Chapter 3
Gendered Biblical Correspondences

Introduction

This chapter and the next assume a life-giving meaning in the words of Scripture: biblical language is understood, in C. S. Lewis’ phrase, to be unimaginably loaded with significance.¹ Chapter 1 considered the need for a linguistic anchor or metaphysic of ‘presence’ in order for there to be something in what we say about God (or anything else).² It was suggested that the Word or Wisdom of God through whom the world was made might supply such a linguistic anchor. In this regard, Graham Ward draws attention to Ernst Hoffmann’s research into the distinction between Heraclitian and Parmenidian ‘logocentrism’.³ Ward reports that for Heraclitus ‘the word of the multitude is lifeless and only through the Logos can it become animated’. For Parmenides, on the other hand, ‘Logos is, words do not have true being, only relative existence to it.’ This, comments Ward, ‘is the difference between the word as sacrament and the word as symbol’.⁴ It also indicates how much, in both ways of thinking about language, human words depend upon the Logos. How much more, one would suppose, must biblical language depend upon the biblical Logos.

This chapter is a literary exploration of biblical parallels, expressed in gendered terms, between the human and divine as well as divine-human levels of existence, in

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¹ See Chapter 1 and Lewis, ‘Fern-seed and Elephants’, p. 207.
² See Steiner, Real Presences, p.121.
³ See Graham Ward, Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology, p. 66.
⁴ See also the conclusion of Chapter 2.
particular in their relevance to women. As already noted, the ‘via analogia’ assumes the possibility of such parallels. Biblical language is understood to point beyond its literal meaning or ‘vehicle’ to a non-literal meaning or ‘tenor’. Biblical metaphors may be said to have symbolic reference with the focus on the tenor. Complementing symbolic reference is a sacramental approach to language with the focus on the vehicle as a means of receiving the tenor. Lewis refers to ‘sacramentalism’ as an attempt to see the archetype in the copy.\(^5\) This understanding is particularly relevant to gendered language for God in which the symbolic referent or ‘tenor’ is the original of which gendered humanity is understood to be the copy.

‘Sacramentalism’ in Lewis’s sense is a means by which transcendent reality may be tasted as well as known: the attempt to see the archetype in the copy is less of a cognitive than an intuitive apprehension.\(^6\) In this regard the term ‘logocentrism’ may have too propositional a ring. Steiner describes a need for ‘cognitive ballast’ to underpin the efficacy of language.\(^7\) But the term ‘cognitive’ is perhaps too sterile for the sense of participation intrinsic to receiving the biblical writings in a sacramental sense. The kind of linguistic ballast that may be said to underlie such a sacramental reading of Scripture might better be described as ‘meta-cognitive’.

Symbolism and sacramentalism in Lewis’s sense go together in apprehending a meta-cognitive element of linguistic correspondence. Ricoeur bears out the sense of participation that accompanies the apprehension of symbolic reference:

\(^5\) Lewis, Allegory, p. 45.
\(^6\) See Chapter 1 and Christensen, C. S. Lewis on Scripture, p. 56.
\(^7\) Steiner, Real Presences, p.121.
Analogy is a non-conclusive reasoning that proceeds through a fourth propositional term (A is to B as C is to D). But in symbol I cannot objectivise the analogous relation that binds the second meaning to the first. By living in the first meaning I am drawn by it beyond itself: the symbolic meaning is constituted in and through the literal meaning which brings about the analogy by giving the analogue. Unlike a comparison that we look at from the outside, symbol is the very movement of the primary meaning that makes us share in the latent meaning and thereby assimilates us to the symbolized, without our being able intellectually to dominate the similarity. This is the sense in which symbol ‘gives’; it gives because it is a primary intentionality that gives the second meaning. 8

Chapter 2 indicated that the imago Dei, in itself an analogy of God, is established through the efficacy of analogous use of language for the things of God. But analogy considered from the outside has a propositional ring to it. The previous chapters looked at the ‘via analogia’ from the outside. This chapter is an attempt to follow it, in Ricoeur’s terminology, from the inside. In order to apprehend the symbolic meaning, the literal meaning cannot be denied or set aside: rather, it must be ‘lived in’. This has profound implications for the symbolic use of gender, the biblical wealth of gendered naming of God and of the relationship between God and the people of God. Phyllis Trible states: ‘Clearly the patriarchal stamp of scripture is permanent’; nevertheless, she claims that her ‘interaction ... [has] uncovered neglected traditions to reveal counter-voices within a patriarchal document.’ 9 It is the contention of this thesis that to ‘live in’ the literal meaning of gendered humanity as image of God will provide access to a more integrated notion of gender at the divine level than such an admission might imply. In saying this, both likeness and unlikeness from literal to symbolic meaning must be discerned with equal seriousness. To hold both in tandem is what is meant by correspondence.

Biblical metaphor, understood in this way, carries a sense of unlikeness in that it enables only a glimpse or taste, rather than full apprehension, of what it purports to describe: likeness and unlikeness operate at the point of correspondence. In McFague’s ‘metaphorical theology’, on the other hand, there is no correspondence between the literal vehicle and what it purports to describe. ‘Metaphorical theology’, says McFague, ‘is a tentative affair and can advance few solid claims in its own behalf. In this sense it is … in the tradition of the via negativa: finding little to say of God with certainty, it boldly makes its case hypothetically and lets it rest.’ There is a certain irony in a metaphorical theology which does not claim the referential power of the via analo gia.

Despite the term ‘metaphorical’, McFague’s theology is an expression of a non-reference towards transcendent reality. She appears to claim a measure of support for her notion of metaphor from Ricoeur: ‘his is not an unqualified acceptance of language’s opening to being … whatever “is” is not to be accepted, for what religious language as metaphor does is to insist on the “is not” as well as on the “is”’. But I
think McFague misapplies the notion of the ‘is not’ of religious language in general here and misrepresents Ricoeur who, she says, ‘introduces a distinctively negative note’. As I judge, Ricoeur’s understanding of the ‘is’ and ‘is not’ of religious language operates in a different framework to McFague’s. Ricoeur states: ‘Could we not say that the feature of metaphor that we put above all other features … is related to poetry as creative imitation of reality?’ This contrasts with McFague’s assertion that metaphors and models relate to reality not in imitating it but by being productive of it. For McFague, the non-referential ‘is not’ of metaphorical language appears to apply to external reality in general while Ricoeur emphasizes creative copying of external reality.

Chapter 1 considered a quest to re-imagine biblical story in order to offer identity for women. In this regard it was noted that McFague proposes a process of ‘remythologizing’, allowing for the imaginative and symbolic expression of religious thinking. The terms used to describe this kind of imaginative expression sometimes seem similar to those of a more traditional approach but the similarity is deceptive. McFague claims a kind of ‘sacramentalism’ in her approach but this is different to Lewis’s notion of ‘sacramentalism’. Biblical interpretation is affected by the frame of

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\text{is first of all and always in language that all ontic and ontological understanding arrives at its expression.}\\
\text{See ‘Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics’, The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, p. 147.}\\
\text{See McFague, Models of God, p. 192 n. 37. See also Chapter 1 Section C.}\\
\text{Cf. McFague, Metaphorical Theology, p. 62: ‘As model, the distance between the Bible and the reality it is attempting to express is always maintained. A model or metaphor is, as we have stressed, never identifiable with its object; the Bible as model can never capture the ways of God’. Citing Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy: An Essay in Interpretation (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), McFague goes on to admit on p. 63 that he does not offer full support to her notion of the modus operandi of religious language: ‘The tradition of hermeneutics … which we have found helpful in this chapter … has conservative leanings… Ricoeur’s devotion to a “hermeneutics of recollection or restoration” versus a “hermeneutic of suspicion” means that … he is principally interested in what language says to us, not in its possible false consciousness or the oppressive cultural structures it may mask as absolutes’.}
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reference in which it is read and whether or not life-giving signification is discerned in Lewis’s sense. This chapter contrasts the two kinds of ‘sacramentalism’ in Section A below, before going on to consider gendered parallels in the wisdom and prophetic biblical traditions.

A. Sacred or sacramental?

A sacramental understanding has played a traditional part in classic theology. Lewis refers to the sacramental theology of Hugo of St. Victor:

For Hugo, the material element in the Christian ritual is no mere concession to our sensuous weakness and has nothing arbitrary about it. On the contrary there are three conditions necessary for any sacrament, and of these three the positive ordinance of God is only the second. The first is the pre-existing similitudo between the material element and the spiritual reality’.

By ‘sacramentalism’ Lewis means an extended application of the first aspect of classic sacramental theology in which transcendent reality has a symbolic echo in our material world. In this regard, Lewis distinguishes pagan from Judaeo-Christian symbolism:

[W]hen you hear in the thunder the voice of a god you are stopping short, for the voice of a god is not really the voice from beyond the world, from the uncreated. By taking the god's voice away – or envisaging the god as an angel, or servant of the Other – you go further. The thunder becomes not less divine but more. By emptying nature of … divinities – you may fill her with Deity, for she is now the bearer of messages.16

This thesis discerns the latter approach in the imago Dei: gendered humanity is understood to be a visible bearer of messages through symbolic likeness to the Trinitarian God.

The previous chapter noted Lewis’s description of ‘sacramentalism’ as an ‘attempt to read [the invisible world] through its sensible imitations, to see the archetype in the copy’. But, as indicated in Chapter 1, McFague has a different understanding of ‘sacramentalism’. In Models of God, in a section entitled ‘The World as God’s Body’, McFague proposes what she calls an experiment ‘with a bit of nonsense to see if it can make a claim to truth’:

What if, we are asking, the ‘resurrection of the body’ were not seen as the resurrection of particular bodies that ascend, beginning with Jesus of Nazareth, into another world? What if God’s promise of permanent presence to all space and time were imagined as a worldly reality, a palpable, bodily presence?

Experimenting with a bit of nonsense in order to make a claim for truth is a different method, it may be noted, from that of trying to discern the archetype in the copy. Nevertheless McFague describes her experiment as a kind of ‘sacramentalism’:

What this experiment with the world as God’s body comes to, finally, is an awareness, both chilling and breathtaking, that we as worldly, bodily beings are in God’s presence. It is the basis for a revived sacramentalism, that is, a perception of the divine as visible, as present, palpably present in our world ... We meet the world as Thou, as the body of God where God is present to us always in all times and in all places. In the metaphor of the world as the body of God, the resurrection becomes a worldly, present, inclusive reality, for this body is offered to all: ‘This is my body’.

According to McFague’s ‘metaphorical theology’, this form of ‘sacramentalism’ is an expression of the via negativa: we meet the world as Thou in the presence of God within the ‘metaphor’. The claim is denied of a sense of encounter with the living God. In the ‘experiment’ God is not distinct from the world but rather the equivalent, perhaps, of the voice heard in thunder. Such a result would border on pantheism. But

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17 Lewis, Allegory, pp. 45-46.
18 McFague, Models of God, pp. 69-70.
19 McFague, Models of God, p. 77.
McFague states that her kind of ‘sacramentalism’ is not pantheistic, because ‘it does not totally identify God with the world any more than we totally identify ourselves with our bodies’. If, however, thunder is neither identified as the voice of God nor as a bearer of messages from beyond the world, it is not clear what kind of ‘sacramental’ function it would have, even within the ‘experiment’.

A sacramental bearer of messages fits in with a cosmology that is by nature hierarchical because the bearer represents rather than constitutes divine reality. But the concept of a hierarchical universe is not congenial to current Western thinking. Lewis notes: ‘Hardly any battery of new facts could have persuaded [an ancient] Greek that the universe had any attribute so repugnant to him as infinity; hardly any such battery could persuade a modern that it is hierarchical.’

McFague is attracted to the ‘rich lived-in character of the medieval world’ and, to some extent, wants to pattern a new kind of cosmology on it. But one of the defects of medieval cosmology in her eyes is that the medieval cosmos was hierarchical. She claims that her view is somewhat similar to Martin Buber’s I-Thou approach towards God and the world. Mascall discusses traditional Western Catholic thinking in dialogue with followers of Buber. In view of the sacramental character of the *imago Dei* explored in this thesis, a short digression in this respect may be helpful.

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20 McFague, *Models of God*, p.71
As part of the metaphor of the world as the body of God, McFague lays stress on meeting the world as Thou and endowing it with some kind of subjectivity. In *Super, Natural Christians* she writes:

The Cartesian dualism that has plagued us for several centuries is loosening its grip. The rigid boundaries between subject and object, self and other mind and body, humans and nature are being questioned.\(^{25}\) Recognizing possible pantheistic implications in this assertion, she adds:

There is nothing mysterious or creepy about this: we are not suggesting that trees and mountains are conscious, purposive subjects, but only that their raison d’être is not to be objects for us.\(^{26}\) Nevertheless, her proposed ‘subjectification of the world’ appears to move in a pantheistic direction: ‘It is the recognition,’ she says, ‘similar to the notion of the *anima mundi* in medieval times and the early Renaissance, that other things have life and vitality.’\(^{27}\) In this regard, McFague quotes soul-ecologist, Thomas Moore: ‘A striking building stands before us as an individual every bit as soulful as we are’.\(^{28}\) McFague does not explain how a building could be every bit as soulful as we are without being conscious and purposive.

According to Mascall, followers of Buber have critiqued the Christian tradition on the following grounds:

A number of recent writers, and in particular the followers of Martin Buber, have attacked the traditional system of Western Catholic theism on the ground that it postulates as the realm of our experience a world of passive and inactive objects in which the possibility of any direct responsible confrontation of human persons with a personal God is to all intents and purposes absent; for

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\(^{26}\) McFague, *Super, Natural Christians*, p. 111.

\(^{27}\) McFague, *Super, Natural Christians*, p. 112.

the ‘I-it’ attitude of arid scholasticism we must, we are told, substitute the ‘I-Thou’ attitude of immediate existential relation to God.

Mascall suggests that the critique applies to modernist, rather than to scholastic, philosophy:

Such a criticism would, I think, be perfectly valid of a Cartesian universe, in which the direct object of human experience is simply a realm of intra-mental ideas and in which any possibility of knowing other existents than ourselves arises simply from the accuracy with which our ideas copy them ... But it does not hold, I would maintain, against a view ... which I believe to be that of the scholastic tradition in its full vigour, according to which existence is an activity and indeed the most fundamental of all activities, and which claims that in our experience of the objects of perception we are entering into a living relationship with fellow creatures whose very existence declares the incessant creative energizing act of God.29

Mascall goes on to consider the effect of I-Thou language in relation to the world:

I do not think it is altogether adequate to describe this as simply an ‘I-Thou’ as contrasted with an ‘I-it’ relation; such a form of words would tend to suggest either that we are confronted only with beings that are alive and personal, or else that we ought to react to every being in our environment as if it were alive and personal, whether in fact it is so or not.30

But, as noted above, McFague appears to move towards responding to everything in the environment as if it were alive and personal. She asserts: ‘The so-called primitive urge to anthropomorphize nature is a correct one.’31

Like McFague,32 Mascall admits the need to overcome ‘ruthless exploitation which has been so calamitous a feature of the modern world’ but disagrees with the followers of Buber about the method of doing so:

It is not, I think, necessary either to deny or personify lifeless matter in order to get what we need; it is sufficient to realize that even the lifeless ‘it’ is the subject of an activity which enables it to be the object of, and to contribute to, our own experience. In existing it is not just passive, but is performing, on its own level of being, an activity – the activity of existing – which, on a vastly

29 Mascall, Existence and Analogy, pp.182-183.
30 Mascall, Existence and Analogy, p. 183.
31 McFague, Super, Natural Christians, p. 53.
32 See McFague, Super, Natural Christians, chapter 3.
higher level and in the analogical mode proper to rational beings composed of soul and body, we too perform. If the radically analogical character of the act of existing is fully understood, we shall be able, without falling into the fallacy of personifying the lower creation, to recognize sub-human creatures, whether animate or inanimate, as partners with us in the activity of existing and as combining with us in the hierarchical order of the universe to praise and glorify God.\textsuperscript{33}

This kind of hierarchy is not oppressive, properly understood. Even lifeless matter is in some sense regarded as ‘subject’ although in a sense very different from that envisaged in ‘subjectification of the world’ as described by McFague. On the other hand, the concept of the world as ‘God’s body’ appears to be a short step towards what Mascall calls ‘falling into the fallacy of personifying the lower creation’.

While attracted to a style of thinking associated with Buber, McFague states that in some ways she prefers the medieval view because it ‘suggests a cosmology, not just a psychology, a way of being in the world rather than a way for an individual to find God’.\textsuperscript{34} Nevertheless, she concludes that ‘our sacred world order cannot be a medieval one’.\textsuperscript{35} Instead she describes a more desirable ‘sacred world order’, using the terms ‘symbol’ and ‘metaphor’ to indicate its flavour. The distinction between ‘symbol’ and ‘metaphor’ appears to be ideological here rather than linguistic: symbol is said to have a ‘Catholic’, and metaphor a ‘Protestant’, connotation:

Our thesis is that the Catholic sensibility is greatly to be desired; that its insistence on a sacred world order is right and needed but that such an order must be one that satisfies the steely-eyed Protestant head-shaking at how bad things really are and how different things are … The Catholic sensibility is symbolic, seeing connections, similarities, and unity among all parts of the

\textsuperscript{33} Mascall, \textit{Existence and Analogy}, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{34} McFague, \textit{Super, Natural Christians}, pp. 102-103.
\textsuperscript{35} McFague, \textit{Super, Natural Christians}, pp. 51-52.
whole; the Protestant sensibility is metaphorical, seeing differences, divergences and deterioration but also surprising and profound relations.  

These considerations are directed towards an end. McFague states: ‘Our reflections have been oriented towards finding a functional cosmology … one that can become the implicit paradigm within which we make our personal decisions and our culture makes its corporate ones.’  

Some implications of this approach for women’s identity are explored further in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis. At this point attention is drawn to McFague’s attempt to construct what she terms ‘a sacred world order’. ‘Sacred’ in this sense is not ‘sacramental’, traditionally understood. This kind of thinking, whether termed Catholic or Protestant, is not conducive to an understanding of the imago Dei as message-bearer. A constructed cosmology can have no messages to bear.

As noted above, Ricoeur describes how it is possible to live in the literal meaning of symbolic language in order to apprehend the non-literal meaning. McFague, however, does not admit the possibility of apprehending meaning in an external, let alone transcendent, sense. She professes an attraction to the ‘lived-in’ quality of medieval cosmology but her method does not allow for the kind of ‘lived-in’ quality that characterized medieval linguistic thinking. By excluding the symbolic hierarchy attached to such thinking, the so-called Catholic symbolic sensibility recommended by McFague would operate within a constructed ‘sacred’ world order. So-called ‘steely-eyed Protestant head-shaking’ would also operate within the model. The ‘is not’ of religious language appears to operate at two levels in McFague’s method,

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36 McFague, *Super, Natural Christians*, p. 52. McFague adds the disclaimer: ‘Needless to say, either of these mind-sets can exist in actual Catholics and Protestants; and both can exist in the same person or culture – and I believe they should’.

firstly at the level of the via negativa towards transcendent reality and secondly within the model itself. As such, the literal meaning is idealized and disowned within the model. Hence the sense of unlikeness becomes a mental reservation (or even a focus on the negative or ‘deterioration’). ‘Steely-eyed Protestant head-shaking’ appears to prevail for McFague.  

Grace M. Jantzen employs similar criteria to those of McFague’s ‘sacramentalism’ in proposing what she terms ‘a feminist religious symbolic’ but goes further in stating a necessary link between pantheism and such symbolic thinking: ‘Because of the identification in the western symbolic of the female with the material, for women to project a divine horizon … it is necessary that this female divine cannot be pure spirit, a disembodied God, but thought of in female terms’. Jantzen distances herself from process theology because of its ‘ontological realism’ which, she states, is ‘somewhat less promising territory for the new ground of a feminist philosophy of religion intent on developing a feminist symbolic of the divine’. Nevertheless, she asserts that ‘if the claims of process thought are treated not as metaphysical truths but as dimensions of a religious symbolic, so that the divine indicates what we consider most worthy and to be valued, then many of their ideas blend well with a feminist approach’. This kind of symbolic construct accords with what McFague terms ‘a sacred world order’. The frame of reference is different to that envisaged in Lewis’s message-bearing ‘sacramentalism’.

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38 Cf. McFague, Super, Natural Christians, p. 51 in connection with a metaphorical understanding of connection: ‘things are and are not similar, with emphasis on the latter’.
39 Grace M. Jantzen, Becoming divine, p. 269.
40 Jantzen, Becoming divine, p. 257.
41 Jantzen, Becoming divine, p. 258.
By contrast, this thesis maintains that there are messages to be received from the transcendent world and that Scripture is a literary means for the reception of such messages. The doctrine of analogy is an attempt to elucidate how language drawn from finite existence can appropriately be used to receive such messages. But expanding on how theological language might work is not the same as exploring what concepts such as the imago Dei might mean. The message of the imago Dei is not received in a propositional way but rather in the context of story. ‘In the enjoyment of a great myth,’ says Lewis, ‘we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as abstraction’. For Lewis, the great story of the Bible is ‘myth’ as well as fact. Spiritual truths and ideas can also be tasted, experienced as concrete. Jantzen critiques the doctrine of analogy on the grounds that it privileges men and men’s minds. But the ‘via analogia’, premised on the doctrine of analogy, goes beyond the doctrine of analogy in engaging sensory aspects of the imagination. The appeal, it is argued here, is not to male imagination alone.

The imago Dei may be said to be something of a test case for the reception of biblical language as symbol and sacrament in Lewis’ sense. The imago Dei both points to God and sacramentally reflects, or ‘bears messages about’ God. It depends on the point of view. If one is looking at visible human beings in order to understand what

42 See Mascall, Existence and Analogy, chapter 5 ‘The Doctrine of Analogy’.
43 Michael J. Christensen, C. S. Lewis on Scripture, p. 56.
44 Something of this sense of tasting Reality by entering into it as myth may be found in the scriptures themselves, e.g. in the Song of Moses: Exodus 15, notably vv. 8-11.
45 See Jantzen, Becoming divine, pp. 175 - 177. Jantzen notes that Aquinas’s argument ‘is set in a metaphysics in which the “being ” of things is in relation to their proximity to the divine being’ and that men’s minds ‘are held to be nearest in likeness to God of anything in human experience’. 
God is like, one will be regarding humanity symbolically. The perspective moves from the thing seen to what is unseen. If one is concentrating on the visible and wondering what significance humanity has, and if God is understood to give humanity significance, this can be described as a sacramental understanding. The perspective moves from what is unseen to what is seen. If humanity as male and female is made in the image of God, gender becomes sacramental. The attempt to read the messages, ‘to see the archetype in the copy’, does not mean that the archetype is male and female but that male and female provide correspondences to some far higher reality.

This relation between symbol and sacrament is demonstrated, in a different way, in the allegorical meanings given to Old Testament passages by New Testament writers. Ricoeur writes:

The Old Testament has an allegorical relation to the New, as when St. Paul compares Hagar and Sarah to the two alliances of servitude and freedom (Gal 4:24-27) ... In this respect Origen only expanded and systematized a Pauline reading of the Old Testament.  

Once again, it depends on the point of view. If one is looking at the object or personification or event in the Old Testament that may be said to point forward to the New Testament, one will be regarding these references as symbols. If one is concentrating on Old Testament references used as illustrations by New Testament writers, this can be described as an allegorical understanding. Allegory, it should be noted, is not, in itself, problematic in illuminating the Christian story. But this kind of allegory is concerned with message-bearing. G. Lloyd Carr distinguishes between an allegorical method of biblical interpretation in which historicity is ignored and a deeper, hidden or spiritual meaning imposed on the text and typology which ‘recognizes the

validity of the Old Testament account in its own right, but then finds … a clear parallel link with some event or teaching in the New Testament.

The following sections attempt to follow the ‘via analogia’ with respect to how gendered humanity reflects God. Given the mystery of existence, both human and divine, in Christian understanding, parallels will inevitably be impossible to pin down in any definitive way. This chapter seeks to explore and enter into biblical texts in the sense of enjoying ‘a great myth’. But the very word ‘texts’ is a distancing one. If the story is to be experienced as ‘myth’ in Lewis’ sense, it requires empathetic reading with the understanding of continuity despite the chronological breadth of biblical writings, varieties of genre and movement between Old and New Testament.

In what follows, these biblical pairs are considered:

- on the divine level, ‘the Lord’ and Wisdom;
- on the human level, Adam and Eve;
- on the divine-human level, ‘the Lord’ (husband) and Israel (wife), bridegroom and bride, Mary and Word-Wisdom incarnate.

As the story-like character of interaction is apprehended, care is needed to interpret any clues the appropriate way round. The use of the familiar to portray the unfamiliar may mislead in terms of which is the original and which the copy.

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47 See G. Lloyd Carr, *The Song of Solomon: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), p. 24. Allegory has the potential to take on a life of its own distinct from message-bearing, as seen in Chapter 2. Some care needs to be taken in distinguishing biblical typology and post-biblical allegorical interpretation, as will be indicated below in the case of Mary.
B. Exploring gendered correspondences

Mary Hayter writes:

Ultimately, whether theological vocabulary is masculine or feminine is of little consequence. The masculine terminology does not denote a male deity; the feminine terminology does not denote a female deity; nor does the mixture of masculine and feminine terminology denote an androgynous God/ess. Rather the indications are that the God of the Bible uniquely incorporates and transcends all sexuality.48

The difficulty with such a statement is that the significance of masculine or feminine language for God is not addressed by the assertion that the God of the Bible uniquely incorporates and transcends all sexuality. Gendered language applied to God, is, admittedly, to be understood differently from gendered language applied to human beings. This does not mean that such language is of little consequence; to maintain this is to deny the symbolic import of the language. Failure to apprehend that the language of human sexuality translates to far higher reality when applied to God leads to a sense of reductionism about such language. The result may be that theologians will look elsewhere for adequate gendered language for God, for example to ancient pagan religions as possible guides for contemporary theological language usage.49

While it is undoubtedly true that God is in some sense above and beyond both sexes, this observation is an expression of the via negativa rather than the ‘via analogia’. It involves taking metaphors or analogies and removing the analogical content from them: it is to say what God is not like, not what God is like. Hayter applies the via negativa to gendered language for God with the intention, it seems, of discounting its significance. But this is not the only way of associating gendered language for God

49 See Johnson, SHE WHO IS, pp. 55 - 56.
with the *via negativa*. Mayer I Gruber agrees that the ‘LORD is neither specifically male nor specifically female’.

But, unlike Hayter, she does not appear to think that gendered language for God is of little consequence.

Gruber writes that the only explicit references to God as mother come from Isaiah 40-66:

> It appears that the presupposition that Isa.56-66 is the work of Trito-Isaiah rather than the continuation of Second Isaiah may have prevented sensitive scholars from asking why it is that one anonymous prophet used an entire series of explicitly maternal expressions for the LORD, the like of which do not occur anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible.

Given that God is ‘neither specifically male nor female’ Gruber draws two conclusions from the maternal expressions for the LORD in Isaiah 40-66. Firstly that ‘to the very same extent that the God of Israel can be compared to a father the God of Israel can and should be compared also to a mother’; and secondly:

> Perhaps ... the anonymous prophet understood that the women were especially attracted to idolatrous cults because of the insensitivity of his predecessors such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel who had intimated that in the religion of Israel maleness is a positive value with which divinity chooses to identify itself while femaleness is a negative value with which divinity refuses to identify itself. Perhaps, as a result of this realization our prophet deliberately made use of both masculine and feminine similes for God.

Metaphorical language for God is, according to Gruber, the prophet’s perception of that with which divinity chooses or does not choose to identify itself. Such a perception impinges on the identity of gendered humanity. The anonymous author of Isaiah 40-66 is said to be more sensitive than Jeremiah and Ezekiel to a requirement

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for a female sense of identity. But it is a constructed identity that Gruber seems to have in mind rather than an identity dependent on being made in God’s image. Gruber’s conclusions would imply that gendered language for God is an ideological projection. The first conclusion that paternal and maternal comparisons can and should apply equally is extended, in the second conclusion, to the surmised method employed by the anonymous author of Isaiah 40-66. (But if biblical writers depicted God by means of ideological projection, it would seem somewhat arbitrary to distinguish non-Hebraic religions as *idolatrous* cults.)

In stating that ‘to the very same extent that the God of Israel can be compared to the father the God of Israel can and should be compared also to a mother’, Gruber cites Phyllis Trible, ‘Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation’.

Trible, however, appears to follow the ‘*via analogia*’ when she writes with regard to Genesis 1:27:

> If ‘male and female’ gives the clue for interpreting ‘the image of God’, the phrase ‘image of God’ gives the clue for understanding ‘God’. In both instances, the tenor is not defined by the vehicle. It is the moon that can be seen but not possessed.

Nevertheless, this sense of open-ended pointing from male and female as vehicle via the image of God to God as tenor, is somewhat offset by her contention that ‘the basic metaphor’ of ‘the image of God male and female’ contrasts with ‘partial metaphors’:

> [M]etaphors such as God the father (Ps. 103:13), the husband (Hos. 2:16), the king (Ps. 98:6), and the warrior (Exod. 15:3) are diverse and partial expressions of the image of God male. By the same token, metaphors such as God the pregnant woman (Isa. 42:14), the mother (Isa. 66:13), the midwife (Ps 22:9) and the mistress (Ps. 123:2) are diverse and partial expressions of the image of God female. All these partial metaphors involve societal roles and relationships which the basic metaphor organizes without necessarily promoting. In fact, the

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basic metaphor contrasts with the imbalance of these partial metaphors. It presents an equality in the image of God male and female, although the Bible overwhelmingly favours male metaphors for deity.\textsuperscript{56}

Trible discerns a \textit{disparity} between the equality of the ‘basic’ metaphor and the inequality of the ‘partial’ metaphors. Here the so-called basic metaphor does seem to operate as vehicle defining or at least critiquing what God can and should be compared to.

This section is an attempt to follow the ‘\textit{via analogia}’ regarding gendered language for God without preconceived judgements about equality. It is an attempt, in Trible’s terms, to follow the moon that can be seen but not possessed. Two distinct traditions of correspondence are considered: that of male and female on the human level as compared with masculine and feminine presented at the divine level, and that of male and female on the human level as compared with masculine associated with the divine level and feminine with the human level. (I use the terms ‘masculine and feminine’ with regard to the divine and divine-human relationships rather than ‘male and female’ but the biblical presentation is more directly anthropomorphic.)

Leonard Swidler may indicate an example of the ‘\textit{via analogia}’ in a link detected between Wisdom and the myth of Genesis 2-3:

Wisdom is the “good and evil” which the \textit{Ishah} of Genesis 2 desired to know but never learned. It is the image of \textit{Ishah} as transformed by the true knowledge of benediction and malediction, the divine antitype of \textit{Ishah}. ‘It shows what \textit{Ishah} would have been had she waited for God’s self-unveiling instead of attempting to grasp the secrets of God herself.’\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56} Trible, \textit{Rhetoric of Sexuality}, p. 22 (Trible’s italics).

In Swidler’s depiction ‘ishah of Genesis 2 corresponds with Wisdom as her divine antitype.

In support of Swidler’s observation, it may be noted that the divine antitype of ‘ishah plays the feminine role in relation to God in biblical and apocryphal wisdom literature:

With you [i.e. God] is Wisdom, she who knows your works,
She who was present when you made the world;
She who understands what is pleasing in your eyes
And what agrees with your commandments. (Wisdom 9:9)

In terms of correspondence: on the human level, ‘ishah is brought forth from the man and is welcomed by him with delight (Genesis 2:21-23); on the divine level, the antitype of ‘ishah is said to be brought forth ‘by’ (Proverbs 8:24) or ‘from the mouth of’ (Sirach 24:3) ‘the Lord’ and to be ‘beside’ ‘the Lord’ in a relationship of delight (Proverbs 8:30).

‘Ishah and her divine antitype are depicted as relationally feminine to the respective masculine figures; the masculine figures supply the origin for the feminine figures while the feminine figures bring delight and rejoicing to the relationship.58

But while Wisdom is depicted as the feminine ‘consort of [God’s] throne’ (Wisdom 9:4), she takes on the authority of God in relation to humanity:

[T]he paths of those on earth have been straightened
and men been taught what pleases you,
and saved, by Wisdom. (Wisdom 9:18)

58 Cf. William McKane, Proverbs: A New Approach (London: SCM Press, 1970) p. 357. Regarding Proverbs 8:30 ff. McKane writes: ‘If MT is read, the picture is thought to be that of the child Wisdom who is the darling … of Yahweh … ‘I was delights daily’ [sic] can be taken to mean that Wisdom experienced pleasure without alloy or that she gave delight to Yahweh … Wisdom is a child without a care, her brow unfurrowed by anxiety, the vivacious playmate of God and man, with heaven and earth as her playground. I have already [see p. 353] indicated that this interpretation of vv 30f. could contribute to a precise hypostasis - Wisdom as the child of Yahweh, begotten not made.’
The idea that ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are relational terms develops as the wisdom tradition unfolds. When the Word-Wisdom ‘pitches camp in Jacob’ (Sirach 24:8 ff.; cf. John 1:14), the focus is her relationship with humanity; in this relationship she plays the masculine role in terms of priority.59

‘I came forth from the mouth of the Most High [says Wisdom] and I covered the earth like mist. I had my tent in the heights, and my throne in a pillar of cloud. Alone I encircled the vault of the sky, and I walked on the bottom of the deeps. Over the waves and over the whole earth, And over every people and nation I have held sway. Among all these I searched for rest, and looked to see in whose territory I might pitch camp. Then the creator of all things instructed me, and he who created me fixed a place for my tent. He said, “Pitch your tent in Jacob, Make Israel your inheritance”.’ (Sirach 24:1ff.)60

The phrase ‘pitch camp’ occurs in the Johannine prologue: ‘the Word became flesh and lived [pitched his tent – ἐσκήνωσεν] among us’ (John 1:14). But the delight to be expected in the relationship does not eventuate. The poignancy of ‘he came to what was his own and his own people did not accept him’ (John 1:11) deepens in the light of the prior literary context.

Peggy L. Day points out that, in general, the implied speaker of Proverbs 1-9 is the father while the implied listener with which the reader identifies is a son. She writes that the speeches about, or attributed to, Wisdom, ‘belong to the same cultural voice

59 There are literary parallels between the figure of Wisdom as presented in Proverbs 8: 22-30 (cf. Wisdom 7: 21 ff.) and the Logos incarnate (John 1: 1 ff.; John 17:5, Colossians 1: 15 ff.)
60 Augustine writes of Wisdom being ‘begotten or made by God’. Edmund Hill comments: ‘a reference probably to Prv 8:22, which reads in the Greek and Latin versions from it “The Lord created me at the beginning of his ways”, a very embarrassing text for the Fathers embattled with the Arians. Hebrew has “possessed me”’. (Augustine, The Trinity, VII, 4, see note 20, p. 233.) Cf. use of qānā in Genesis 4:1.
that speaks through the father ... Where the father is the authoritative voice in the family, *Hokmot* is the corresponding public voice.\(^6^1\) Put differently, it could be said that two levels are operating simultaneously: on the human level, a human father talking to a grown up son (‘Hear, my son, your father’s instruction’, Proverbs 1:8); on the divine level, Wisdom in relation to ‘the Lord’ (‘The Lord by wisdom founded the earth’, Proverbs 3:19), and also as public voice for ‘the Lord’ (Proverbs 8:32-36). The correspondence between human and divine of Genesis 1:26-27\(^6^2\) is picked up as correspondence of voices in the Proverbs prologue. But in Proverbs, instead of the male and female on the human level, the father addressing the son is presented on the human level. From a literary point of view the wisdom tradition supplies an interesting precedent for the Godhead seen from above as masculine and feminine translating to a father-son relationship when the Word is made flesh.

The divine antitype of *ishah* demonstrates the overarching possibilities of gender. Not only does Proverbs 8:22-31 provide a detailed description of relationship at the divine level in terms of masculine and feminine, but Wisdom herself, in the wider biblical context, is depicted as both feminine and masculine: feminine in the Proverbs prologue, whereas Jesus is traditionally understood to be the Incarnation of the pre-existent eternal Word or Wisdom.\(^6^3\) Wisdom is depicted as feminine at the divine level in relation to ‘the Lord’ but is made flesh as male, due, it may be inferred, to Wisdom’s masculine persona in relation to humanity. Rather than ‘equality’, as suggested by

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\(^6^2\) Cf. Sirach 17:3: ‘The Lord fashioned man from earth ... and made them in his own image.

\(^6^3\) See Augustine, *City of God*, XX,26: “Christ himself is prophetically called “the tree of life” [cf. Proverbs 3:18] because he is himself the Wisdom of God of which Solomon says, “Wisdom is the tree of life to those who embrace her.”
Trible, the interpretive clue of male and female in the image of God would appear to be ‘relationship’, as suggested by Hill. In spite of this insight, Hill has not apparently considered that gender itself is relational. Augustine, in a passage about the Son’s equality, consubstantiality and co-eternity with the Father, writes: ‘The Son of course is the Father’s Word, which is also called his Wisdom’. Hill remarks at this point: ‘And Wisdom is feminine. This is going to involve me in some changes of gender, which I ask the reader to excuse’.

For Hill, the change of gender in Wisdom from the divine feminine to the human masculine appears problematic. Augustine goes on to write (as translated by Hill):

‘when the fullness of time came she was sent … in order that the Word might become flesh, that is become man’. Augustine maintains that the grammatical feminine applied to Wisdom does not imply that Wisdom is female in sex; this, it should be noted, is part of a passage that refers to the appropriateness of interpreting the language of human relationship in reference to the Godhead in a spiritual and

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64 Trible, *Rhetoric of Sexuality*, p. 22.
65 Hill, n. 22 on Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII, p. 338. See Chapter 2, Section C.
67 Hill, n. 87 on Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV, 27. Cf. Ruether (*Imago Dei, Christian Tradition and Feminist Hermeneutics*, p. 269) who writes on the September 30, 1988 Papal statement on the ‘Dignity and Vocation of Women’: ‘The Pope … boldly claims that God can … be said to have both male and female qualities, and that mutuality between men and women in the image of God mirrors the mutual love within the Persons of the Trinitarian God’. Ruether then poses the question: ‘Has one of the three Persons changed gender?’
68 Cf. McFague who writes: ‘Current research on the relationship of Sophia to the Logos claims that their roles were similar and eventually became competitive, with the female, subordinate one giving over to the male, equal one: Sophia was absorbed by the Logos, the Son who is equal to the Father.’ (*Models of God*, p. 208, n. 33). It might be surmised that she confuses absorption with identification because, in support of her depiction of ‘current research’, she cites Raymond Brown who writes: ‘the Gospel of John sees Jesus as the “supreme example of divine Wisdom active in history, and indeed divine Wisdom itself”.’ (*The Gospel according to John*, Anchor Bible 29 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1966) cxxiv.)
69 Augustine, *The Trinity*, IV, 27.
symbolic sense. Hayter writes: ‘it is highly doubtful that feminine Wisdom, Torah, Spirit and Righteousness, or any other ‘feminine figure’, actually tell us anything about sexuality in God’. This would appear to miss the point that human sexuality is the vehicle, in Trible’s terminology, of ‘the moon that can be seen but not possessed’. God is not to be seen in terms of human sexuality; rather, gendered human relationship is to be seen as a unique clue in offering a glimpse of God.

The wisdom tradition contains echoes of Genesis 2-3 in which the human and divine levels of masculine and feminine run parallel, supplying a depiction of the reality that Eden was intended to mirror. On the human level, the harmonious relationship of male and female is tragically severed almost from the beginning. Nevertheless, Trible notes some echo of the lost bond between male and female in the Song of Songs:

In many ways ... Song of Songs is a midrash on Genesis 2-3. By variations and reversals it creatively actualizes major motifs and themes of the primeval myth. Female and male are born to mutuality and love. They are naked without shame; they are equal without duplication. They live in gardens where nature joins in celebrating their oneness ... Paradise Lost is Paradise Regained.

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70 See Augustine, The Trinity, XII, 5: ‘[A]nyone of sober good sense … must get accustomed to discovering traces of spiritual things in bodies in such a way that when he turns upward from here and starts climbing with reason as his guide in order to reach the unchanging truth itself through which these things were made (Jn 1:3), he does not drag along with him to the top anything that he puts little value on at the bottom’. (Hill’s italics)
72 Trible, Rhetoric of Sexuality, p. 21.
73 See Trible, Rhetoric of Sexuality, chapter 4 ‘A Love Story Gone Awry’.
The Song of Songs has also been interpreted as an allegory of the love story between God and the people of God.\(^7^5\) Be that as it may, the theory draws attention to another biblical relationship depicted in terms of male and female. Divine and human levels run parallel in the wisdom tradition but are brought together in the prophetic tradition in a relationship described in marital terms. The parallel is no longer between the divine and human levels but between the divine-human and human levels. Correspondences between earthly marital discord and discord between God and the people of God are not only described but also acted out in the book of Hosea. On the positive side, the marital relationship is a strong expression of the rapprochement between the divine and human. On the negative side the feminine character plays the part of a harlot.

Hosea’s prophetic task requires him to marry a harlot in order to symbolize the unfaithful behaviour of Israel towards Yahweh.\(^7^6\) The two levels (human and divine-human) appear as two parallel marriages. The purpose of the human marriage is symbolic; the two levels are distinguished by literary style. The description of the human level takes the form of bare narrative (Hosea 1:1-3; 3:1-3). By contrast the description of the marital relationship between God and Israel takes the form of a dramatic poem with a graphic depiction of the fate Israel must suffer for her infidelity.

\(^{7^5}\) See the Introduction to the Song of Songs in the Jerusalem Bible. Cf. also Carr, *Song of Solomon*, pp. 23-24, who quotes John Murray (from *The Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, March 1983, p. 52): ‘I cannot now endorse the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Solomon. I think the vagaries of interpretation given in terms of the allegorical principle indicate that there are no well-defined hermeneutical canons to guide us in determining the precise meaning and application if we adopt the allegorical view. However, I also think that in terms of the biblical analogy the Song could be used to illustrate the relation of Christ to His church’.

\(^{7^6}\) This symbolic function needs to be distinguished from the symbolic judgment of Ezekiel 24:15 ff. The death of Ezekiel’s wife has a similar symbolic function to that, initially, of the children of Hosea and Gomer: see Trumble, *Rhetoric of Sexuality*, pp. 39-40. Cf. G.A.F. Knight, *Hosea: Introduction and Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1960) pp. 36 ff. on prophetic symbolism and the unity in Hebrew thought between word and action. In further distinction, Oholah and Oholibah are material personifications of the infidelity of Samaria and Jerusalem (Ezekiel 23). They are not human types of the relationship between God and the people of God but a fictitious projection of that relationship.
(Hosea 2). The picture of the wife held up to public shame in being stripped naked for her infidelity (Hosea 2:3) alters a motif in the primeval depiction of relationship between husband and wife. Nakedness is no longer associated with the relationship of delight (cf. Genesis 2:25) but with shame and misery (cf. Genesis 3). Israel’s husband has the power to highlight this shame and misery, the power of exposing his wife’s behaviour by stripping her naked. It must be remembered, however, that the husband in this case is God, and that Israel as wife is an inclusive term for the men and women of Israel. On the human level there is no suggestion that Gomer physically suffers the fate figuratively threatened for Israel. The worst she appears to undergo is being bought back ‘for fifteen silver shekels and a bushel-and-a-half of barley’ after an adulterous affair.

On the divine-human level, the intensity of shame is the obverse of the intensity of delight restored:

Therefore I will now allure her,  
and bring her into the wilderness,  
and speak tenderly to her.  
From there I will give her vineyards,  
and will make the Valley of Achor [or Misery] a door of hope.  
There she shall respond as in the days of her youth. (Hosea 2:14,15)

Derek Kidner comments on the two-sided nature of being brought into the wilderness:

This is the positive and creative side of [God’s] severity, for ‘the wilderness’ could mean either of two things for Israel: either her life in ruins or her pilgrim spirit and youthful promise recaptured. Here it offers the second, by way of the first. The thought of setting out with God is picked up by a later prophet, who sang of that short-lived honeymoon:

77 Hosea 3:1-2. Cf. Knight, *Hosea*, pp.27 ff. as to whether Hosea married two different ‘harlots’. Knight remarks, ‘to imagine that Hosea took to himself two women and not one would wholly upset his parallel with God’s love for Israel, his one unique and chosen people’. (p.28)
I remember the devotion of your youth,
your love as a bride,
how you followed me in the wilderness,
in a land not sown. (Jeremiah 2:2)\textsuperscript{78}

Isaiah 62:1-4 offers a prophetic picture of ‘Jerusalem’s salvation’ in terms of marriage:\textsuperscript{79}

For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,
and her salvation like a burning torch.
The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the Lord will give.
You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
You shall no more be termed Forsaken
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate;
but you shall be called My Delight is in Her,
and your land Married;
for the Lord delights in you,
and your land shall be married.\textsuperscript{80}

The theme of delight is resumed in this marriage. God the husband reaches out to the people of God with joy. (It is, in fact, ‘the mouth of Yahweh’ who confers the new name on Jerusalem.) God’s delight in divine-human intimacy is highlighted: ‘as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride so shall your God rejoice over you’ (Isaiah 62:5b).

The response of humanity as bride is expressed in terms of clothing in Revelation 19:7-8:

\textsuperscript{78} Derek Kidner, \textit{Love to the Loveless: The story and message of Hosea} (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983) p. 32.
\textsuperscript{79} Strictly speaking, the land, not the people, is described as married. This would appear to be metonymy i.e. the name of one thing applied to another with which it is closely associated, e.g. ‘crown’ for king.
\textsuperscript{80} Cf. parallel themes in Hosea 1-3.
‘…Let us rejoice and exult and give [God] the glory!
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready (ἡτοίμασεν ἐδωρήν)
to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure’ -
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds (τὰ δικαιώματά) of the saints.81

Far from being stripped naked for her infidelity, the bride has been clothed (it was
given to her so that - ἐδόθη σωτή ἵνα - she should be clothed) in her good deeds, to the
glory of God.

Biblical parallels, expressed in terms of masculine and feminine, are traced in
summary form in Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ (ARCIC) paragraph 9:

The covenant between the Lord and his people is several times described as a
love affair between God and Israel, the virgin daughter of Zion, bride and
mother: “I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you,
declares the Sovereign Lord, and you became mine” (Ezekiel 16:8; cf. Isaiah
54:1 and Galatians 4:27). Even in punishing faithlessness, God remains
forever faithful, promising to restore the covenant relationship and to draw
together the scattered people (Hosea 1-2; Jeremiah 2:2, 31:3; Isaiah 62:4-5).
Nuptial imagery is also used within the New Testament to describe the
relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:21-33; Revelation
21:9). In parallel to the prophetic image of Israel as the bride of the Lord, the
Solomonic literature of the Old Testament characterizes Holy Wisdom as the
handmaid of the Lord (Proverbs 8:22f; cf. Wisdom 7:22-26) similarly
emphasizing the theme of responsiveness and creative activity. In the New
Testament these prophetic and wisdom motifs are combined (Luke 11:49) and
fulfilled in the coming of Christ.

In looking for what it means to be human as male and female, biblical
correspondences point to the understanding that gendered humanity reflects the
divine-human relationship of God-with-us and us-with-God presented as masculine
and feminine and, as was seen earlier, the divine relationship of ‘the Lord’ and
Wisdom presented as masculine and feminine. To this point, correspondences
observed between human and divine as well as human and divine-human levels use

81 Compare the nakedness referred to in Revelation 3:17-19.
the analogy of masculine and feminine in keeping with a ruler and consort style of relationship. That this is not the only way that feminine and masculine operate together will become apparent in the next two sections.

C. The twofold role of the woman

Ephesians 5:31-32 harks back to the original purpose of marriage. Verse 31 is a quotation of Genesis 2:24: ‘For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’. But man and woman on the human level are not chiefly in view in the Ephesians passage as verse 32 makes plain: ‘This is a great mystery … applying … to Christ and the church (εἰς χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν)’. The terms of human relationship of verse 33 are enjoined because of the correspondence to the divine-human relationship of delight; this gives an added dimension to ‘the reason’ given in Genesis.

Genesis 2 prefigures this relationship at the divine-human level. But this is not a complete picture because there is another biblical pair that presents a rather different view of woman and man at the divine-human level, as is also prefigured in Genesis. To understand this biblical pair as woman and man, it is necessary to go back to the beginning of the story:

ADONAI, God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this … I will put animosity between you and the woman, and between your descendant and her descendant; he will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:14-15)\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{82} This translation comes from The Complete Jewish Bible, David H. Stern (ed.), (Clarksville, Maryland: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998). Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ paragraph 28, note 4 refers to a problematic variant translation in the Latin Church: ‘The Hebrew text of Genesis 3:15 speaks about enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between the offspring of both. The personal pronoun (\textit{hu‘}) in the words addressed to the serpent, “He will strike at your head,” is masculine. In the Greek translation used by the early Church (LXX),
The judgement meted out to the man has to do with the ground from which he was taken. The judgement meted out to the woman is more complex because she is also involved in the judgement meted out to the serpent; in addition there is another player in this judgement, the woman’s descendant or seed. The man (in the Garden) is not mentioned as having a part in this matter. The woman is involved in terms of enmity placed by God between her and the serpent and as ancestral mother of the descendant who will be the enemy of the serpent’s descendant.

Genesis 2 describes, at some length, the process of producing a suitable companion for the man, finally pronounced to be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh and suitable, prophetically, to detach the man from father and mother so that he may cleave to her and the two will become one flesh. Genesis 3 describes the loss of spontaneous delight in the primal relationship. Birth-giving then takes on a prominent role, not only because of the disagreeable aspects for the woman but also because of the promise of redemption that comes through it. The purpose of redemption is the restoration of the relationship of delight at a new level. It could be said that whereas marriage is originally given for the purpose (among others) of birth, birth takes on the purpose of preparing for the divine-human marriage.

however, the personal pronoun autos (he) cannot refer to the offspring (neuter: to sperma), but must refer to a masculine individual who could then be the Messiah, born of a woman. The Vulgate (mis)translates the clause as ipsa conteret caput tuum (“she will strike at your head”). This feminine pronoun supported a reading of this passage as referring to Mary, which has become traditional in the Latin Church. The Neo-Vulgate (1986), however, returns to the neuter ipsum, which refers to semen illius: “Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem et semen tuum et semen illius; ipsum conteret caput tuum, et tu conteres calcaneum eius.”

The judgement is pronounced to 'ādām (verse 17). The assumption is that 'ādām refers here to Adam (i.e. the man). An inclusive reading of 'ādām here would involve the woman in the man’s judgement as well as in her own judgement and in the judgement of the serpent. Hebrew terms for ‘man’ are considered in more detail in Chapter 4.

Cf. Trible, Rhetoric of Sexuality, p. 131: ‘In creating Eros, Yahweh caused joy and nourishment to come from the earth. But since disobedience has disrupted creation, the earth itself (not the deity) will now produce pain and famine.’
A preview of the nature of the divine-human marriage appears in the celebratory poem of Genesis 2:23 (cf. Ephesians 5:31-32). In this preview the woman (‘ishah) is the companion-consort of the man (‘ish) as the corresponding ‘woman’ (the church) is companion-consort of Christ. A preview of the means of accomplishing this divine-human marriage appears in the poem of judgement (Genesis 3:14-15). Regarding Genesis 3:15, Kidner writes:

There is good New Testament authority for seeing here the protoevangelium, the first glimmer of the gospel. Remarkably, it makes its debut as a sentence passed on the enemy … only the New Testament will … show how significant was the passing over of Adam for the woman and her seed (cf. Mt. 1:23; Gal. 4:4; 1 Timothy 2:15).85

In the former case the woman is at the side of the man. In the latter case the man is passed over in favour of the woman and her seed. For this reason, typology associated with the woman needs to be discerned with some care.

In this regard, a comparison of Barth’s interpretation of the imago Dei with the typology of Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ offers an illustration of variant approaches. Barth writes:

According to 1 Corinthians 11:7 there is a man [Es gibt nach 1 Kor 11.7 wohl einen Mann] who actually is the εἰκών καὶ δόξα θεοῦ and from this standpoint the same can be said of every man. And side by side with this man there is a woman who is his δόξα as He (the Head of the woman but not without her) is the δόξα of God, and from the standpoint of this woman, or rather of her Husband, the same could be said of every woman. This man together with this woman is the man who is the image of God [Dieser Mann mit dieser Frau ist der Mensch, der das Ebenbild Gottes ist], who is it and does not merely indicate it or establish its physical possibility, like Adam and Seth and all the subsequent members of the genealogical tree.86

86 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics III/1, translated by J. W. Edwards et al (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1970) p. 203. See discussion on pp. 195-205. This would mean that there has been
In this interpretation, correspondence appears to have become potentiality. Barth seems to be saying that the primal relationship of man and woman merely establishes the physical possibility of mirroring the divine level, an understatement, it would appear, of Genesis 1:26-27. 'Ishah is not said to foreshadow the church (in relation to Christ) but rather the church defines 'ishah. In the absence of typological correspondence, it is not clear why the church is called a woman. Further, Barth does not refer here to 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 which implies that the man who is the ὅσος of God is also dependent on a woman.

By contrast, paragraphs 26-27 of Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ discern multiple correspondences in terms of church and ‘Mary-Eve typology’. These are summed up in the following statement with regard to the relationship between Mary and the disciple John, initiated by Jesus on the cross (John 19:25-27):

These last commands of Jesus before he dies reveal an understanding beyond their primary reference to Mary and “the beloved disciple” as individuals. The reciprocal roles of the ‘woman’ and the ‘disciple’ are related to the identity of the Church … A corporate understanding of ‘woman’ … calls the Church constantly to behold Christ crucified, and calls each disciple to care for the Church as mother. Implicit here perhaps is a Mary-Eve typology: just as the first ‘woman’ was taken from Adam’s ‘rib’ (Genesis 2:22, pleura LXX) and became the mother of all the living (Genesis 3:20), so the ‘woman’ Mary is, on a spiritual level, the mother of all who gain true life from the water and blood that flow from the side (Greek pleura, literally ‘rib’) of Christ (19:34) and from the Spirit that is breathed out from his triumphant sacrifice (19:30, 20:22, cf. 1 John 5:8). In such symbolic and corporate readings, images for the Church, Mary and discipleship interact with one another. Mary is seen as the personification of Israel, now giving birth to the Christian community (cf. Isaiah 54:1, 66:7-8), just as she had given birth earlier to the Messiah (cf. Isaiah 7:14).

only one man qua male and the church (i.e. no actual physical woman) directly in God’s image. Both together are the human being [der Mensch] who is the image of God.

Compare the correspondences implicit in Ephesians 5:31-32.
The correspondences discerned here are complex. By associating with John, other disciples may share the call to adopt Mary as mother, but the link to the Church is through John not Mary. Further, this associative approach with John and, through the association, to Mary, is not the same as the typological approach, a point recognised in the words ‘implicit here perhaps is a Mary-Eve typology’. Typologically, the ‘woman’ can be understood corporately as church in the sense that the church is the antitype of ’ishah who gains life from the side of Adam. If Mary is seen as the mother (i.e. source) of the church, she corresponds typologically not with Eve but with Adam. The first ‘woman’, in being taken from Adam’s rib, corresponds to ‘all who gain true life’ from Christ’s side. This is the companion consort role. The mother role of ’ishah is not paralleled by Mary (as a personification of Israel) giving birth to the Christian community, but by the historical Mary giving birth to the Messiah (since she is the mother of the descendant who crushes the serpent’s head).

Power reports that Augustine developed the figure of Mary as ‘a feminine meta-symbol … who could exemplify the ideal Scientia’.88 This might imply a companion-consort motif in connection with Mary as an allegorical figure. But Augustine does not mention Mary in connection with companion-consort typology in the following passage:

Now in creating woman at the outset of the human race, by taking a rib from the side of the sleeping man, the Creator must have intended, by this act, a prophecy of Christ and the Church.89

Augustine goes on to draw out the parallel between the woman and the church in terms of origin:

88 Power, Veiled Desire, p. 171.
89 Augustine, City of God XXII, 17.
The sleep of that man clearly stood for the death of Christ; and Christ’s side, as he hung lifeless on the cross, was pierced by a lance. And from the wound there flowed blood and water which we recognize as the sacraments by which the Church is built up. This, in fact, is the precise word used in Scripture of woman’s creation; it says not that God ‘formed’ or ‘fashioned’ a woman but that he built it (the rib) up into a woman. Hence the Apostle also speaks of the ‘building up’ of the Body of Christ, which is the Church.

Finally he suggests a parallel between the nature of relationship between the man and woman in the Garden and between Christ and the church:

The woman, then, is the creation of God, just as is the man; but her creation out of man emphasizes the idea of unity between them; and in the manner of that creation there is, as I have said, a foreshadowing of Christ and his Church.

The companion-consort of Christ is the Christian community of which Mary is a part. Augustine writes, ‘Mary is more blessed in receiving the faith of Christ than in conceiving the flesh of Christ’. New Testament parallels between ‘ishah and the church (Ephesians 5:31-32, cf. 2 Corinthians 11:1-3) do not allude to the mother of Jesus. But Mary is nevertheless the archetypal mother in the sense of giving birth to

Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21. See also Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ paragraph 25 with regard to John 2:1-11. The distinction is less clear in paragraph 58, note 10 which draws attention to the dogma of Mary being assumed ‘body and soul’. It states: “‘assumed body and soul’ is not intended to privilege a particular anthropology. More positively, ‘assumed body and soul’ can be seen to have Christological and ecclesiological implications. Mary as ‘God bearer’ is intimately, indeed bodily, related to Christ: his own bodily glorification now embraces hers. And, since Mary bore his body of flesh, she is intimately related to the Church, Christ’s body.’ In the last sentence the term ‘body’ is used in the physical sense (‘Mary bore [Christ’s] body of flesh’) and the metaphorical and spiritual sense (‘she is intimately related to … Christ’s body’).

Augustine, De virginitate.3, quoted in Power, Veiled Desire, p. 179. The different degrees of blessedness illustrate the distinction between Mary as the antitype of Eve in her physical relationship with Christ and Mary as a member of the metaphorical body of Christ.

Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ paragraphs 28-29 draw attention to the woman who gives birth to a male child in Revelation 12 and suggests that while ‘most scholars accept that the primary reading of the woman is corporate’ there may be a secondary reference to Mary. In this regard, Robert H. Mounce writes: ‘The woman is not Mary the mother of Jesus but the messianic community, the ideal Israel’. The Book of Revelation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1987) p. 236. Mounce p. 239 notes ‘the interesting suggestion’ of G. B. Caird on this point. Verse 5 depicts the ascension immediately following ‘nativity’. Caird suggests that this is ‘an anomaly … only in the fancy of modern critics because for John “the birth of the Messiah … means not the Nativity but the Cross”. Following the [parallel passage] of Psalm 2, the birthday of
the Messiah. These literary distinctions are important, in particular if the role of Mary as human mother of Christ is to be apprehended in its uniqueness and not subsumed into the role of the Church.

D. The inversion factor

The typologies indicated in Genesis 2-3 need to be carefully discerned, as noted above. The man in the Garden and the descendant of the woman who will crush the serpent’s head are both individual males.93 Besides the two men, there are also two women, the woman in the Garden and the mother of the descendant (who will crush the serpent’s head). But, in contradistinction to the male figures, there is a third ‘woman’ who is not an individual. In this latter case, the name ‘woman’ arises solely from the correspondence made with one of the functions of the woman in the Garden, sustained as a term for the people of God in relation to God. While it may be natural to identify her *individual* counterpart with both functions attributed prophetically to the woman in the Garden, the consequence is that the proper particular function of the mother of the descendant tends to be underestimated.

Mary’s universal significance grows out of what she is concretely. She is not, historically, the bride of Jesus; her relationship to the man is different. On the human level it is the relationship of mother to son, which is not radically new. The revolutionary aspect of this relationship is not on the merely human level. Mary’s role as mother of the Redeemer is unique because it reverses the relationship not only between masculine and feminine but also between divine and human. Instead of the

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93 Their concrete individuality does not preclude broader associative roles. See Chapter 7, Section D.
divine being the source of the human it is the other way around. Albeit a human mother, Mary is *Theotokos*, God-bearer.

Prefiguration of the descendant in his humanness includes, and is highlighted by, prefiguration of the descendant’s mother.⁹⁴ In this regard, the most striking of Old Testament passages is the somewhat obscure text of Jeremiah 31:21-22:

Set up road markers for yourself, make yourself guideposts; consider well the highway, the road by which you went. Return, O virgin Israel, Return to these your cities. How long will you waver, O faithless daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing on the earth: a woman encompasses a man.

This translation comes from the New Revised Standard Version. The Jerusalem Bible offers an alternative translation for Jeremiah 31: 22b: *ki bârâ YHWH hadâšâh bâ‘āreṣ neqēbâ tešōbēh gâber*:

For Yahweh is creating something new on earth: the Woman sets out to find her Husband again.

If the latter is the meaning of those lines it would imply that the faithless daughter of Jeremiah 31: 22a is also the woman of Jeremiah 31: 22b, that is that the faithless daughter (i.e. Israel), by Yahweh’s contrivance, will set out to find her husband (i.e. Yahweh) again. But if this were envisaged, it would be more natural to address Israel as ‘O faithless wife’, rather than as a daughter.⁹⁵

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⁹⁴ Cf. the mother of Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14) and of the Servant (Isaiah 49:1) and a similar allusion in Micah 3.

⁹⁵ Cf. Gerald L. Keown et al, *Jeremiah 26-52*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1995) pp.122-123: "The three-word saying at the end of v. 22 … uses vocabulary not found elsewhere in the Book of Consolation … “Female will encircle he-man” is more likely about giving birth than about finding a husband, since being without a husband is not a problem raised in chapters 30-31 … Wordplay connects the current situation represented by the daughter … “who turns away” and the new thing created by God, a female who …“encircles”.”
The motif of ‘a new thing’ is repeated in verses 31-34:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant which I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord ... they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.  

The new covenant will not be like the old, although Yahweh was the husband of Israel under the old covenant. In this context there is a suggestion that a woman is going to relate to a man in a radically new way.

Trible detects poetic links throughout Jeremiah 31:15-22 that resonate with the notion of womb, with woman enclosing man. Translating $\text{tešōbēb}$ of Jeremiah 33:22 as ‘surrounds’, she writes:

In the last line of the poem, the word female ($\text{neqēbā}$) resonates with all these [feminine] images [in Jeremiah 31:15-22] ... this word occurred in Genesis 1:27 as a generic term to include all females. Moreover, it was used there in poetic parallelism to the phrase ‘image of God’, a parallelism approximated in Jeremiah 31:22b. In both these passages this noun is object of the verb create ($\text{bārā}$) with God (or Yahweh) as subject. Thus, the text of Genesis 1:27 ... provides an external witness to the kind of internal function the noun $\text{neqēbā}$ has here in Jeremiah.

By poetic analysis, Trible discerns that the meanings of ‘virile male, child to adult’ are associated with man [geber] who is surrounded by $\text{neqēbā}$. She writes:

After calling Israel a ‘turnabout [haššōbēba, v. 22a] daughter’, the poet juxtaposes immediately the description of female surrounding [$\text{tešōbēb}$, v. 22b] man. Two very different portraits of the female are thus associated

96 This is again the translation from the New Revised Standard Version. The Jerusalem Bible translates the ‘though I was their husband’ of Jeremiah 31:32 as, ‘so I had to show them who was master’.  
97 Trible, Rhetoric of Sexuality: the discussion of Jeremiah 31:15-22 is on pp. 40ff.  
98 Trible, Rhetoric of Sexuality, p. 48.  
99 Trible, Rhetoric of Sexuality, p. 49.
through assonance; yet this association yields a radical transformation with the positive superseding the negative in Yahweh’s new creation.

In contrast to the Jerusalem Bible translation, Trible discerns a radical change in the relationship of male and female, with the implication that this is to be understood generically. But her exegesis arises out of her appraisal of poetic nuances in the passage. Trible does not go on to suggest the second meaning that has been discerned in this text in terms of fulfilment in the New Testament.

William L. Holladay notes that ‘Roman Catholic exegesis till modern times has been dominated by Jerome’s view that the clause [Jeremiah 31:22b] refers to the Virgin enfolding Christ in her womb’. While not sharing this view, Holladay goes on to acknowledge:

Jeremiah here indicates two convictions: first, that the situation is far worse than people could imagine, so that Yahweh must move all the way back to Genesis 1 to make it right; and second Yahweh will make it right even so. The reassignment of sexual roles is innovative past all conventional belief, but it is not inconceivable to Yahweh. (One may also add that it is no more inconceivable than the assumption behind the notion of a new covenant, vv 31-34).

The reassignment of sexual roles reverses the order of creation in a novel way because it occurs on the divine-human level. In this relationship the woman is the origin, the God-man born from her. As the human mother of the God-man, Mary presents a new twist in rapprochement of heaven and earth in terms of gender. This very fact in all its importance is distorted if Mary is identified with the antitypes of Israel to ‘the Lord’ (or the bride to the bridegroom) on the divine-human level, and Wisdom to ‘the Lord’ on the divine level, because these relationships parallel the

creational assignment of sexual roles, not the reassignment of sexual roles. Something of what this reassignment of sexual roles might mean for women is expressed by Mary’s kinswoman Elizabeth: ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord comes to me?’ (Luke 1:42-43) There is also some hint in John’s gospel that Mary and Jesus are to be regarded as generic woman and man. Jesus addresses his mother as ‘woman’, never as ‘mother’.  

In further distinction from the bride role of the new messianic community, the birth of Jesus from a human mother occurs under the old covenant. Paul writes: ‘but when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as children.’ (Galatians 4:4) Hermann N. Ridderbos remarks:  

He was the Son of the Father, who stood by His Father’s side already before the sending (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6, 2 Cor. 8:9, Phil 2:6 and Col. 1:15). The Sonship designates not merely an official but also an ontological relationship (cf. Phil. 2:6). The words born of a woman, do not refer to the beginning of His existence as Son, but as the child of a woman … The woman was not only the medium of his coming into the flesh, but from her He took all that belongs to the human. She was in the full sense His mother. That Paul in these words is also reflecting on the virgin birth is, as we see it, extremely doubtful.  

The virgin birth, if in view at all, is not the primary focus; rather the human birth of Jesus (born under the law) is contrasted with the spiritual adoption of the redeemed

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102 Like the original hā’ādām, Jesus is ‘ο ἄνθρωπος here.  
(who were under the law). Alan Cole writes: ‘Christ was born under law-conditions so that He might ransom those who were themselves under such conditions.’ The nature of the ransomed state is pictured in the allegorical development of Sarah, summed up in the quotation, in Galatians 4:27, from Isaiah 54:1. Cole comments:

The quotation from Isaiah 54:1 is appropriate for many reasons, although there is no direct evidence in the original that it was ever applied to the barren Sarah. Its direct reference is to desolate Israel, and secondarily to Jerusalem … Since in this passage Israel is seen as the ‘bride’ of God, the thought of Revelation finds a ready echo. And because the Christian Church is also seen as the ‘bride of Christ’ (see 2 Cor xi.2 for the Pauline use), a whole system of identifications comes into operation at once.

The church that is the bride is not made up of those ‘born of woman’ but of those adopted by God (Cf. John 1:12-13; 3:1-10). Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ paragraph 11 refers to Mary’s acceptance of her typological role that is to pave the way for ‘the fulfilment of God’s will for Israel’:

Paul speaks of the Son of God being born ‘in the fullness of time’ and ‘born of a woman, born under the law’ (Galatians 4:4). The birth of Mary’s son is the fulfilment of God’s will for Israel, and Mary’s part in that fulfilment is that of free and unqualified consent.

Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ paragraph 18 suggests a connection between the birth of Jesus and Christian birth and adoption: ‘The virginal conception … points to the new birth of every Christian, as an adopted child of God. Each is “born again (from above) by water and the Spirit” (John 3:3-5).’ The point being made here is that both births are a ‘sign of the presence and work of the Spirit’. If the miraculous nature of Jesus’ birth is highlighted, the similarity between the birth of Jesus and the

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106 It might be asked whether the suggestion that Christ’s birth points to Christian rebirth is typology in reverse, pointing from Christ rather than towards Christ.
new birth of every Christian is highlighted, as both are births from above. Otherwise they belong to different covenants. Jesus was born ‘under the law’ (i.e. the old covenant). Mary herself must enter the new covenant. 107

As noted above, Mary is not the antitype of ’ishah in the companion-consort relationship, except insofar as she is part of the church. But to say that is to put the matter negatively. Surprisingly perhaps, the most detailed interchange between Jesus and his mother occurs at a wedding. 108 In alerting Jesus to the problem (‘they have no wine’ verse 3) Mary obviously expects Jesus to be able and willing to do something about it, as is indicated by Jesus’ response: ‘Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.’ (Verse 4) Mary does not argue but in effect ignores this response. (His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ verse 5). Does she take it upon herself to determine that his hour has come?109 If so, Jesus tacitly submits. Mary is not the bride but she plays an active role behind the scenes at the wedding. 110


108 John 2:1-12. John the Baptist’s comment in John 3:28-29 (‘You yourselves are my witnesses that I said: I am not the Messiah but I have been sent ahead of him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice.’) gives credence to the idea that, in John’s gospel, roles at a wedding can be understood as theologically significant. See Sandra M. Schneiders, Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus In The Fourth Gospel (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003) p.135 on Jesus as the true Bridegroom in John 2:9-10 and 3:27-30.


110 Mary: Hope and Grace in Christ (ARCIC) paragraph 25 observes: ‘Jesus begins by calling into question his former relationship with his mother (“What is there between you and me?”), implying that a change has to take place. He does not address Mary as ‘mother’, but as ‘woman’ (cf. John 19:26). Jesus no longer sees his relation to Mary as simply one of earthly kinship. Mary’s response, to instruct the servants to “Do whatever he tells you” (2:5), is unexpected; she is not in charge of the feast (cf. 2:8). Her initial role as the mother of Jesus has radically changed. She herself is now seen as a believer within the messianic community’. 139
To pinpoint the typological role of Mary is not to deny that she can function in other ways. While Mary is not the type of Wisdom in companion-consort relation to ‘the Lord’, this is not necessarily to deny her capacity to function representatively on the human level in terms of wisdom. The figure of Wisdom in the book of Proverbs has a counterpart on the human level in the alphabetical poem at the end of chapter 31, the somewhat daunting description of the perfect wife. This description is of woman, not as romantic sexual partner of man, as appears in the Song of Songs, but as mistress of the household. This woman is wise: ‘she opens her mouth with wisdom’ (v. 26). Like Wisdom she has a public voice: ‘let her works praise her in the city gates’ (v. 31 cf. Proverbs 1:20 -21). In this idealized picture, her sons call her blessed and her husband sings her praises: ‘Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.’ (vv. 28-29) In real life Elizabeth says to Mary, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.’ (Luke 1:42) This can be compared with the remark made by an unknown woman to Jesus, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that nursed you’, to which Jesus replies, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’ (Luke 11:27-28) It is clear that biological relationship is not enough for the degree of blessedness that Jesus has in mind. But Mary spans both degrees of blessedness. The biological mother of Wisdom may be said in some sense to encompass all women in her unique experience.\footnote{Cf. Swidler’s observation that Wisdom ‘shows what Ishah would have been had she waited for God’s self-unveiling’. \textit{Women in Judaism}, p.29.}

Tina Beattie writes:

\footnote{Cf. Swidler’s observation that Wisdom ‘shows what Ishah would have been had she waited for God’s self-unveiling’. \textit{Women in Judaism}, p.29.}
It may be easier for a woman who has a non-Catholic upbringing to enjoy and celebrate Mary than for a woman who has always been taught to see Mary as a rebuke to her own sexual desires.\textsuperscript{112}

The humanity of Mary of Nazareth is obscured if she is seen as a projected symbol of virginity. In tracing the complicated history of the Marian tradition, Elizabeth Johnson writes:

The birthing and maternally caring metaphors which the Hebrew Scriptures used to describe God’s unbreakable love for the covenantal people have been concretised and carried forward in the figure of Mary.\textsuperscript{113}

The suggestion that metaphorical language for God has been ‘concretised’ in the ‘figure of Mary’ is another way of saying that ‘the figure of Mary’ has been used allegorically. Johnson adds: ‘transferring this maternal language back to God enables us to see that God herself has a maternal countenance’.\textsuperscript{114} She writes: ‘the Marian tradition is a golden motherlode which can be ‘mined’ in order to retrieve female imagery and language about the holy mystery of God.’\textsuperscript{115} Rather than engaging in such an indirect process of allegorical re-association, fresh appraisal of the biblical witness to Mary would be timely.

In summary, if ’ishah is seen as a type of Wisdom or a type of the Church in relation to Christ, the typological association has to do with the relationship of delight. If ’ishah is considered as a type of Mary, the typological association has to do with the pronouncement of judgement and with what Kidner terms ‘the first glimmer

\textsuperscript{112} Tina Beattie, \textit{Rediscovering Mary: Insights from the Gospels} (Liguori, Missouri: Triumph, 1995) p. 11.


\textsuperscript{114} Johnson, ‘Mary and the Image of God’, p. 50.

of the gospel’. In the former cases ‘ishah and her antitypes play the companion-consort role in relation to the masculine figure; in the latter case the source and priority of masculine and feminine are reversed. To appreciate this reversal, Mary’s role as antitype of ‘ishah needs to be distinguished from other devotional or allegorical associations.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted a sacramental reading of Scripture in which analogical language and typological figures are regarded as message-bearers. Christensen terms this the ‘via analogia’, based on Aquinas’ doctrine of analogy and C. S. Lewis’ literary view of biblical inspiration. This method of reading contrasts with what McFague terms ‘sacramentalism’, in which the possibility of transcendent meaning is ruled out. Sacramental reading of the message-bearing kind illustrates the degree to which the transcendent underwrites the world of our senses. In relation to the *imago Dei*, such reading illustrates the degree to which human gender points to and sacramentally embodies greater realities.

This is to follow a very different direction than that of much recent thinking about the *imago Dei* and metaphorical language for God. Gruber intimates that maternal metaphors for God employed by the anonymous author of Isaiah 40-66 are an attempt to correct the insensitive ideology of earlier prophets rather than a means of apprehending the nature of God. Johnson’s suggestion that the Marian tradition is a

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117 See Christensen, *C. S. Lewis on Scripture*, chapter 4.
‘motherlode’ which can be ‘mined’ in order to retrieve female imagery and language about God would appear to recommend detaching biblical language from its referent with the intent of using it for another purpose. Johnson’s method is not that of detecting biblical parallels but rather a freewheeling approach to biblical and traditional language. The intention is not, it appears, to find out what God is like but rather to project a picture of what God ought to be like. Such an intention is realized in Jantzen’s proposal that pantheism is a necessary projection of a feminist symbolic of the divine. To use Trible’s phraseology, the moon would be well and truly possessed on such terms. The alternative approach suggested here aims to offer a more careful typology with regard to biblical traditions.

The chapter has drawn attention to parallels from the man and woman in the Garden in relation to divine and also divine-human antitypes, as well as to the radically new relationship, in terms of gender, between the divine and the human that occurs in the Incarnation. These correspondences are complex not only because of the different levels of existence involved but also because of human sin that distorts the analogies. The nature of relationship between masculine and feminine has emerged as a key to gender, the predominant masculine gender associated with God due, it may be supposed, to the feminine persona of the people of God in relation to ‘the Lord’. But Mary demonstrates ‘a new thing on the earth’. As Mary herself says: ‘Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed’ (Luke 1:48b). The reassignment of roles, not only between masculine and feminine but also between divine and human, paves the way for the restoration of the relationship of delight at a new level. The next chapter considers exegetical issues, in particular in connection with the relationship of delight.