power, *Veiled Desire*, p. 139; Edmund Hill, n. 27 on Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII, 12, p. 339. In his ‘Foreword to Books IX –XIV’, Hill notes that ‘mind’ as his translation of *mens* ‘means more than “mind” commonly means in English; it is the subject of the highest psychic functions, volitional and affective as well as cognitive’.

\(^{73}\) Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII, 12.
Augustine argues from Colossians 3:10 that ‘the renewal of the mind ... according to the image of him who created him’ applies to both man and woman. (‘Is there anyone then who would exclude females from this association, seeing that together with us men they are fellow heirs of grace?’). ‘Rational mind’, common to both men and women, is then understood as the theatre for the image of God,\(^74\) while bodily differences symbolize different mental functions:

> [I]t is only because she differs from the man in the sex of her body that [the woman’s] bodily covering could suitably be used to symbolize that part of her reason which is diverted to the management of temporal things, signifying that the mind of man does not remain the image of God except in the part which adheres to the eternal ideas to contemplate or consult them: and it is clear that females have this as well as males.\(^75\)

Augustine suggests that the material body could be used to symbolize the immaterial ‘mind’. In this interpretation neither male nor female are said to be directly in God’s image but rather the male body functions as a projected ‘symbol’ or allegory of the ‘masculine’ part of the ‘mind’, which is in the image of God. (Edmund Hill goes so far as to make a diagram of Augustine’s theory of the image of God.)\(^76\) In attempting to reconcile Genesis 1:26-27 with 1 Corinthians 11:7, Augustine appeals to Colossians 3:10 in which the mind is said to be renewed according to the image of the creator.

Augustine’s association of the human capacity of mind (\textit{sapientia}) is then linked with the \textit{imago Dei} through the assumption that \textit{sapientia} is ‘masculine’ and therefore, according

\(^74\) It is clear that Augustine did not invent this idea. Origen had written, ‘We do not understand ... this man ... whom Scripture says was made ‘according to the image of God’ to be corporeal ... But it is our inner man, invisible, incorporeal, incorruptible, and immortal which is made ‘according to the image of God’: Genesis Homily 1 13, \textit{Homilies on Genesis and Exodus}, translated by Ronald E. Heine (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1981) p.63.

\(^75\) Augustine, \textit{The Trinity}, XII, 12.

\(^76\) A copy of Hill’s diagrams associated with Augustine’s theory of the \textit{imago Dei} appears at the end of this section.
to 1 Corinthians 11:7, in God’s image.

There are specific difficulties with this theory as well as with the allegorical approach in general. First, as Power points out, identifying sapiencia (wisdom) with the masculine principle had more in common with the ‘vir sapiens of the philosophic tradition’ than with the Hebrew tradition, given that Philo had represented Wisdom ‘as the mother of creation, as God is the Father of the universe.’\footnote{Power, Veiled Desire, p. 136. Power cites Philo, Quod detrius potior insidiardi solet, 54; 115-17; legum allegoriarum, 14. 49.} Philo had also asserted that ‘as woman is to man, and Sense-perception is to Mind, so man is to God ... He must be obedient to God as woman is to man.’\footnote{Power, Veiled Desire, p. 133. Power cites Philo, Quis rerum divinarum heres sit, 13. 64} Philo’s language, at this point, is reminiscent of Augustine’s own insistence (in City of God) on Adam’s need for submission: ‘it is to man’s advantage to be in subjection to God, and it is calamitous for him to act according to his own will, and not to obey the will of his Creator.’\footnote{Augustine, City of God, 14, 12. Cf. the parallels of submission in Augustine, Confessions, XIII, 34: ‘You took man’s mind, which is subject to none but you and needs to imitate no human authority, and renewed it in your own image and likeness. You made rational action subject to the rule of the intellect as woman is subject to man’. By contrast, Origen makes spirit masculine and soul feminine: Genesis Homily 1, 15.} Had Augustine allowed his own understanding of man’s submission of the will to parallel his understanding of man’s contemplation of God, he could have allowed sapiencia to remain feminine, resulting in a feminine principle of mind (in both men and women) surviving in eternity.\footnote{For Augustine, sapiencia is masculine, not in relation to God but to scientia which is not party to the imago Dei except via sapiencia. The nature of gendered language in the covenantal relationship is explored further in Chapter 3.}

Secondly, as noted above, the presupposition behind the theory, the two-tiered hierarchy of the mind, had a pagan philosophical background. The allegorical concept of ‘he’ and ‘she’ is integral to Augustine’s biblical interpretation, as in the following
passage from *The Trinity*:

As we climb inward then through the parts of the soul by certain steps of reflection, we begin to come upon something that is not common to us and the beasts, and that is where reason begins, and where we can now recognize the inner man ... But through that reason which has been delegated to administer temporal affairs he may slide too much into outer things ...; that is to say the reason which presides as the masculine portion in the control tower of counsel may fail to curb her. In such a case ... the sight of eternal things is withdrawn from the head himself as he eats the forbidden fruit with his consort.  

Augustine, it might be contended, was insufficiently critical of his cultural context. Nevertheless, Hill defends Augustine’s allegorical picture:

> [T]he whole virtue of Augustine’s structure of the *psyche* is that it is pregnant with dynamic possibilities; it is in constant movement, either in the right or the wrong direction. That is why in Book XII [of *The Trinity*] he casts it into the dramatic form of a paradise story in microcosm ... In this way he graphically suggests the defacement of the divine image.

But what may be a virtue in one sense is not necessarily a virtue in another. In depicting the gendered *imago Dei*, Augustine seems to use ‘image of God’ to mean not so much likeness to God in a created sense as openness or ‘nearness’ to God. In his picture the *imago Dei* is not static; it is either drawing nearer to, or moving away from, God.

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82. In *The Trinity* XII, 20, Augustine distances himself from ‘some of the outstanding defenders of the Catholic faith … who have gone before us … [and] have said that the man stands for the mind and the woman for the senses of the body’ [cf. Ambrose *De Noe et Arca* 92]. Augustine rejects this due to a distinction between the woman and the animals. Critiquing Augustine’s use of the philosophical concepts of his day has implications for our own day: at what point does the missiological or apologetic function of theology become illegitimate?
84. Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, XIII, 22: ‘For when you created men, you did not say ‘Let man be made according to his kind’ but *Let us make man wearing our image and likeness*. You spoke in this way because you meant us to see for ourselves what your will is. This was why your servant Paul … said *There must be an inward change, a remaking of your minds* ...This is how, when we learn to know God, we become new men in the image of our Creator’. Augustine sees creation in the likeness of God in terms of a journey towards spiritual likeness or, as Lewis terms it, ‘nearness-of-approach’. For Augustine, however, the distinction between ‘nearness-by-likeness’ and ‘nearness-of-approach’ is not clear-cut. Cf. Jantzen, *Becoming divine*, pp. 175 - 177. Jantzen writes that for Augustine men’s minds ‘are held to be nearest in likeness to God of anything in human experience’. It would be more correct to say that, for Augustine, *sapientia*, common to men and women, is nearest in likeness to God.
C. S. Lewis distinguishes between two kinds of nearness to God:

One is likeness to God ... But, secondly, there is what we may call nearness of approach. If this is what we mean, the states in which a man is ‘nearest’ to God are those in which he is most surely and swiftly approaching his final union with God, vision of God and enjoyment of God. And as soon as we distinguish nearness-by-likeness and nearness-of-approach, we see that they do not necessarily coincide.85

According to Lewis’ terminology, Augustine would seem to use the *imago Dei* in the sense of ‘nearness-of-approach’: the dynamic possibilities of the picture tell us more about spiritual access to God than what God is like. A human capacity to apprehend God is connected with *relationship* with God but does not explicate the *nature of human likeness* to God: while the renewal process will increase likeness to God, it is not, in itself, likeness to God. *Sapientia*, while linked by Augustine to transformation and becoming more Christ-like, is not *on that account* linked to the symbolic likeness of the gendered *imago Dei*. It is the ‘masculinity’ associated with it that would appear to link it to such likeness. Nevertheless, there is a symbolic correspondence between the threefold functions of ‘mind’ (Augustine cites memory, understanding and will)86 and the Trinitarian nature of God. But this likeness has to do with ‘mind’, not the whole person. The allegorical relation of ‘mind’ to body raises the problem of dualism between mind and body.

It should be recalled that Augustine resorted to allegory in order to include women

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86 Augustine, *The Trinity, XV*. Cf. Augustine: *City of God, XI, 26*: ‘We resemble the divine Trinity in that we exist; we know that we exist and we are glad of this existence and knowledge’. See above.
in the *imago Dei*, although not their physical sex.\(^{87}\) Whether allegory is the only way to reconcile 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 with Genesis 1:26-27 is another matter. Hill, more critical of Augustine at this point, offers an alternative interpretation based on direct symbolic likeness between humanity and the Godhead:

I think [Augustine] has missed a genuine suggestion of Paul’s in this same chapter that interpersonal human relationships can to some extent be regarded as a reflection of the interpersonal divine relationships.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3 the apostle writes, *I want you to know that the head of every man is the Christ and the head of woman is the man, and the head of the Christ is God.* The relationship signified by ‘head of’ is not merely one of dominion or priority, but of origin, as is clear from what he later says, *The man is not from the woman, but the woman from the man* (verse 8). So here we have a chain of relationships or origin, God-Christ-man-woman; for God and Christ we can read Father and Son, and so we can set up a proportion: as the Son is to the Father, so is the woman to the man; as the Son is from the Father, so is the woman from the man. The man and the woman are of course Adam and Eve; in the case of that pair the woman is from the substance of the man in equality of nature just as the Son is from the substance of the Father in equality of nature.\(^{88}\)

It may be noted that the lack of reference to the *imago Dei* for women in 1 Corinthians 11:7 is an omission, not a denial: Paul does not say that woman is *not* in the image of God.\(^{89}\) Nevertheless, regarding the passage Lewis writes:

[I]n verse 3 [Paul] has given us a very remarkable proportion sum: that God is to Christ as Christ is to man and man is to woman, and the relation between each term and the next is that of Head. And in verse 7 we are told that man is God’s image and glory, and woman is man’s glory. He does not repeat ‘image’, but I question whether the omission is intentional, and I suggest that we shall have a fairly Pauline picture of this whole series … if we picture each term as ‘the image and glory’ of the preceding term.\(^{90}\)

\(^{87}\) This distinguishes Augustine from John Chrysostom, whose literalist interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:1-12 excluded women from the *imago Dei* on the basis that the *imago Dei* has to do with male authority. See Chrysostom, *Discourse 2 on Genesis*, quoted in Elizabeth A. Clark, *Women in the Early Church*, *Message of the Fathers of the Church* 13 (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1983) p. 35.


\(^{89}\) It should be noted that Paul goes on in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 to say that woman and man are interdependent ‘in the Lord’.

\(^{90}\) C. S. Lewis, ‘Christianity and Literature’, in *Christian Reflections* (Glasgow: Fount, 1983) p. 19. Lewis only claims to make a literary, not a theological point here.
In one way Lewis is right; from a logical linguistic point of view, the sequence requires a repetition of ‘image and glory’. That is why I think the omission is significant. If ‘image’ had been repeated, woman would have been the ‘image’ of man. As it is, she is the ‘glory’ of man but not the ‘image’. The reason, I suggest, is that she is not the image of man but the image of God.

A more detailed exploration of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 in comparison with Genesis 1:26-27 and Colossians 3:10 occurs in chapter 4. These passages raised a genuine exegetical question for the early church, a question that has not gone away. Augustine’s solution may perhaps help to convince moderns that the motive of including women does not always justify the method of biblical interpretation. That he was not a misogynist, however, is demonstrated, I think, by the following exhortation: ‘Do not despise yourselves, you men: the son of God assumed manhood. Do not despise yourselves, you women: God’s son was born of woman’.\footnote{Augustine, 	extit{de agone Christiano}, 12, quoted in Henry Bettenson (ed.), 	extit{The Later Christian Fathers: A selection from the writings of the Fathers from St. Cyril of Jerusalem to St. Leo the Great} (Oxford: OUP, 1982) p. 218.}
Augustine’s structure of the psyche

Augustine's theory of the imago Dei

D. An allegorical deity?

Elizabeth A. Johnson bases her proposed name of SHE WHO IS for God on Thomas Aquinas’s He Who Is. Johnson describes the background of ‘He Who Is’ as a name for God:

Near the start of the biblical story of deliverance and covenant stands an enigmatic encounter. A bush is burning in the wilderness without being consumed. In respect for the presence of the holy, Moses removes his shoes ... In this context the exiled shepherd asks the ancestral God for a self-identifying name. It is graciously given: I AM WHO I AM (Ex 3:14), ‘ehyeh ‘asher ‘ehyeh, safeguarded in the sacred Tetragrammaton YHWH.

Having drawn attention to disagreement among scholars about the exact meaning of the name, Johnson continues:

Of all the interpretations of the name given at the burning bush, however, the one with the strongest impact on subsequent theological tradition links the name with the metaphysical notion of being. YHWH means ‘I am who I am’ or simply ‘I am’ in a sense that identifies divine mystery with being itself.

But according to Johnson, there is a problem with this interpretation:

Biblical exegetes are unanimous in criticizing the anachronistic tendency to read this philosophical meaning back into the original text ... for the Hebrew mind did not resonate with such metaphysical nuances until it came into contact with Hellenistic culture.

Johnson describes the development of what she terms ‘the metaphysical interpretation of YHWH’: ‘Nevertheless, from the Septuagint translation onward the

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92 Augustine also refers to God as ‘HE WHO IS’. See City of God VIII, 11 and XII, 2.
94 Johnson, SHE WHO IS, p. 241.
95 Johnson, SHE WHO IS, pp.241-242. As authority for the statement about exegetical unanimity on the limits of the Hebrew mind, Johnson cites Walter Kasper, God of Jesus Christ, translated Matthew O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1984), pp. 147-152. But cf. C. S. Lewis, Miracles, p. 192: ‘The old, richly imaginative thought which still survives in Plato has to submit to the deathlike but indispensable process of logical analysis ... until at last a purely mathematical universe and a purely subjective mind confront one another across an unbridgeable chasm’. (See Chapter 1.) Prior to Plato, truth tended to be received in the context of event or ‘story’. According to Johnson, ‘the metaphysical interpretation of YHWH’ was not inimical to later Jewish thinking. It may have been the result of logical analysis.
idea that the name YHWH discloses the ontological nature of God gained precedence in Jewish circles and was widely used in early Christian theology’. Johnson intimates how Aquinas, building on this later tradition, interpreted YHWH metaphysically:

Aquinas fills this name with all the transcendent significance that accrues to pure, absolute being in his system. God whose proper name is HE WHO IS is sheer, unimaginable livingness in whose being the whole created universe participates. This is to attribute to Aquinas a method (similar, as will be seen, to Johnson’s own method) of treating the name of God as a receptacle for the content of a projected idea, rather than as a means of encounter with the living God, as described in Exodus 3:14. Johnson goes on to offer an alternative ‘symbol’ for ‘sheer, unimaginable livingness’ that she calls SHE WHO IS. It seems, however, that Johnson has a different idea to Aquinas about what is implied linguistically by ‘IS’.

Johnson introduces SHE WHO IS as a term for God in the following way:

If God is not intrinsically male, if women are truly created in the image of God, if being female is an excellence, if what makes women exist as women in all difference is participation in divine being, then there is cogent reason to name toward Sophia-God, ‘the one who is’, with implicit reference to an antecedent of the grammatically and symbolically feminine gender. SHE WHO IS can be spoken as a robust, appropriate name for God. With this name we bring to bear in a female metaphor all the power carried in the ontological symbol of absolute, relational liveliness that energizes the world.

My question at this point is: what does Johnson mean by metaphor and symbol?

Sallie McFague outlines her understanding of metaphorical language for God in contradistinction to ‘a traditional, Thomistic view of analogy’:

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96 Johnson, SHE WHO IS, p. 242.  
97 Johnson, SHE WHO IS, p. 242.  
It is sometimes asserted that the so-called transcendentals can be predicated properly of God whereas metaphors are always improper. Thus, in the analogy of proper proportionality, one can assert that human goodness is to human being as God’s goodness is to God’s being. To this I would respond with two points:

(1) Since we do not know what God’s being is, we have no corollary for asserting ‘goodness’ to God.

(2) ‘Goodness’ can only be a metaphor when asserted of God (if it is to mean anything at all); that is, we use the association of human goodness as a grid or screen to say something about God.99

This is not the place for a restatement of the doctrine of analogy, so much as a restatement of the terms on which the doctrine of analogy is proposed. E. L. Mascall writes:

[W]e are not merely concerned with the question ‘How can an infinite, necessary and immutable Being be described in terms that are derived from the finite, contingent and mutable world?’ but with the question that is anterior to this and without which this cannot be properly discussed at all, namely ‘How is the possibility of our applying to the infinite Being terms that are derived from the finite order conditioned by the fact that the finite order is dependent for its very existence on the fiat of the infinite and self-existing Being.100

Metaphor, according to Mascall, is a weak form of the analogy of proportionality.101

The doctrine of analogy makes the claim that goodness can be attributed to God literally102 due to the combination of the analogy of proportionality (critiqued above by McFague) and the analogy of attribution (unius ad alterum) which belongs to his second point: the dependence of the finite order on the infinite and self-existing

101 See Mascall, Existence and Analogy, pp. 103-104: ‘A spurious, though sometimes useful, form of this type of analogy is metaphor, in which there is not a formal participation of the same characteristic in the different analogates but only a similarity of effects. Thus, to take a classic example, the lion is called the king of the beasts because he bears to savage animals a relation similar to that which a king bears to his subjects, but no one would assert that kingship is to be found formally in the lion’. Mascall adds that anger is not to be found formally in God.
102 As can other transcendentals, so-called because outside Aristotelian categories.
McFague distances herself from Mascall’s second point, as will be explored more fully in chapter 5.

The Thomist conception of He Who Is is based on a covenantal encounter with the living God. This kind of covenantal encounter is assumed by Mascall in his description of the Thomist doctrine of analogy. But, according to McFague, meaning for language about God can only come from a human source. Meaning, according to Mascall, comes from above, as does everything else, in spite of the need to use earthly analogies.

McFague’s methodology appears similar to that of Jacques Derrida, who, according to Paul Ricoeur, associates metaphor with a process of idealization, in short with a process from below. But there is a difficulty with this kind of thinking. Meaning can be raised to an abstract level beyond metaphor, otherwise discussion about the concept of metaphor, in fact all philosophical discourse, would be impossible. There is a lifting up or transformation that partially cancels and reinterprets at a higher level.

Deconstructionists misunderstand this, if they associate it with idealization, says Ricoeur, because ‘lifting up’ is a process distinct from idealization. To say that ‘goodness’, when predicated of God, can only be a metaphor is to deny ‘lifting up’ in this context, in other words to say, with apparent linguistic inconsistency, that abstractions can be used with regard to humans but not with regard to God.

If the concept of ‘goodness’, predicated of God, does not reach the level of abstraction linguistically but has to draw all its content from the human example, what

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103 Mascall, Existence and Analogy: see especially chapter 5 ‘The Doctrine of Analogy’.
104 See McFague, Models of God, p.192, note 37.
about the concept of femininity? Does Johnson apply this limitation in her discussion of God and femininity? Earlier she writes:

We think via the path of images; even the most abstract concepts at root bear traces of the original images that gave them birth. Just as we know the world only through the mediation of imaginative constructs, the same holds true for human knowledge of God.\(^{106}\)

But it is one thing to say that abstract concepts bear traces of the images that gave them birth, and quite another to assert that an abstract concept is, in McFague’s phrase, \textit{only} a metaphor, in particular given McFague’s understanding of metaphor. There is a suggestion of that ‘\textit{only}’ in Johnson’s ‘we know the world [and God] only through the mediation of imaginative constructs’. When she speaks of God and femininity it would appear that Johnson is following the same procedure as McFague: ‘if being female is an excellence, if what makes women exist as women in all difference is participation in divine being, then there is cogent reason to name toward Sophia - God ...With this name we bring to bear in a female metaphor…’ Femininity predicated of God, appears to derive content from human femaleness without recognition that, in reality, it is the other way round.\(^{107}\) As noted above, Johnson bases her proposal on the premise of Aquinas’s He Who Is. But if her metaphor is an idealization as it appears to be, SHE WHO IS, by definition, does not claim to be on the same linguistic level as Aquinas’s He Who Is.\(^{108}\)

\(^{106}\) Johnson, \textit{SHE WHO IS}, p. 46, citing Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae} 1,q.12,a.13 in support of this contention.

\(^{107}\) But cf. Johnson, \textit{SHE WHO IS}, p. 55: ‘But insofar as God creates both male and female in the divine image and is the source of the perfections of both, either can equally well be used as metaphor to point to divine mystery’. While Johnson appears to acknowledge the dependence of the finite order on infinite Being, the suggestion that male and female terms are ‘equally’ applicable to divine mystery begs the question about the meaning of the \textit{imago Dei} because God will be apprehended in terms of an a priori gender ‘equality’. This overlooks the possibility that male and female terms may point to divine mystery in different ways, as is explored in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Turning to her understanding of ‘symbol’, Johnson uses the word twice in her ‘feminist gloss’ on Exodus 3:14. She speaks of the ‘cogent reason to name toward Sophia-God, “the one who is”, with implicit reference to the antecedent of the grammatically and symbolically feminine gender’ (my italics). In this, she proposes that the Thomist grammatically masculine ‘who’ in the Latin phrase *qui est* be understood neutrally as ‘the one who is’.

The original Latin … reads, *Ergo hoc nomen, “qui est”, est maxime proprium nomen Dei …* The grammatical gender of the pronoun *qui* is masculine to agree with its intended referent *Deus*, the word for God which is also of grammatically masculine gender. The name could be translated quite literally ‘who is’ or ‘the one who is’, with the understanding that the antecedent is masculine.109

Given the neutral reading, ‘the one who is’, Johnson goes on to suggest the possibility that the referent could then be understood to be grammatically feminine. The WHO of WHO IS would then refer to an antecedent SHE, which would agree grammatically with the new feminine referent. The wording ‘Sophia-God, the one who is’, would suggest that the SHE of SHE WHO IS would refer back to Sophia-God. But this cannot be the case if the implied referent is symbolically feminine, unless Sophia-God symbolises something else. It would appear that ‘symbolically’ here has a similar meaning to ‘female metaphor’, which would mean that the unspecified referent is understood to reflect human femininity. By contrast, while the Thomist *Deus* is grammatically masculine, no suggestion is made that this God is symbolically masculine. Otherwise the same question would arise: what is the tenor for God’s masculinity?110

Johnson’s second use of ‘symbol’ occurs in the sentence: ‘With this name we bring

110 The legitimacy of reinterpretation as a method is considered in Chapter 4.
to bear in a female metaphor all the power carried in the ontological symbol of absolute, relational liveliness that energizes the world.’ Given that the Thomist *qui est* refers to self-existing Being, the word ‘ontological’ would appear to be significant. But instead of self-existing Being, Johnson refers to the ‘symbol’ of such Being (my italics). Once again the ‘symbol’ would appear to derive significance from below: ‘we bring to bear in a female metaphor all the power carried in the ontological symbol ...’ (my italics). As noted in chapter 1, Johnson claims that religious symbols can be generated by ‘women’s religious experience’ understood as ‘an awakening from the deep abyss of human existence in real encounter with divine being’.

Besides these two uses of the term ‘symbol’, Johnson also refers to ‘image’. She writes: ‘If God is not intrinsically male, if women are truly created in the image of God ...’ This usage casts doubt on the previous surmise that the symbolic correlative of the (implicit) intended referent of SHE is human femininity. Put simply, if the previous surmise were correct, Johnson would be saying that women are created in the image of God who is the image of women. Logically this would not be satisfactory; nevertheless there is reason to suppose that this is what she does mean. A similar circularity appears elsewhere. She writes:

> Women’s experience of self, interpreted as experience of God, fleshed out with values characteristic of women’s ways of being in the world, comes to a theological flashpoint when women begin to articulate and act in accord with their dignity as *imago Dei, imago Christi*.

In this passage, women’s experience of self appears firstly to be conceptualised as experience of God and secondly ‘fleshed out’ with values characteristic of women’s

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111 The grammatical import of ‘ontological’ in relation to ‘symbol’ is not clear to me, given that this is followed by ‘of absolute relational liveliness that energizes the world’.

112 Johnson, *SHE WHO IS*, p. 47.

113 Johnson, *SHE WHO IS*, p. 69.
ways of being in the world. If the intention is to materially represent the original concept, this is allegory.

Two questions arise. First, what is the status of the ‘ontological symbol of absolute, relational liveliness that energizes the world’ as compared with God as reality? Secondly, what is the status of the *imago Dei*? Johnson would appear to be saying that women are in the image, not of God, but of a projected symbol or allegory of God, seen in terms of ‘values characteristic of women’s ways of being in the world’. If women’s experience of self is interpreted, in a projected way, as experience of God, the projected symbol, called SHE WHO IS, would then operate as a personification of women’s experience.

Chapter 1 of this thesis noted that Sallie McFague’s kind of sacramentalism operates within the model or projected ‘metaphor’. This sacramentalism, says McFague ‘suggests that human beings as the *imago dei*, those with the greatest potential for responding as beloved to lover, can be revelatory of the God-world relationship in a special way’. 114 Within her proposed model, McFague appears to endorse Augustine’s idea that the *imago Dei* has to do with responsiveness or openness to God. If values characteristic of women’s ways of being in the world are revelatory of SHE WHO IS, Johnson’s representation of the *imago Dei* would seem to operate in a similar way.

Johnson also applies the term ‘symbol’ to the Trinity:

> At its most basic the symbol of the Trinity evokes a livingness in God, a dynamic coming and going with the world that points to an inner divine circling around in unimaginable relation. God’s relatedness to the world in creating, redeeming, and renewing activity suggests to the Christian mind that

God’s own being is somehow similarly differentiated. Not an isolated, static ruling monarch but a relational, tripersonal mystery of love.\textsuperscript{115}

The use of the word ‘symbol’ for the Trinity and also the tentative nature of ‘evokes’ and ‘suggests to the Christian mind’ is reminiscent of McFague’s remarks about her ‘three models’ (of ‘mother’, ‘lover’ and ‘friend’).\textsuperscript{116} McFague writes:

\begin{quote}
The attempt to unseat both monarchical and traditional trinity language ... is not a subterfuge to establish a new trinity using different names ... The alternative models we have considered are not a trinity in the old sense of hallowed names for God ... nevertheless a modest proposal is advanced, inasmuch as metaphorical, heuristic theology says much but means little. It is mostly fiction, mainly fleshing out a few basic metaphors in as deep and comprehensive a fashion as possible to see what their implication might be.\textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}

If this construct of the trinity with a small ‘t’ is, as McFague claims, ‘mostly fiction’, it takes on a key characteristic of allegory. Again, if this style of theology says much and means little about God it presumably will say much but mean little about the imago Dei.

In the previous section it was noted that Augustine’s use of allegory raises the problem of dualism between mind and body. In Johnson’s case, insofar as the imago Dei is part of a mental projection, the body is excluded. Further, in Johnson’s ‘symbolic’ model, the theological affirmation of the imago Dei is turned on its head: the deity would appear to be modelled in the image of humanity. There is consequently an epistemological gap; how can the imago Dei be a premise in a closed

\textsuperscript{115} Johnson, SHE WHO IS, p. 192. On p. 205 she adds, ‘Our speech about God as three and persons is a human construction that means to say that God is like a Trinity, like a threefoldness of relation’ (Johnson’s italics).
\textsuperscript{116} See McFague, Models of God, chapter 3. Johnson writes regarding McFague’s Models of God: ‘this book, Models of God, contains the best systematic development of God as mother yet to appear.’ (Johnson, SHE WHO IS, p. 297, n. 14.) Cf. also SHE WHO IS, chapters 7, 8 and 9. On page 187 Johnson sums up these chapters: ‘In human language we have charted something of the dialectical movement of Spirit-Sophia present and absent in the world, remembered the conflictual, liberating story of Jesus-Sophia ongoing as the Christ, and modelled the absolute mystery of unoriginated origin in the gestalt of Mother-Sophia. A trinitarian pattern of experience has emerged, as was intended’.
\textsuperscript{117} McFague, Models of God, p. 182.
self-referring system?

**Conclusion**

The doctrine of analogy assumes and attempts to explain the ability of human language to express revealed truths about God. The *imago Dei* is an interesting touchstone in the question of how literal and symbolic apprehension can work in tandem because, by definition, the *imago Dei* is both. To be made in the image of God means to be a copy or analogue of God. But the claim itself, of being made in God’s image, must be taken in a direct sense; otherwise the *imago Dei* would be an analogy about an analogy (if such is possible). Hill, translator of Augustine’s *The Trinity*, describes the *imago Dei* in terms of a proportion: ‘as the Son is to the Father, so is the woman to the man; as the Son is from the Father, so is the woman from the man’. 118 This serves to underline the analogical nature of our resemblance to God.

Neither Augustine’s nor Johnson’s apprehension of the *imago Dei* would appear to take up the idea that humanity as male and female is made in God’s image in the sense of an embodied copy or analogy. Augustine proposes that part of the ‘inner man’ is in the image of God due to an allegorized human ability to apprehend God. Johnson appears to say that women are in the image of a projected ‘symbol’ of God. McFague veers towards Augustine’s idea that the *imago Dei* has to do with openness to God, but, in her case, God and the image of God do not claim to be more than a part of a projected ‘metaphor’ or model. Hill is closer to the mark in discerning the analogy between human and Trinitarian interpersonal relationships in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16.

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The introduction to this chapter contended that religious comparison operates in a similar manner to poetic comparison: gendered humanity can be compared with God as a red rose can be compared with a woman. The doctrine of analogy supplies a classic rationale on which such religious comparison is based. The doctrine itself has to do with comparison or ‘nearness-by-likeness’ to use Lewis’s terminology. The assumption behind the doctrine of analogy has to do with access to revealed truth. As such, it is associated with what Lewis calls ‘nearness-of-approach’. As noted above, in attempting to include women in the *imago Dei*, Augustine’s proposal confuses ‘nearness-by-likeness’ with ‘nearness-of-approach’. Johnson, on the other hand, seems to abandon ‘nearness-of-approach’. Like McFague, Johnson confines ‘nearness-by-likeness’ to the projected ‘symbol’, putting the rose-like quality back within the model as it were. By contrast, this thesis follows the assumption of the doctrine of analogy in discerning the nature of the *imago Dei*: ‘nearness-by-likeness’ is known on the assumption of some kind of ‘nearness-of-approach’.

Like the doctrine of analogy, the *imago Dei* is couched in terms of covenant. The covenant between God and humanity underpins the linguistic covenant in Steiner’s sense. Unlike allegory in which an abstraction projects a fictitious representation, humanity as male and female acts as the embodied locus, which points to and also reflects a higher reality. Lewis uses the terms ‘symbolism’ and ‘sacramentalism’ to express these modes of operation. What is true of the *imago Dei* as visible symbol is to some degree true of language in general and biblical language in particular. Graham Ward draws attention to ‘the difference between the word as sacrament and

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the word as symbol’. This would seem a succinct summary of traditional emphases on the relational and revelation-based character of biblical language on the one hand and the emphasis on analogical representation on the other. Symbolically, biblical language points to ultimate reality; sacramentally, such language is meaningful because it conveys revealed truth. If either part of this process is denied or sidelined, it is difficult, linguistically, to see how the *imago Dei* can have meaning, or other biblical language for that matter.

In a section of *C. S. Lewis on Scripture* entitled ‘We see through a glass darkly’, Christensen writes:

> The great medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas related to ultimate reality in the intuitive as well as in the rational sense, and concluded that human beings can know what God *is* and that he is his own essence, but we cannot know in any precise, affirmative sense what God’s essence is. The attributes of the Infinite cannot be contained in finite language and thought. Aquinas also asserted, however, that mankind was not destined to silence about the Source of his religious experience. We can speak of God in two ways. We can say what God is not (*via negativa*), … We can also approximate the nature of God by employing useful analogies (what can be termed *via analogia*).\(^1\)

The doctrine of analogy offers a linguistic basis for a ‘*via analogia*’ but to follow it through goes beyond linguistics. It is the further claim of this thesis that the concept of the *imago Dei* offers fruitful ground for exploration along such lines.

Rosemary Ruether describes an alternative approach to the ‘*via analogia*’, which ‘changes fundamentally the nature of the discussion’ about ‘the image of God idea in Scripture and Christian tradition’.\(^2\) In this way of thinking, humanity *is* destined to silence about the transcendent source of religious experience since religious

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121 Christensen, *C. S. Lewis on Scripture*, pp. 57-58.

discussion is limited to a projection of human experience. If the nature of the
discussion is changed, encounter with the living God described in the story of Moses
and the burning bush cannot be read as *actuality*. A framework in which experience of
self is ‘interpreted as experience of God’ would not be compatible with such an
understanding.¹²³ This feminist way of thinking affects biblical exegesis and
understanding of sources of identity for women, as will be seen.

By contrast, this thesis affirms the possibility of encounter with the living God. To
affirm access to God is not to deny human agency. Rather it is through human
apprehension of God that the covenant relationship is mediated and symbolic likeness
is given content. The next chapter attempts to seek biblical detail regarding
correspondences from male and female on the human level to some equivalent at the
divine level. Although human language is limited in communicating what God is
like, the assumption that Genesis 1:26-27 is reliable in communicating that humanity
is made in God’s image would argue a similar reliability for other biblical evidence on
the matter. While women in their physical sex may not be symbolic of the
bridegroom in relation to the bride, this is not the final word on women’s
correspondence with divine reality.

¹²³ Johnson, *SHE WHO IS*, p. 69.