Chapter 7
Gendered Identity and the Church

Introduction

This thesis has explored the *imago Dei*, looking firstly at the symbolic reference of a linguistic ‘via analogia’, secondly in following up biblical clues, and thirdly in considering exegetical issues, particularly with regard to the relationship of delight. By these means women can be seen to be made in God’s image in a direct sense, without recourse to a masculine *tertium quid*. Nevertheless, identity for women cannot be satisfactorily established in a climate that disputes the possibility of meaning itself. The last two chapters considered this dilemma for women and proposed an alternative to a subjectivist source of meaning. This chapter applies these matters to a quest for women’s identity in the church.

In her extensive study of feminist thinking in society and the church, Elaine Graham draws attention to the work of the ‘radical’ feminist tradition of ‘writing the body’, which attempts to maximalize sexual difference, in contrast with ‘liberal’ feminism which seeks to ‘minimize sex difference beyond reproduction’.¹ Luce Irigaray is an exponent of the tradition that seeks to maximalize sexual difference. But Irigaray, as noted earlier, is aware of the tension between any emancipist thrust towards the fulfilment of this aim and a deconstructionist undermining of any resulting claim to meaning and identity. Women, says Irigaray, ‘want to seize that which already exists so as to bring it back to an invisible source – their source? – a place from whence they

might create themselves *ex nihilo*. Feminist subjectivity, it may be surmised, wants to stake its claim before subjectivity is undermined any further. In contrast to this attempt to maximalize sexual difference, Rosemary Ruether maintains that most feminism today favours an expanded unitary view of human nature.

But if divided about an ontological response, writers such as Ruether and Irigaray appear to be at one about a prior predicament for women. Irigaray goes on to say: ‘Has not history forced this impossibility upon [women]? They must continue to live, cut off from their beginning and from their end’. Ruether states: ‘The Christian tradition included women in the image of God only in an androcentric way’. Kari Elisabeth Børresen describes this quandary as ‘women’s God-alien femaleness’, stemming from a supposed patriarchal bias of intention on the part of the author of Genesis 1:26-27. In support of Børresen’s diagnosis, this thesis notes a history of biblical interpretation in which women have been included in the *imago Dei* only at the expense of their femaleness, as for instance in Augustine’s and Calvin’s interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. Whether an expanded unitary view of human nature is a convincing remedy for women’s so-called God-alien femaleness may be open to question.

This chapter considers identity for women in the church against a background of the various kinds of thinking outlined above, in particular in terms of Graham’s study of feminist thinking in the human and social sciences. One challenge to establishing

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2 Irigaray, ‘The Limits of Transference’, *The Irigaray Reader*, p. 109. See also Chapter 1 of this thesis.
6 Børresen, ‘God’s Image, Man’s Image, Patristic Interpretation of Gen 1,27 and 1 Cor 11,7’, p. 187.
identity along Irigaray’s lines is the lack of a coherent worldview to support it. But, while not uncritical of Irigaray, Graham’s study largely endorses her methodology. Graham describes a quest for embodiment, difference and a solid anchoring in the historical process and relates this to women’s identity in the church. The chapter begins with an examination of these aims in terms of the presuppositions expressed in the study. The second section considers polarized discourse in the Christian churches about the role and identity of women. The last two sections submit an alternative praxis for women in the church, based on the assumption of the message-bearing or sacramental quality of the imago Dei argued in this thesis.

A. Contingent, embodied and different

A search for identity for women qua women runs counter to a movement to minimize sexual difference beyond reproduction. An attempt to anchor identity in the cultural process, as suggested in Graham’s study, is somewhat at odds with a desire for women to create themselves. These kinds of tensions are played out against a deconstructionist challenge to subjectivity. The emancipist thrust of feminist thinking favours subjectivity as a source of values and identity but a subjectivist frame of reference is not conducive to a sense of ‘lived-in’ embodiment. This section considers conflicting influences both in the human and social sciences and in theological thinking about women.
In her study of feminist thinking in the human and social sciences, Graham points to postmodern perspectives in which ‘subjectivity and selfhood are contingent upon the individual’s inhabitation of culture’:

Models of action that presuppose rationality ... autonomy and freedom of self-determination have been exposed as particular and historically conditioned accounts, dating from the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution. The most outstanding example of ... altered notions of agency has arisen from feminist theories which identify human action and knowledge as profoundly embodied.7

According to Graham, recent studies indicate complex understanding of ‘how we inhabit our bodies in and against historical and cultural contexts’.8 Graham relates this to thinking about women’s identity in the church.

One difficulty with postmodern perspectives is a lack of contingency on anything other than a subjectivist frame of reference. In this sense there is a contradiction in the assertion that identity is contingent upon culture. Chapter 5 of this thesis argued that loss of linguistic access to the external world perpetuates a subjectivist epistemological framework: deconstructionist thinking relativises the subjectivist framework but still operates within it. Graham herself draws attention to Derrida’s denial of ‘any notion of language as revealing a reliable external reality’.9 She remarks:

Post-modern perspectives which dethrone axioms concerning the transparency of language, the unity of consciousness and reason, and the self-possession of the individual portray ... notions of a personal identity that is contradictory and fragmented.10

It is in this context, it should be noted, that Derrida depicts ‘a subject who is constituted by a relation to an exteriority ... in the communal networks of

7 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 224.
8 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 145.
9 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 184.
10 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 224.
signification’. According to his epistemological framework, not only subjectivity but also ‘exteriority’ and ‘signification’ are deconstructed. The postmodern perspectives by which subjectivity and selfhood are said to be contingent upon the individual’s inhabitation of culture do not offer a secure epistemological base for personal identity. As Graham indicates, notions of identity on such a basis are likely to be contradictory and fragmented.

But, as already noted in this thesis, the emancipist thrust of feminism wishes to retain the validity of a subjectivist framework. The idea that subjectivity and selfhood are contingent on cultural setting contrasts with the title of the study: Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood and Theology. Graham contends that ‘gender is an artefact of human culture’ but she concludes that ‘a theology of gender’ needs to ‘foster the values, relationships and truth-claims of a more gender-inclusive community’. She does not appear to acknowledge an inherent conflict between subjectivity that is contingent on cultural setting and subjectivity that critiques and moulds culture, in particular as such a conflict might affect the values, relationships and truth-claims of the feminist project. Nevertheless, her study draws attention to a possible loss of a source for truth-claims accompanying a loss of subjectivity. Graham asks:

Does such a dissolution of the subject, and a disavowal of any notion of personhood that is independent of human discourse lead to an anti-humanism? Or can ethical and political value-commitments be founded on

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13 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 224.
14 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 231.
some enduring notion of the person that does not collapse into
metaphysics or essentialism?\textsuperscript{15}

Further, while postmodern perspectives of subjectivity and selfhood are said to be
contingent upon inhabitation of culture, a feminist search for embodiment and
sexual difference would distance women’s subjectivity and selfhood from
‘patriarchal’ culture. The ‘patriarchal’ way of thinking about women is said to have
deprived women of a sense of profound embodiment associated with inhabitation of
culture. Irigaray, according to Graham, stands against ‘patriarchal thought’ that
‘essentializes [the female body] as “Other” and immaterial and represses the
feminine into the male unconscious’. Instead Irigaray ‘uses female
morphology deliberately to create an alternative ontology’.\textsuperscript{16}

Graham goes on to say that ‘Irigaray’s radical project to rewrite Western
epistemology and ontology restores the significance of the body, passion, libido
and the unconscious as legitimate foundations of knowledge and selfhood.’\textsuperscript{17}

But does it? Graham observes further:

Irigaray’s feminine bodies are highly metaphorical, the site of a pre-
Oedipal, pre-social unconscious. Irigaray develops femininity as an
essentialist, metaphysical category because it is from precisely this
mysterious status beyond patriarchal language and culture that women
develop their subversive power.

Despite the aim to restore the significance of the body, Graham’s study discerns a
lack of embodiment in this depiction of female morphology: ‘By placing the
female body outside patriarchal culture, the more effectively to challenge

\textsuperscript{15} Graham, \textit{Making The Difference}, p 223.
Irigaray’ in T. Brennan (ed.), \textit{Feminism and Psychoanalysis} (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 120.
\textsuperscript{17} Graham, \textit{Making The Difference}, p.137.
androcentric norms, Irigaray risks rendering women’s bodies immaterial and rhetorical, rather than empirical and rooted in social relations.\textsuperscript{18}

Graham’s study perceives tension between Irigaray’s professed aim of providing an alternative to patriarchal conclusions about women and her success in doing so. As I understand the description, patriarchal thought is said to repress and reinterpret female embodiment as an immaterial male projection. Within the projection the female body is said to be ‘essentialized’ (or allegorized) as ‘other’ to the male. But in Irigaray’s alternative presentation, female morphology, no longer depicted as contingent on patriarchal culture, is ‘essentialized’ in a mysterious metaphysical realm beyond patriarchal culture.\textsuperscript{19}

Graham’s critique queries the assumption that the subconscious mind is a natural ally in the quest for embodiment. Rather, in stating that Irigaray develops femininity as an immaterial metaphysical category in which the unconscious is said to be a legitimate foundation of knowledge and selfhood, Graham’s appraisal would appear to endorse the contention of this thesis that feminist thinking may tend towards developing a disembodied metaphysical realm through the agency of the subconscious mind.

To sum up at this point: a quest for \textit{contingency} on cultural setting operates in a climate of desire for independence from so-called patriarchal culture while a quest for \textit{embodiment} and \textit{sexual difference} appears to founder on a perceived need to project


\textsuperscript{19} Graham qualifies this critique by suggesting that Irigaray’s work, rather than constituting a return to determinism and essentialism, is arguably characterized by an element within psychoanalysis in which ‘bodies are simultaneously … determined by … social pressures, but also stand beyond and outside culture, threatening to undermine the surface both of conscious rationality and of the social order’. (Graham, \textit{Making The Difference}, p.139.)
femininity as a category outside the norms of patriarchal culture. Irigarary seeks to develop an alternative ontology for women distinct from that supplied through ‘patriarchal’ culture but the method of developing the alternative ontology does not differ from the method attributed to ‘patriarchal’ culture. While ‘patriarchal’ thought is said to repress and reinterpret female embodiment as an immaterial male projection, Irigaray’s project appears to reinterpret female embodiment as an immaterial female projection. A desire for identity for women qua women contingent on a sense of ‘lived-in’ embodiment runs counter to such a method. While the subjectivist epistemological framework is less than helpful in this regard, a post-modern critique of subjectivity only exacerbates the problem. A post-modern critique would tend to undermine the cogency of feminist values and the frame of reference in which contingency on culture and embodiment can be said to operate.

Irigary’s response to opposing influences is described by Whitford as ‘the enactment of the tension’.20 Similarly, while stating that the challenge is ‘to contemplate human nature as contingent and contextual’,21 Graham wishes to retain feminist subjectivity and values:

The impasse of postmodernism is resolved not by turning away from its critique of metaphysics and dominant rationality, but by insisting that purposeful, coherent and binding values can be articulated from within the core of human activity and value-directed practice.22

Graham goes on to outline the relevance of such a method for theology:

[T]he centrality of practice – as self-reflexively reflecting and constructing gender identity, relations and representations – is confirmed as the focus of critical attention for a theology of gender. It would add a feminist critique of

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21 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 223.
22 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 227.
such claims to truth and value by attending to latent aspects of domination and exclusion in the formulation of such values.

Such a ‘centrality of practice’ is reminiscent of Irigaray’s method. As has been noted, Irigaray says that women ‘want to seize that which already exists so as to bring it back to an invisible source – their source? – a place from whence they might create themselves ex nihilo’. In this representation, one may surmise that the contextual nature of gendered thinking is to be seized and reformulated.

There is a kind of circularity of method in both Irigaray’s and Graham’s proposals. In this context, it is not clear how Graham would avoid the lack of embodiment and non-relation to external reality that she detects in Irigaray’s projection of female morphology. What Graham terms ‘the centrality of practice’ may, in fact, resemble McFague’s ‘ecological’ model of self and world. Unlike McFague, Graham does not claim to depict a ‘subject-subjects’ model, unless it could be said that there is a subject-subjects aspect to the idea that women want to create themselves. I have ventured to draw a diagram of what I think Graham may mean by what she presents as ‘the centrality of practice’, along the lines of my diagram of McFague’s ‘subject-subjects’ model.

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23 Luce Irigaray, ‘The Limits of Transference’, The Irigaray Reader, p. 109. See also Chapter 1. See Chapter 5, section B.
Given a method similar to Irigaray’s and perhaps McFague’s, Graham’s study does not do more than hint at a possible way of avoiding ‘essentialism’. Unlike an approach that draws attention away from biological sex difference, Graham states that ‘authentic analysis of gender must be informed by accounts of human bodiliness’.  

But embodiment, while important, must not be seen as deterministic. She continues:

The challenge is to find ways of speaking which cast bodies as the primary source and medium of our relationship to the world – as a kind of ‘vantage point’ for experience, whilst lending diversity and provisionality to such accounts.  

In this regard, a non-deterministic approach is said to be particularly relevant to women due to a history of negative perception: ‘it has been the rule that embodiment is regarded as an exclusively female quality, and that the female gender is marked with signs of carnality, non-rationality and biological determinism’.  

(Some ambivalence may be noted towards associating embodiment with women, in view of

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an alleged history of ‘patriarchal thought’ that ‘essentializes [the female body] as “Other” and immaterial and represses the feminine into the male unconscious’. 28

Graham applies the challenge of engaging with embodiment to theology:

‘Theological traditions that have disregarded bodily experience in the articulation of spiritual and ethical verities may well have to be reformulated.’ 29 She writes with regard to the Incarnation:

A number of recent works … provide pointers towards forms of critical theological studies of gender, and suggest ways in which a theology of gender might be constructed from the vantage points of human practice … [James Nelson] … seeks a rediscovery of embodied identity and how this might inform ministry. The Doctrine of the Incarnation suggests for [Nelson] that sexuality and physicality must affect spirituality and identity. 30

But what is meant by embodied identity in such a context? If the doctrine of the Incarnation is said to draw attention to sexuality and physicality, how does this accord, it may be asked, with relativising the masculinity of Christ? 31 (This point will be considered again in section D below.)

Graham, it seems, attempts to steer between a denial of the relevance of biological sex difference and a fixed understanding of gender. The idea that gender divisions are a dimension of social relations is seen as a corrective to ‘essentialism’. Her study notes that gendered human nature, understood as ‘a form of social relations’, is ‘thoroughly compatible with a Trinitarian model of God’. 32 Here she comes closest to

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28 See Graham, Making The Difference, pp. 136-137.
29 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 226.
30 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 228. She refers to James Nelson, The Intimate Connection (London: SPCK, 1992, pp. 21-28). If embodiment is important, resurrection of the body takes on renewed significance. But cf. Johnson’s contention that the risen Christ exists only pneumatically. (See SHE WHO IS, p. 72.)
32 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 223.
the view suggested by Hill but she does not explore the contention in terms of further biblical interpretation. In fact, her study appears to view creation and the *imago Dei* negatively, as theological concepts that postulate ‘an eternal pre-existent human nature’.\(^{33}\) In response, it might be observed that the relevance of Trinitarian social relations to gendered human social relations is not clear unless gendered humanity is seen to be made in God’s image.

Graham observes that there is a lack of clarity about sex and gender and their interrelation both within and outside the church: ‘a deeper and more critical enquiry is necessary into the nature and extent of gender difference, its origin and dynamics, as well as the implications for policy and practice.’\(^{34}\) She writes:

In attempting to avoid biological determinism, the sex / gender distinction ... risks a corresponding form of social ‘categorism’ by seeing learning, social roles and externally imposed norms as the sole constituents of gender identity. Yet this obscures the body as an agent in the formation of gender altogether, with two consequences. Firstly, gender is perceived as a matter of behaviour and consciousness, presupposing disembodied minds as the primary and determinant sites of gender: a perpetuation of, rather than a challenge to, Cartesian dualism. Secondly, the privileging of consciousness universalizes and abstracts the material and historical aspects of ‘lived experience’.\(^{35}\)

In this appraisal a sex/gender distinction is associated with dualistic thinking that feminism purports to avoid.

This section began by engaging with the relevance of historical and cultural context to postmodern perspectives, alongside a feminist notion that ‘human action and knowledge is profoundly embodied’.\(^{36}\) But what kind of historical and cultural


\(^{34}\) Graham, *Making The Difference*, p. 6.


contingency is in view? Chapter 6 noted a remark by Paul Fiddes: ‘If the [Christ-event] which has all the contingency of time and space, of the dusty roads of Galilee, the sweat of crowds and the blood of executions, is normative for the embodiment of God, then we can never escape the particular.’

37 The contingency of time and space referred to by Fiddes would seem ‘profoundly embodied’ in a different manner from Graham’s description of contingency: finding ‘ways of speaking which cast bodies … as a kind of ‘vantage point’ for experience, whilst lending diversity and provisionality to such accounts’.

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Graham’s notion of ‘provisionality’ in terms of speaking about embodiment and relationship to the world would indicate that identity constructed on such a basis is likely to be fragile. There is an ontological price to pay in Derrida’s epistemological climate. The attempt to maximize sexual difference is more clearly affected by deconstructionist fragility than ‘liberal’ feminism seeking to ‘minimize sex difference beyond reproduction’, which is more clearly grounded in the politics of equality.

39 But, as Graham’s study appears to confirm, there is a price to pay in liberal feminism as well. Liberal feminism does not address what Børresen calls ‘women’s God-alien femaleness’. This omission runs counter to the emphasis on embodiment in recent studies in the human and social sciences.

37 Fiddes, Participating in God, p. 290.
38 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 226.
40 Graham, Making The Difference, pp. 26-27.
41 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 145.
Inventing the next steps to women’s identity would appear to entail steering between conflicting influences. Such a project looks set to lead to ever more complex abstraction. In the quest for embodiment the journey will depend on the starting-point. Graham’s study emphasizes the notion that embodiment and difference are contingent on something else. The question is, contingent on what? This thesis would agree that subjectivity is inadequate as a basis for the establishment of embodiment and difference. But, in a climate of doubt about the validity of meaning, communal networks of signification are no more adequate. If the church is regarded as a communal network of signification, the matter becomes even more problematic because here there appears to be long-term polarization about the role and identity of women, as will be considered in the next section.

**B. Discourse in the Church**

The previous section noted two different styles of feminist thinking: ‘liberal’ feminism which seeks to minimize sexual difference beyond reproduction and a tradition of ‘writing the body’ which attempts to maximize sexual difference. In the former the emphasis is on equality and the common humanity of men and women. The latter focuses on embodiment and identity for women. One of the difficulties with the tradition of ‘writing the body’ is that of avoiding essentialism in a constructed realm of self-creation. Despite the quest for embodiment, such a realm is in itself disembodied. Conflict between the two different ways of thinking, as well as

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conflict intrinsic to the quest for embodiment, finds expression in discourse about the role and identity of women in the church.

Without providing an exhaustive coverage of different ways of thinking, this section considers some methods of offering identity for women in the church and some results arising from those methods across a broad spectrum of denominational and theological backgrounds. An emancipist thrust appears evident in a suggestion, by liberation theologian Leonardo Boff, of a masculine and feminine principle in the Godhead. Nevertheless, his proposal is critiqued by Elizabeth A. Johnson, also a Roman Catholic. On the Protestant side, the kind of identity for women offered by Karl Barth is compared with that offered by evangelical, Gilbert Bilezikian. This leads into consideration of a long-running dispute, amongst American evangelicals, between so-called ‘egalitarians’ and ‘complementarians’.

Leonardo Boff suggests that women are linked with the Holy Spirit through Mary. He argues for a masculine and feminine principle in the Godhead, the Son representing the masculine principle and the Holy Spirit representing the feminine principle. According to Boff, since masculine and feminine at the human level are both in the image of God both are equally eligible for ‘divinisation’. He understands the Incarnation in the sense that ‘from the first moment of his conception [the human being Jesus of Nazareth] was assumed by the second Person of the Divine

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Trinity in such a way that he is not only a human being but God incarnate as well'. 45

Similarly, Boff claims that Mary is assumed by the Holy Spirit, and thus elevated to the level of God. 46 Boff concludes that ‘the created feminine is eternally associated with the mystery of the Trinity, through Mary assumed by the Holy Spirit’. 47

Boff begins with the symbolic order (both masculine and feminine are in God’s image) but he moves away from it. In arguing that women (through Mary) are united with the Holy Spirit he does not claim that women are in the image of the Holy Spirit. He writes: ‘The Spirit, the eternal feminine, is united to the created feminine in order that the latter may be totally and fully what it can be – virgin and mother’. 48 One danger with this kind of approach is stereotyping of alleged feminine traits, as Johnson points out: the Spirit is associated with the traits of virginity and motherhood which are reflected back as expectations of women. Johnson objects to this on the grounds that virginity and motherhood do not exhaust women’s capacity for self-realization. Instead she proposes SHE WHO IS at the divine level, as a ‘symbol’ or name for God more broadly imaging women’s capacity for self-realization. 49

Johnson rejects the idea that God has a ‘feminine’ dimension, realized in the Holy Spirit on the grounds that that the third person of the Trinity is amorphous and easily seen as subordinate to the other two persons. 50 What she does not acknowledge is that her method still locks women into an approach in which women’s traits are projected to the divine level and then reflected back as

45 Boff, The Maternal Face of God, p. 94.
49 Elizabeth A. Johnson, SHE WHO IS. See chapters 3 and 11.
50 Johnson, SHE WHO IS, p. 50.
expectations and idealizations for women. The process is avowedly circular: beginning with their own experience women are understood to be in God’s image in terms of a projection of that experience. On such terms the *imago Dei* becomes a misnomer. Both Boff and Johnson outline a method whereby women can be said to be in the image of the projected feminine. As such they run the risk of portraying femininity as an essentialist metaphysical category rather than as a category that is, as Graham terms it, ‘empirical and rooted in social relations’.  

Distinct from feminist thinking but similar in the effect on ontology is Barth’s cosmological framework in which the history of creation is viewed through a concept of the eternal sight of God. As argued in chapter 5, such a perspective would tend to place a similar kind of distance between God and the created world as that between a model-maker and a model. The result is a weakening of the sense of creational embodiment, and a widening of the gap between creator and creation. Mascall describes this kind of thinking as a ‘strain in modern neo-Protestantism ... which postulates between God and creatures not merely a radical difference of nature and status but a separation so absolute as to make the creature’s very existence inexplicable and nonsensical’. Mascall contrasts this view with ‘the historic tradition of Christian thought, which has recognised that the very insufficiency of finite beings

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51 See Johnson, *SHE WHO IS*, p. 69: ‘Women’s experience of self interpreted as experience of God, fleshed out with values characteristic of women’s ways of being in the world, comes to a theological flashpoint when women begin to articulate and act in accord with their dignity as *imago Dei, imago Christi*’.


53 See Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III.I*, p. 54.
to maintain themselves involves that God is intimately present to them and active with them.\textsuperscript{54}

For Barth, the role of maintaining finite history is ascribed to the Incarnation in a way that appears to operate within a vision produced through the eternal perspective.\textsuperscript{55} In Barth’s creational framework, human existence, seen retrospectively through the Incarnation, tends to be envisaged rather than actual. Barth’s separation of creator and creature is also relevant to the understanding of gender difference. Ruether draws attention to Barth’s concept of the relation between male and female as the God-creature analogy. She remarks: ‘Given Barth’s belief in the absolute gulf between the divine and the human, this establishes the most hierarchical model imaginable as analogue for male-female relations’.\textsuperscript{56} Barth presents the \textit{imago Dei} primarily in terms of relationship between God and Christ (with whom the Church is pneumatically connected). As noted in chapter 5, this concept of the \textit{imago Dei} subsumes the Church as ‘woman’ under Christ as ‘man’.

Further division in discourse about women in the church crosses what on other grounds are regarded as theological allegiances. Stanley Grenz writes:

Evangelicals today are divided into two clearly defined groups: those who believe that all facets of ministry ought to be open to women (egalitarians) and those who are convinced that women can properly serve only in supportive roles (complementarians). Despite a protracted discussion on the issue, the chasm between the two viewpoints seems to be widening.\textsuperscript{57}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[54]{Mascall, \textit{Words and Images}, p. 104.}
\footnotetext[55]{See Barth, \textit{Church Dogmatics III/1} p. 54. Cf. p. 76.}
\footnotetext[56]{Ruether, ‘\textit{Imago Dei, Christian Tradition and Feminist Hermeneutics’}, p.283. Cf. Chapter 4, section D.}
\end{footnotes}
But the kind of thinking that supports such division does not necessarily divide neatly into clear categories. Gilbert Bilezikian writes: ‘As members of the community where “there is neither male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus,” we should strive to exhibit to the world our “sameness” in Christ.’ As such, he would appear to support a ‘liberal’ feminist position that seeks to minimize sexual difference. He also states: ‘It is the responsibility of Christian men to realize that women do not derive their identity from men but from having been created in God’s image and from being new persons in Christ.’ This would appear to be a step towards establishing difference between men and women. But Bilezikian’s interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:7 does not establish women as the imago Dei:

Men and women represent different realities in relation to God. By virtue of his unmediated origination, man’s presence in worship emblemizes his head as his spiritual Maker. Man’s head represents “the image and glory of God,” somewhat like the “glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). Man cannot represent mere humanity before God, since his physical head symbolizes Christ. Therefore, man is not permitted to use a headcovering in worship. He may not cover Christ (his head) in God’s presence.

Woman in worship stands in a different relation before God. Because of her origination from man, she is fully qualified to represent the essence of complete, uncompounded humanhood before God. Her physical head emblemizes man as a reminder of her derivation from him. Therefore, she is humanity twice recognized, first for herself and again for man, represented by her physical head as her life-source. As such, she reflects the full “glory of man.”

Ruether’s critique of the relation between male and female seen as a God-creature analogy would seem relevant here.

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59 Gilbert Bilezikian, Beyond Sex Roles, p. 211.
60 Gilbert Bilezikian, Beyond Sex Roles, p.141.
As noted above, Ruether maintains that most feminism today favours an expanded unitary view of human nature.\(^6^1\) Grenz reports that a position minimizing sexual difference was once held by ‘egalitarians’:

In the past egalitarians tended to counter the complementarian position by denying any distinction between male and female. This position, often termed “androgyny,” declares that there is only one fundamental human essence … Proponents of androgyny assert that apart from obvious differences in reproduction, no fundamental distinctions exist between males and females.\(^6^2\)

More recently, claims Grenz, egalitarians ‘want the church to avail itself of the particular contribution of men and women in every aspect of its life. The egalitarian case is … [that] the differences between the sexes demand the inclusion of both in leadership.\(^6^3\)

Grenz presents the egalitarian case for inclusion of both sexes in church leadership in the following terms:

God is not merely beyond male and female. Rather, God’s relationship to creation takes on both male and female dimensions. Thereby, God forms the foundation for the distinctively male and female dimensions of human existence. As a consequence, a true perception of the divine nature requires the contribution of both men and women.\(^6^4\)

As noted above, Johnson would object to an idea of God perceived in terms of a female dimension. She writes regarding the effect of this perception on theological language:

We must be very clear about this. Speech about God in female metaphors does not mean that God has a feminine dimension, revealed by Mary or other women. Nor does the use of male metaphors mean that God has a masculine dimension, revealed by Jesus or other men; or an animal dimension revealed by lions or great mother birds; or a mineral dimension, which corresponds with naming God a rock … If women are created in the image of God, then God can be spoken of in female metaphors in as full and as limited a way as

\(^{6^3}\) Grenz, Women in the Church, p. 230.
\(^{6^4}\) Grenz, Women in the Church, p. 150.
God is imaged in male ones, without talk of feminine dimensions reducing the impact of this imagery.  

The movement by ‘egalitarians’ away from ‘androgyny’ would appear to illustrate a growing consensus that sexual difference is important. ‘Complementarians’ would agree about this. In outlining the ‘complementarian’ position, Wayne Grudem also refers to ‘equality’ between men and women:

If one word must be used to describe our position, we prefer the term complementarian, since it suggests both equality and beneficial differences between men and women. We are uncomfortable with the term “traditionalist” because it implies an unwillingness to let Scripture challenge traditional patterns of behavior, and we certainly reject the term “hierarchicalist” because it overemphasizes structured authority while giving no suggestion of equality or the beauty of mutual interdependence.

An unresolved debate, however, centres round the meaning of the word ‘head’ in 1 Corinthians 11:3. Grudem’s understanding of the meaning of ‘head’ might appear to counter the argument presented in this thesis that the imago Dei has to do with the woman’s origination from the man (as reflecting the origination of the Son from the Father). In this regard Grudem writes:

The most common egalitarian interpretation of [the word translated ‘head’ in Ephesians 5:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:3] is that … kephalē does not mean “person in authority over” but has some other meaning, especially the meaning “source”. Thus, the husband is the source of the wife (an allusion to the creation of Eve from Adam’s side in Genesis 2), as Christ is the source of the church.

Grudem presents his dissent from this interpretation:

In 1985, I looked up 2,336 examples of kephalē in ancient Greek literature. I found that in those texts, kephalē was applied to many people in authority … but was never applied to a person without governing authority (when it was used in a metaphorical sense to say that person A was the “head” of person or persons B) … The fact remains that more than two decades after the publication of my 1985 study, the alleged meaning of “source without

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65 Johnson, SHE WHO IS, P. 54.
66 Grudem, Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism, p. 14.
67 Grudem, Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism, pp. 121-122.
authority” has still not been supported with any citation of any text in ancient Greek literature that refers to person A as the “head” of person(s) B. 68

Elsewhere Grudem cites Catherine Clark Kroeger’s translation of a quotation from Cyril of Alexandria:

Therefore of our race he becomes first head, which is source, and was of the earth earthy. Since Christ was named the second Adam, he has been placed as head, which is source, of those who through him have been formed anew unto him unto immortality through sanctification in the spirit. Therefore he himself our source, which is head, has appeared as a human being …. Because head means source, He established the truth for those who are wavering in their mind that man is the head of woman, for she was taken out of him. 69

As Grudem reports, Kroeger goes on to say that ‘kephalē is defined as source (archē) no less than four times in this single paragraph’. Grudem comments, ‘even if one were to grant that Kroeger has found some examples where kephalē takes the meaning “source,” the point still remains that there is no instance of source apart from authority’. 70

Grudem makes this point in order to dissent from an egalitarian position that would deny the idea of authority in connection with ‘head’, to the alleged extent of denying Christ’s authority over the church. 71 At the same time Grudem appears to disassociate


70 Grudem, ‘The Meaning of Kephalē (“Head”): A Response to Recent Studies’, pp. 464-465. In fact, Grudem presents three other arguments in response to Kroeger’s translation of the quotation from Cyril of Alexandria: first that the citation is too late for a reliable meaning of kephalē in the New Testament era, secondly that archē can also be translated “ruler” or “leader” or “beginning” (without any connotation of source’) and thirdly that understanding God the Father as the source of the Son is tantamount to saying that God the Father created the Son (which is unlikely in an orthodox writer at the time of the Trinitarian controversy).

71 Grudem, Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism, p. 123.
himself from the idea that Christ is the ‘source’ of the church, comparing Christ’s
relation to the church in Ephesians 5 with a school principal’s relation to the students:

To take a similar example from English, it makes sense to say that a school
principal is the ‘head’ of the school, since he or she has ‘authority’ over the
school. The principal … provides students with many things, such as
leadership, discipline and protection, so we could say that the principal is the
“source” of leadership, discipline and protection for the students. But we
cannot say that the principal is the “source” of the students.72

The comparison gives the impression that Grudem takes Christ as ‘head’ of the
church in Ephesians 5:23 to mean ‘authority without source’. This would appear to
strain the results of enquiry into the meaning of the word kephalē, with consequent
implications for male-female relations in the church and marriage.

To sum up this brief survey, it might be said that an emancipist thrust is
represented in different ways by Boff, Johnson and Bilezikian, while Barth’s
and Grudem’s way of thinking would place women in a subordinate position.73
But Bilezikian’s notion of the imago Dei could not be described as
emancipatory and the methods employed by Boff, Johnson and Barth in arguing
for the imago Dei, while differing from each other, appear to have the effect of
presenting a disembodied notion of humanity. Boff and Johnson could both be
said, in Graham’s terms, to present femininity ‘as an essentialist metaphysical
category’ rather than as ‘empirical and rooted in social relations’.74

72 Grudem, Countering the claims of Evangelical Feminism, p. 123, n. 4.
73 But cf. Grudem, Countering the claims of Evangelical Feminism, p. 255: ‘the
complementarian position is equality in being (in the sense of equal value, honour,
personhood, and importance) with differences in authority. The complementarian position
holds to subordination in function, not subordination in being.’ Cf. also Ruether, ‘Imago Dei,
Christian Tradition and Feminist Hermeneutics’, p. 283: ‘For Barth … neither man nor
woman can exist by themselves but only as an inseparable human dyad’.
Graham draws attention to post-modern perspectives in which ‘subjectivity and selfhood are contingent upon the individual’s inhabitation of culture’.  But an attempt to constitute women’s identity by referring to cultural ‘networks of signification’ within the church would seem beset with difficulty, not only in terms of a weakened sense of the possibility of meaning but also due to polarization within such networks. Derrida might regard the competing voices of Babel positively but women may not agree. On all counts, if human networks of signification are the only means of constituting women’s identity, the outlook is not promising. This applies to the biblical writings in so far as these are seen as no more than the product of human networks of signification. It may be inferred that identity must be contingent on something more than the inhabitation of culture. The way forward, it is argued, is a reappraisal of the imago Dei in the context of an apprehension of God’s wider self-disclosure.

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75 Graham, Making The Difference, p. 224.
76 Smith, Jacques Derrida: Live Theory, p. 45.
78 Sallie McFague would understand the biblical writings in this relativist sense; see Models of God, pp. 29-31. But cf. Kristina La-Celle Peterson, Liberating Tradition: Women’s Identity and Vocation in Christian Perspective (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008). Peterson does not appear to agree with McFague in this respect. Peterson writes on p. 209: ‘We have the (metaphorical) reminder in Isaiah 55:9 that God’s ways are higher than our ways as heaven is higher than the earth … That is why we need so many and such varied ways to speak about God’. Nevertheless, she quotes McFague’s approach to metaphor approvingly (see pp. 207, 209, 220) without acknowledging McFague’s theological and philosophical divergence from her position.
C. Sacramental Identity

Discourse in the church appears to concern self-realization for women, the full participation of men and women in every aspect of church life and authority structures in the church and marriage. Although Graham indicates recent interest in social relations and embodiment in the human and social sciences, the impact of these considerations is yet perhaps to be fully felt in the church. This thesis proposes a focus on the *imago Dei* as a means to engage in this area, contending that other matters of concern will find their proper place in the broader context of sacramental embodiment.

As a key to understanding embodiment and difference, Graham’s study draws attention to the notion that human nature is ‘contingent’. By ‘contingent’ Graham means dependent on ‘the individual’s inhabitation of culture’, as noted above. McFague expresses a similar desire for a ‘lived in’ quality to a way of thinking about oneself and the world. She wishes to regain something of an anchored sense of embodiment that characterized the medieval cosmos. This thesis argues, however, that deconstructionist thinking removes the basis for such a sense of embodiment, even where attempting to regain it. By contrast, M. C. Darcy expresses the sacramental perspective when he writes: ‘what we know is the contingent, and the contingent as a suppliant for its existence and its meaning on what is not itself’.  

Chapter 3 noted a vivid sense of embodiment arising from what Mascall terms the ‘scholastic tradition in its full vigour’. This tradition, according to Mascall, ‘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.\(^{80}\)

Rather than limiting contingency to the ‘inhabitation of culture’, this thesis invokes the wider context of contingency on the creative, energizing act of God as well as the living relationship with fellow creatures that exist by virtue of such contingency. Ruether rightly objects to a depiction of male-female relations as the God-creature analogy: in such a depiction the male would be identified with the creative energizing act and the female, in Darcy’s terminology, with the suppliant for its existence on the act. But in the view argued in this thesis there are two kinds of contingency. In *sacramental* contingency man and woman are equally suppliant for their existence on the creative, energizing act of God. In *interpersonal* contingency (to use Hill’s term) man and woman are contingent on each other. The creative, energizing act is the source of embodiment. Interpersonal contingency is the key to gendered relationships. That interpersonal contingency is in itself sacramental applies equally to male and female. At the same time, man and woman, while mutually dependent, are not interchangeable any more than God the Father and God the Son are interchangeable or Christ and the Church. (In order to emphasize ontological equality at the divine-human level, ‘Church’ is capitalized.)

Graham’s concern about biological essentialism, whether justifiable or not as regards the old covenant, is less tenable under the new covenant because birth-giving is raised to a new dimension. The dawning of the new covenant is heralded by a reversal of origin and priority in interpersonal contingency at the divine-human level. In the

resurrection, a further change occurs in human gendered relationships. In the absence of marriage at the human level marriage itself will be raised to the divine-human level. Nevertheless, the difference between men and women is maintained. Physical difference is not excluded but is taken up, it may be inferred, in sacramental significance.\textsuperscript{81} This section explores the sacramental implications of the new covenant for women qua women.

As has already been observed in this thesis, the \textit{imago Dei} can be considered in two ways. If one looks, so to speak, from humanity to God, humanity is said to be in the image of God. This is to speak of the \textit{imago Dei} in terms of symbolic reference. If one looks from God to humanity, humanity can be said to sacramentally embody something about the Godhead. This is to speak about sacramental identity. That this form of identity is to some degree open to change is evident in the doctrine of the resurrection. ‘It is sown a physical body. It is raised a spiritual body ... Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven’ (1 Corinthians 15:44a, 49). Nevertheless, it may be inferred that there will be some continuity between the physical and spiritual body: the risen Christ ate a piece of fish (Luke 24:43).\textsuperscript{82} By the same token the sacramental function may change in dimension and yet have continuity in some sort, ‘from one degree of glory to another’ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

\begin{footnotes}
\item[81] Cf. Augustine, \textit{City of God}, XXII, 17.
\item[82] See C. S. Lewis, \textit{Miracles: A Preliminary Study} (London, Geoffrey Bles, 1948), p. 175. Lewis writes that ‘in some respects the risen Christ resembles the ‘ghost’ of popular tradition’. ‘Like a ghost He “appears” and “disappears”: locked doors are no obstacle to Him’, writes Lewis. But, Lewis continues, ‘He Himself vigorously asserts that He is corporeal (Luke xxiv. 39-40) and eats boiled fish’. Lewis comments that it is ‘at this point that the modern reader becomes uncomfortable.’
\end{footnotes}
Gender in biblical terms is complex and multi-layered. The material and historical is not overridden by the divine but taken up into the divine. This is a process not yet complete. In the new covenant, God begins to do a new thing with gender. The biological roles of male and female are not abolished but given a wider context, allowing for the command to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ to be taken up in the evangelistic fervour of the church (Matthew 19:12). The early church favoured celibacy, not for its own sake but for the sake of the kingdom. It was common for the apostles to be accompanied by their wives as ‘sisters’, i.e. in a celibate relationship in which the wives would function as fellow workers (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:5; 1 Timothy 3:11). In a sense the roles of men and women become more similar with the advent of Christ, although not in every respect. There are some things women may not do (1 Corinthians 14:33a-36; 1 Timothy 2:11-12), as there are some things that men may not do. (Women could minister to women who were segregated and to whom the men had no access.)\(^83\) The idea of limitations applying to women in the exercise of functions otherwise performed by both sexes is not congenial for the modern sense of inclusion. But such variations can be seen in a positive light, as a preservation of sexual difference at a new level.

Something of this new development appears in the current relationship of Christ and the Church. In this relationship, the risen Christ has high priestly authority over the house of

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\(^83\) Clement of Alexandria writes:

Indeed, Paul did not shrink from greeting his mate in a certain one of his letters … Thus he says in one letter, ‘Do we not have authority to take along with us a wife that is a sister, as the rest of the apostles do?’ … But these apostles, as was proper to their ministry, attended to preaching without distraction, took their wives with them not as marriage partners but as sisters, that they might be co-ministers to women at home. Through them the teaching of the Lord was introduced to the women’s section of the household without incurring slander.

God (ιερέα μέγαν ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ, Hebrews 10:21). Unlike the superseded Levitical priesthood, Christ is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. This high priesthood is connected with the Davidic kings, but Christ’s high priesthood is due not only to his inheritance from the Davidic line but also, in his own right, to ‘the power of an indestructible life’ (Hebrews 7:16 cf. Acts 2:24). The Church as the body of Christ partakes of the royal priesthood of Christ. ‘[F]or you [i.e. Christ] were slaughtered and by your blood ransomed [saints] for God … you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God and they will reign on earth’ (Revelation 5:9 –10; cf. Hebrews 6:19-22; 1 Peter 2: 4-10).

Janice Rees reports that, for Sarah Coakley, the crossing of the ‘ontological binary difference’ between God and humanity in the Incarnation is in some way reflected in the liturgical act of the Eucharist: ‘As an ordained priest who stands in persona Christi, Coakley has found herself crossing from the traditionally understood “masculine” divine side of the altar, representing Christ, to the “feminine” side of the altar in representing the church’. Ontological difference is not abolished, it may be noted, since the ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ sides of the altar remain. Yet both sides partake of the one mystery.

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84 F. F. Bruce writes: ‘[T]he expression “great priest” is a literal rendering of the expression of the most common Hebrew title for the high priest … God’s house over which he exercises his high priesthood is, of course, the community of God’s people (cf. Heb 3:6)’: The Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1990) p.253.


86 Cf. Exodus 19: 5-6. Lehne refers to the transfer of the Levitical symbolism to Jesus and ‘the symbolism of a new, living Temple embodied in the praying community’ (my italics): The New Covenant in Hebrews, p. 49; cf. p. 136, n. 68. See also Barnabas Lindars, The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews (Cambridge: CUP, 1991) pp. 137-138: ‘the metaphor of priesthood … presented in Hebrews … has contributed a most valuable … concept of priesthood. It is the ideal for all Christians, inasmuch as all share in the priesthood of Jesus (cf. 1 Pet 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6, 5:10)’.

The motif of crossing over picks up a theme for the imago Dei argued in this thesis. At the same time, a gendered distinction is maintained. Some difference of function, envisaged in the Pauline writings, would suggest that the relation of the Church to Christ is reflected sacramentally, in different ways, in male and female leadership. I will not enter here into the implications for female leaders in particular church traditions except to point out that the distinctions insisted on in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 are said, in verses 14-15, to be in accord with nature, even though occurring at the new level of Christian leadership.\textsuperscript{88} That women have a sacramental function that occurs naturally (rather than necessarily being imposed by regulation) is evidenced in the traditional Protestant tendency to treat the minister’s wife as the (unofficial) ‘mother of the congregation’.\textsuperscript{89}

The sacramental function for women seemingly allows for some breadth of implementation. This is evident in the Pauline treatment of women as ‘fellow workers’ (e.g. as shown in Romans 16:3 in the greeting to Prisca and Aquila). Ruth Hoppin has taken up Adolph von Harnack’s theory that Priscilla was the author of Hebrews. But such a theory apparently runs counter to thinking in some quarters that would place women in a subordinate position in the church. \textit{Priscilla’s Letter: Finding the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews} is stated to have been taken out of

\textsuperscript{88} Cf. Chapter 4, Section D. While justice cannot be done here to the varying constraints of church order, a broad distinction may be observed between an Anglo-Catholic emphasis exemplified by C. S. Lewis and a Protestant emphasis exemplified by Wayne Grudem. Lewis claims that the New Testament permits female preachers: ‘One man had four daughters who all “prophesied”, i.e. preached.’ But, for Lewis, the ‘priest’ represents God’s relation to humanity; this sacramental function is therefore masculine. (See C. S. Lewis, ‘Priestesses in the Church?’, p. 89. Lewis alludes to Acts 21:9.) Grudem, however, distinguishes ‘prophecy’ from ‘preaching and teaching’. Due to the authoritative nature of teaching, Grudem excludes women from preaching and teaching in a mixed public setting. (See Grudem, \textit{Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism}, pp. 136-141.)

\textsuperscript{89} Cf. Theodor Fliedner’s proposal of marriage to Friederike Muenster, his future wife in 1828. Fliedner wrote that, in becoming his wife, she would also be regarded as ‘the mother’ of his congregation at Kaiserswerth. See Anna Sticker, \textit{Friederike Fliedner und die Anfänge der Frauendiakonie}: (Frankfurt am Main: Neukirchener Verlag, 1963), p. 15.
print soon after publication,\(^90\) due, it is suggested ‘to the influence of religious extremists who regard the concept of female authorship of the epistle intolerable’.\(^91\)

This raises the question as to whether female authorship of Hebrews would violate any limitations to female leadership under the new covenant (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:33a-36; 1 Timothy 2:11-12).\(^92\) Hoppin cites Bilezikian, who writes that Priscillan authorship would explain ‘a number of semi-apologetic pleas for credibility found in the Epistle’ and who ‘notes a tone of deference towards the readers’ spiritual leaders, even intimating that the letter was written under their auspices’. The inference is that her sacramental function would affect, but not exclude, Priscilla’s leadership. ‘This,’ says Bilezikian, ‘would explain the curious nature of the document, which is at once a letter and a treatise’.\(^93\)

The possibility of Priscillan authorship, once proposed, draws attention to the persistent nature of first person plural exhortations rather than commands in Hebrews, with the exception of the last chapter in which are a number of direct commands.\(^94\) Hebrews 13 reads like a letter, unlike the rest of Hebrews. This raises the further possibility that Hebrews 13 is a postscript written by Aquila to Priscilla’s sermon-like treatise, a theory that provides solutions to the absence of an opening greeting in Hebrews and the


\(^{92}\) I have written about these texts and their implications in my own church, the Uniting Church in Australia. See ‘Women in Leadership’ in W. & K. Abetz (ed.), *Swimming between the Flags: Reflections on the Basis of Union* (Bendigo, Victoria: Middle Earth Press, 2002), pp. 154-159.


\(^{94}\) Cf. 1 Timothy 2:11-12.
otherwise inapplicable statement by the writer of Hebrews 13:22: ‘I have written to you briefly’. Joint authorship of Hebrews by Priscilla and Aquila, whether sustainable or not in terms of Quellenforschung, is brought forward here as an illustration of a possible breadth of function for female leadership.

The sacramental distinction between male and female is associated with the distinction between head and body. 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 intimates that the man’s role is naturally in accord with the uncovered head (v. 14) while the woman’s role is in accord with the covered head, i.e. with a ‘head’ to cover the body (v. 15). Elaine Graham draws attention to the ‘somatophobic Western philosophy’ inherited from the Platonic emphasis on soul and mind as sources of true knowledge with the concomitant association of women with ‘bodiliness’. Radical feminists, according to Graham, find this offensive due, not to the association as such, but on the grounds that the body is dualistically relegated to the status of accessory. This kind of dualism, however, is

95 Further evidence for joint authorship may be noted in the concluding style of Hebrews 12 followed by the inconsecutive opening of Hebrews 13. Cf. the allusion to a shepherd theme rather than priestly theme in Hebrews 13:20.

96 See Bilezikian, Beyond Sex Roles, pp. 302-304. Bilezikian, describing the theory of Priscillan authorship as ‘very tentative’, draws attention to a possible grammatical impediment to female authorship (the gender of the participle for ‘to tell’, transliterated diégoumenon, in Hebrews 11:32). He suggests that the author may have used ‘an editorial masculine’ as a subtle hint of ‘the limitations pertaining to her status’ as a woman. (It could be objected that this would confirm the need by the author for a pseudonymous masculine imprimatur, a limitation which puts the authority of women’s sacramental status in doubt. On the other hand, if female authorship were obvious from the beginning, the loss of the author’s name and a change of one Greek letter (diégoumenēn to diégoumenon) could well have had a common origin.) I would add that the participle could be a conditional neuter for an impersonal verb in the accusative absolute: (‘for time will fail me if it come to telling [is told] in detail of …’) Cf. Hebrews 9:5 (literally: ‘concerning which it is not now to speak in detail.’) See William W. Goodwin, A Greek Grammar (London: Macmillan, 1974, p. 337, n. 1569). Cf. also Hoppin, Priscilla’s Letter, pp. 49-52.

97 See Chapter 4, and cf. Ridderbos: ‘In 1 Corinthians 11:3,8,12 [the metaphor of ‘head’] is related to the history of the origin of mankind, namely that the woman is from the man, has her existence with him, and is therefore the ‘glory’ of the man just as the church is the ‘glory’ of Christ (cf. Eph 5:27).’ (Paul: An Outline of His Theology, pp. 381-382.)

not in view in the Corinthians passage. The distinction between head and body is not the same as that between mind and body: unlike the mind, head and body are both physical terms. Equality of nature allows for the interdependence of verse 11–12:

‘Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God.’

As noted in Chapters 3 and 4, the reversal of origin and priority of 1 Corinthians 11:11–12 may be understood to apply to the relationship of Mary and Christ. For woman qua woman, the wider significance of ‘woman’ as generic mother may be in view, the sense in which women can be said to be ‘daughters’ of Mary as she fulfils the role of ‘the woman’ in supplying ‘the seed’ who redeems humanity. The sacramental importance of the mother role may also be in view in the rather obscure addendum of 1 Timothy 2:15: ‘Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.’ Firstly, the passage appears to begin with ‘generic’ woman before moving to the plural ‘they’. Secondly, two possible interpretations of διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας (of childbearing in general or the birth of a specific child) have both to do with motherhood. It is hardly likely that salvation would, in an ordinary sense, be available to women on any other grounds than those previously outlined in 1 Timothy 2:5-6. But given the context of the deceiving of Eve,

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99 There is, however, one other sense in which the association of woman and body might be considered offensive. 1 Corinthians 15:44 ff. is a case in point: ‘So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.’ Here is presented the shame of the corruptible body. But it is not body itself that is shameful but body (including the head) in its state of exile from the tree of life and so subject to decay. This concept may lie behind the Pauline exhortation not to live ‘according to the flesh’, e.g. in Romans 8:4, i.e. not to live in accordance with the state of exile which was responsible for soul-body dualism in the first place: cf. Genesis 3:7.

100 Cf. 1 Peter 3: 1-6 for usage of the term ‘daughters’. See also the next section.
the reference to childbirth would be apposite for two possible reasons: the penalty of
pain in Genesis 3:16a, and the promise associated with the ‘seed of the woman’ in
Genesis 3:15. It is possible that there is a double entendre in this verse. The verb
translated ‘shall be saved’ (σωθήσεται) could be understood in two senses: as protection
during otherwise painful and dangerous childbirth, and as a reference to the role of ‘the
woman’ in salvation. Chapter 2 noted Augustine’s observation: ‘Do not despise
yourselves, you men, the son of God assumed manhood. Do not despise yourselves,
you women, God’s son is born of woman.’¹⁰¹ The next section will consider further
how all women may be said to enter into this kind of sacramental motherhood.

In her study on the Fourth Gospel, however, Sandra M. Schneiders denies that Mary
is significant for women qua women, an interpretation of Mary that would appear to
preclude the sacramental significance for women of ‘the birth of the child’. While
acknowledging that ‘John does seem to imply that the mother of Jesus had some
special role in relation to the salvific work of Jesus’,¹⁰² Schneiders goes on to write:

If [Mary] is understood as the new Eve in relation to the new Adam, or as
Sion giving birth to the Messiah, her role is unique and is not shared by
other Christians, women or men. Just as men do not participate any more
than women in Jesus’ unique role as Savior of the World, new Adam, or
Messiah, so women do not participate any more than do men in Mary’s
unique role as new Eve or Lady Sion.

Schneiders claims that Mary’s role is not shared by other Christians if she is
understood as the new Eve or ‘Sion giving birth to the Messiah’.¹⁰³ This would

¹⁰¹ Augustine, de agone Christiano, 12, quoted in Henry Bettenson (ed.), The Later Christian Fathers:
A selection from the writings of the Fathers from St Cyril of Jerusalem to St. Leo the Great, p. 218:
see Chapter 2, Section C.
¹⁰² Sandra M. Schneiders, Written That You May Believe, Encountering Jesus in the Fourth
¹⁰³ Sandra M. Schneiders, Written That You May Believe, pp. 97-98. Cf. Chapter 3 Section C and
the summary statement with regard to the relationship between Mary and the disciple John,
initiated by Jesus on the cross (John 19:25-27): ‘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
appear to conflate the maternal role of the historical Mary, with Mary seen as
the personification of Israel. It is not clear to me how Mary as ‘Sion giving
birth to the Messiah’ is linked with ‘Mary-Eve typology’.

By contrast Schneiders likens the kind of universal significance pertaining to Mary
the mother of Christ to that of Judas:

The historical Judas was male, but this does not imply that men are more
typically the locus of the mystery of unbelief and betrayal than women. The same
must be said of Mary as model of conversion and discipleship.104

This is to regard Mary (and Judas) allegorically as the locus of a projected quality
rather than to understand the historical Mary typologically in her unique relation to
Christ and as such offering identity for women qua women.

Rather than finding significance for women in the historical mother of Christ
Schneiders finds significance for women in Mary Magdalene. Schneiders describes
how the garden setting of Jesus’ tomb evokes ‘the creation account, where God walks and
talks with the first couple in the garden … and promises salvation through a woman’.105
She continues:

In this garden of new creation and new covenant, Jesus, who is both the
promised liberator of the new creation and the spouse of the new Israel,
encounters the woman [Mary Magdalene], who is, symbolically, the
Johannine community, the church, the new people of God.

Schneiders would appear to associate both functions of the woman in the Garden
with an individual antitype, but unlike the ‘Mary-Eve’ typology suggested in Mary:

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104 Schneiders, Written That You May Believe, p. 97.
105 Schneiders, Written That You May Believe, p. 217.
Grace and Hope in Christ paragraphs 26–27, the proposed individual antitype is not Mary, mother of Christ, but Mary Magdalene.106

Schneiders states: ‘The purpose of the exegetically based reflection on the women in John’s Gospel … is to provide resources for the imagination of contemporary Christians as they deal with the issue of women in the church today’.107 Her observations tend towards an abstract conception of the mother of Christ in contrast with a proposed identity for women by association with the historical Mary Magdalene. This thesis agrees with her aim of finding identity for women by association with a key biblical figure but disagrees with her typology. The way forward for women in the church today, it is argued, is to enter into the unique historical role of Mary, mother of Christ. The significance for women in general, if admitted, of ‘the birth of the [specific] child’, provides a new slant for women in relation to the imago Dei. In interpersonal terms, this is the God-creature analogy in reverse: God in Christ is contingent on humanity. The woman is directly related to God incarnate. She is bearer of the image of God (as touching his manhood) and of the Son of God equal to the Father (as touching his Godhead).108

106 Cf. Chapter 3 Section D.
107 Schneiders, Written That You May Believe, p. 95.
108 As the Athanasian Creed affirms. The Son of God is the (visible) image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) in his humanity; cf. John 14:9: ‘He who has seen me has seen the Father’.
D. Sacramental inclusive language

This thesis began by considering the modus operandi of language, in particular biblical language. Attention was drawn to the distinction between what I call covenantal and non-covenantal linguistics. Chapters 5 and 6 outlined some consequences of this linguistic distinction in terms of frame of reference. Ricoeur describes the two possibilities:

Feuerbach, the common master of all atheism, tells us: let us return to man what he has given to God, so that man reappropriates what he has poured into the sacred by emptying himself. But I think that our question – and we understand it better after Marx, Nietzsche and Freud – is: what is man? Do we know man better than we know God? In the end, I do not know what man is. My confession to myself is that man is instituted by the word, that is by a language which is less spoken by man than spoken to man.109

This is to contrast the concept of the ‘sacred’ as an object of human attribution with the concept of ‘sacrament’ (though the word is not used), in which meaning comes from outside and is the object of human apprehension. In the latter case, humanity is part of a mystery to be uncovered, with the key to the mystery outside humanity. In the former case, mystery as well as meaning is created by humanity.110

In Feuerbach’s understanding, the ‘sacred’ receives its identity from humanity. This is relevant to linguistics: if language about the ‘sacred’ receives all its cogency from humanity, there is no covenant between the word and the sacred world that it purports to describe. Tyrrell would perhaps have agreed with Feuerbach that humanity gave identity to God in ‘earlier and inadequate expressions of the religious idea’.111 Tyrrell’s response was not atheism but doubt. McFague, on the other hand, recommends further pouring of the human self into the realm of the ‘sacred’, in a process that she terms ‘re-

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110 Cf. the remark by Ruether: ‘it is not ‘man’ who is made in God’s image, but God who has been made in man’s image’: Imago Dei, p. 287.
mythologizing’. Irigaray and Keller link this kind of thinking with the self-realization of women. But there is a cost in this, as Graham’s study indicates. The realm developed outside patriarchal culture becomes an ‘essentialist, metaphysical category’, without the sense of being ‘empirical and rooted in social relations’. In non-covenantal thinking, humanity empties itself, as Feuerbach remarks.

Graham’s study connects language for the ‘sacred’ with an alleged ‘patriarchal’ perspective on God and women. Graham cites Daphne Hampson:

A patriarchal society has given rise to the concept that God is to be perceived as peculiarly male. God is seen as transcendent above humankind in what is an ordered hierarchy. Since men also see themselves as above women, ‘humanity’ has been designated as ‘feminine’ in relation to God. We arrive then at a whole social construct, whereby men are seen as good and strong and more spiritual, in relation to women who tend to be seen as sinful, weak and closer to things of the earth.

This is to assume that the portrayal of humanity as feminine in relation to God arises not from the action and self-disclosure of God in historical interaction with the people of God but from a construct of a ‘patriarchal’ society. Nevertheless the suggestion that the depiction of humanity as ‘feminine’ leads to the association of femininity with sinfulness is not in accordance with the biblical portrayal of humanity: it is the failure of humanity to be ‘feminine’ in relation to God which is sinful. The suggestion, according to the alleged ‘patriarchal’ construct, that God is perceived as ‘peculiarly male’, does not account for the presentation of Wisdom as feminine in relation to ‘the Lord’.

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But Hampson dissociates herself from the biblical writings and advocates a new form of language for God:

Given a world of experience, the theological question arises as to how we shall interpret it. There is no need, necessarily, to think that God exists apart from humankind … Much in science (and contemporary thought forms) suggests that all power, all reality, is in some way in flow and interconnected. May ‘God’ not be a dimension of all that is? …What I believe we need to do then is to find a way to conceptualize God which is independent of the Christian myth, a myth which is neither tenable or ethical. We must find a way to capture our experience of God in the language of our day. In doing this we shall be doing no more than others did in their time, drawing on the cultural milieu in which they lived… We shall need language and metaphor. But that we shall need a highly articulated mythology and symbolism, such as Christianity employs seems unlikely.¹¹⁴

Describing Friedrich Schleiermacher’s thought as ‘an inspiration’, Hampson writes:

Schleiermacher opened up the possibility of conceiving that it is through our knowing of ourselves that we come to a perception of God. God is not to be known apart from ourselves, though God is more than we are. Methodologically it becomes possible to speak of God without dependence on particular revelation.¹¹⁵

Hampson admits that Schleiermacher himself, as a Christian, wanted subsequently to draw on revelation. Nevertheless, she adds:

His work may well be open to a kind of reductionism. We live, as he did not, the other side of Feuerbach and of Freud, and ask the inevitable question as to how he can guard himself against the possibility that he may be deluded. I myself would want to bring forward much more empirical evidence for belief that there is a dimension of existence which we should name God that he never adduces. But his conceptualization is fruitful. Thus one remains in dialogue with the tradition … I have had occasion in recent years to witness people’s reaction to me when I defined myself as religious, but not Christian.

While she also cites our historical situation post Feuerbach and Freud, Hampson’s conclusion about the way language should relate to ‘the sacred’ is different from


¹¹⁵ Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, p.172.

The kind of ‘inclusive’ liturgical language outlined in Graham’s study appears to arise from the assumption that gendered metaphors for God are no more than a reflection of human culture. Such language is not a relational way of responding to a self-disclosing God but rather a human attribution of values to God. Graham writes:

The substitution of ‘feminine’ terms to replace patriarchal images of Father, King and Lord in inclusive liturgies and prayers are no more ‘value-free’ than patriarchal language, although arguably they represent important aspirations on the part of the worshipping communities to count women’s experiences as equally holy, and worthy of imaging the holy, as those of men.\footnote{Graham, *Making The Difference*, pp. 224 - 225.}

In this description the source of meaning is the human construct. It is suggested that women’s experiences can be projected allegorically as a means of *imaging* ‘the holy’. Such imaging is a material projection of something more abstract, the value of women’s experiences. The projection is material in the sense of being an imaginative construal. Projecting the much discussed ‘women’s experience’ risks rendering such experience, in Graham’s own words, as ‘immaterial and rhetorical, rather than empirical and rooted in social relations’.\footnote{See Graham, *Making The Difference*, pp. 137-138.} Further, the ‘inclusive language’ described above is not inclusive in the sense of unity in diversity: masculine and feminine images are not related to each other except through the social construct. The process is a projection of diversity, with women’s experiences imaging ‘the holy’ beside, or in place of, those of men.
Projection of human experience as a source of language for the realm of the ‘sacred’
is a method of producing both meaning and mystery. In the sacramental approach it is
not necessary to seek an ‘is not’ because it is part of the ‘is’ that comes from outside
and therefore can only be partially apprehended. But in language based on projected
human experience there is no outside source of meaning. Chapter 3 noted that, in
McFague’s ‘metaphorical theology’, the ‘is’ and the ‘is not’ function differently from
metaphor as commonly understood. McFague writes: ‘I do not know who God is, but I
find some models better than others for constructing an image of God commensurate
with my trust in a God as on the side of life. God is and remains a mystery.’120 As
she observes further, ‘the father model’ (along with ‘other models of God such as
mother, lover and friend’) is ‘an expression of the loves we know’ rather than
‘necessarily descriptive of the nature of God’. God remains a mystery, it can be
observed, because the so-called ‘is’ of the metaphor makes no claim to know anything
of God. The ‘is not’ qualifies the projected ‘is’, not knowledge of God.

Schneiders elaborates this way of thinking. ‘As theologian Sallie McFague
explains’, she says, ‘a metaphor can only function as a metaphor and thereby give us
access to the mysterious if the ‘is’ i.e. the affirmation and the ‘is not’ i.e. the negative
qualifier are held on tension’. Schneiders goes on to state:

It is equally and simultaneously true that God is, and is not, our father. If the
denial is repressed the metaphor succumbs to literalism, i.e. it dies. But the
literalized metaphor, like an unburied body, is not harmless to its environment,
the imagination.121

120 McFague, Models of God, p. 192, n.37.
121 Sandra M. Schneiders, Women and the Word: The Gender of God in the New Testament and
the Spirituality of Women (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1986) p. 27. Schneiders quotes from
Sallie McFague, Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language (Philadelphia:
On such terms, as Schneiders notes, the religious metaphor tends to work in two directions. She continues:

We create the metaphor to say something about God; but then God seems to be saying something about the vehicle of the metaphor. Thus if God is king, there is a tendency to see kings as divine. If God is male, then males are divine and masculinity becomes normative of humanity, the true image of God as St. Augustine maintained in an infamous passage.122

In saying ‘we create the metaphor to say something about God’, Schneiders follows McFague whose ‘metaphors and models are, albeit in a provisional way, productive of reality’.123 In this method the so-called metaphor is no more than a projection of human experience. The focus is not on God but on the literal vehicle, albeit projected. This approach makes the dependence on the signifier much more absolute than in the sacramental understanding. In consequence, the sinful connotation of the literal vehicle comes to the fore. Instead of a deeper meaning critiquing the sinful vehicle, the projected meaning is seen to inappropriately glorify the sinful vehicle unless the projection is simultaneously disowned. On this understanding, God is and is not our father.

Elsewhere Schneiders observes:

Jesus’ metaphorical attribution of fatherhood to God ... laid the foundation for his creation of a new family. Those who called no man on earth father (Mt 23:9), that is, who were subject to no human patriarch, could freely associate themselves in a new community of disciples bound together by faith in Jesus. Even Jesus’ mother had to make the transition from blood relationship to faith relationship in order to become a member of this new community. And those who followed him became brother and sister and mother to him (Mk 3:31-35), i.e. his new family who, by his invitation, could also call God ‘Abba’ (cf. Mt 6:9).124

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122 Schneiders, *Women and the Word*, p. 28, referring to Augustine, *On the Trinity*, XII, 7, 10, but it appears that she misinterprets Augustine here: see Chapter 2, section C.
In order to safeguard the tension between the affirmation and the negative qualifier (in Schneiders’ own description of metaphor) it would be necessary to add that those who followed [Jesus] became and did not become brother and sister and mother to him and were and were not his new family. But Schneiders indicates that the ‘fatherhood of God’ supplants earthly parenting. In this latter case she appears to express a sacramental approach to the literal and familiar. She offers a means of critiquing the sinful literal vehicle by referring to what she sees as Jesus’ healing choice of literal vehicles:

By his use of ‘Abba’ for God and by his presentation of God as father of the prodigal, Jesus was able to transform totally the patriarchal God-image. He healed the father metaphor which had been patriarchalized in the image of human power structures and restored it to the original meaning of divine origination in and through love.¹²⁵

This is a sacramental understanding, with meaning deriving from the divine origination, a source which McFague appears to disown.¹²⁶

Emphasis on the ‘is not’ aspect of language is, in fact, not without difficulty for the feminist movement, according to Graham’s study. At this point Graham comes closest to recognizing the problem posed for the feminist movement by deconstructionist theory. She observes that Derrida’s notion of différance (the ‘simultaneous assertion and negation of meaning’) are said to undermine feminist assumptions: ‘deconstructionist philosophies and strategies claim that ‘equality’ and ‘difference’ are not absolutes, but are themselves constructs’. She goes on to report:

Indeed, one of the main criticisms of the poststructuralist impetus within feminism is that it deprives the woman’s movement of a clear identity upon which to build a political programme; it is thus seen as a withdrawal from

¹²⁵ Schneiders, Women and the Word, p. 48.
¹²⁶ See McFague, Models of God, p. 192, n. 37.
engagement, a theory devoid of practice, and a collapse into the very metaphysics which it claims to deconstruct.\textsuperscript{127}

But instead of acknowledging the consequences of a social construct theory of language for the feminist movement in general, Graham limits the consequences to the more radical branch of feminist thinking. She applies the criticism of the poststructuralist impetus to Irigaray’s writing:

To find the authentic woman requires stepping into non-identity, and perceiving woman as non-being, absence, loss of self in an almost ‘mystical’ experience of surrender of self-identity ... in the space to which patriarchal discourse cannot penetrate because there is no longer anything to reflect, women can discover a purposeful and autonomous self-determination.\textsuperscript{128}

In this description, the negative qualifier has taken on a life, if it can be called life, of its own in providing access to meaning and mystery. Emphasis on the negative qualifier raises the question as to whether ‘\textit{vive la différence}', apparently gaining currency with more radical feminists, is really \textit{différence} or Derrida’s \textit{différance} in a new guise.\textsuperscript{129}

Chapter 2 of this thesis noted the extent to which Irigaray might go in entering into the ‘is not’ facet of the imagination. Her description of ‘the horizon of sexual difference’ outlines an existence beyond all signification, all meaning and even being. Such a ‘beyond’ would in Keats’ phrase ‘tease us out of thought’.\textsuperscript{130} This is the stuff of revolutionary Romanticism, a visionary future of a ‘general cultural mutation’ in

\textsuperscript{127} Graham, \textit{Making the Difference}, pp.185-186.

\textsuperscript{128} Graham, \textit{Making the Difference}, pp.176-177.

\textsuperscript{129} Graham, \textit{Making the Difference}, p. 177- 178. Graham cites L. Irigaray, \textit{This Sex Which Is Not One}, translated by C. Porter and C. Burke (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1985). But Graham also notes the ironic comment behind such a depiction of women. This is, perhaps, what Irigaray means by the \textit{ex nihilo} source for women’s self-creation.

which women would have a central role to play. There is a programme to it as well as the poetry of non-definition. But if *différance* is the substance of the programme (which in itself is beyond all substance), where, it can be asked, does the signification for pursuing it come from? This is the feminist dilemma *par excellence*. Where and on what basis does one stand in order to project the imagination? As has been indicated, this kind of thinking critiques, but does not replace, rational subject-object epistemology.

A social construct theory of language might not stretch the ‘enactment of the tension’ to the same degree in all cases, but to the extent that it underlies, it also undercuts what is commonly called ‘inclusive language’ in worship. A linguistic method of self-emptying into the realm of the ‘sacred’ is recapitulated in a self-emptying identity even where deconstructionist thinking is not taken to an extreme conclusion. The process of forming inclusive language for ‘the holy’ outlined in Graham’s study has the effect of making a wider concept of gender dependent on the sex from which the concept is projected. The resultant concept of gender is at once disembodied and yet limited by the physical sex that gave it birth. And, as has been seen, such linguistic constructions lack reference to their alleged object. This kind of language has nothing but itself to supply identity. An alternative style of inclusive language occurs in the biblical writings. Alongside the assumption of meaning are complex sources of identity in gendered terms.

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As has already been noted, the divine level in the biblical wisdom tradition is presented as a relationship of masculine and feminine, with gender itself presented as a relational term. In the prophetic tradition, the relationship between God and the people of God, fulfilled in the relationship of Christ and the Church, also takes up the human level into the divine-human level in a way that is inclusive of both sexes. Males and females are included both in the masculinity of Christ and in the feminine response of the Church; both sexes are exhorted to grow into the manhood of Christ (εἰς ἄνδρα, Ephesians 4:13) while comprising the body of which Christ is the head in parallel to the relationship of wife to husband (Ephesians 4:12, cf. 5: 23).

The possibility that women and men could both be involved in differing ways with a masculine or feminine figure has implications for the concept of gender. Ricoeur describes the process of association, with reference to the early chapters of Genesis:

> These great narratives which … put into play space, time and characters woven into story form, have in fact an irreducible function. It is a threefold one. First, they place the whole of mankind and its drama under the sign of an exemplary man, an Anthropos, an Adam, who symbolically stands for the concrete universal of human experience. Secondly they give to this history an élan, an allure, an orientation, by unfolding it between a beginning and an end; they thus introduce a historical tension into human experience, starting from the double horizon of a genesis and an apocalypse. Finally … they recount how man, originally good, has become what he is in the present.132

Although human experience is at issue in both cases, the procedure in this example is very different from the procedure outlined in the example of inclusive language offered by Graham. In her example, the starting point is the abstract concept of the value of women’s experiences, which is projected as an image of ‘the holy’. By contrast Ricoeur begins with a particular character, set in a history, who is symbolic of universal human experience.

The suggestion that an exemplary man might stand for the concrete universal of human experience is subject to question in Trible’s interpretation of Genesis 3:22-24:

If the word hā-’ādām in these closing verses ... is read not as a generic term but as an exclusively male reference, then the story never says that the woman was driven out of the garden ... Though this interpretation may be tempting, the interlocking structures and motifs of the story do not validate it.133

Trible goes on to describe hā-’ādām in these verses as ‘generic man and invisible woman’.134 Trible’s response to the failure to refer to the woman specifically is, in fact, both positive and negative. In one way it would be more palatable if the term did exclude ‘the woman’ here. On the other hand, the fact that the woman is implied but not mentioned specifically could be read as a failure to acknowledge her significance.

In older interpretation, ‘the man’ would be taken as an inclusive term, as Trible acknowledges in referring to hā-’ādām as a ‘generic’ (i.e. inclusive) term.135

Trible’s suggestion that the use of a masculine term in a generic sense raises the problem of the ‘invisible woman’ is at odds with the idea that a gendered term may function inclusively. But if generic man cannot be understood in a gender-inclusive manner, what becomes of Christ as a gender-inclusive figure? Here the boot seems to be on the other foot. Hayter writes: ‘

135 A similar problem to the one suggested by Trible regarding ‘invisible woman’ could be found in the understanding of Israel as the faithless wife. In this case the inclusive term is female, and includes the men of Israel as well as the women: but if Trible’s methodology were followed, the men might be described as ‘invisible’. The degree to which invisibility is apprehended as absence is the degree to which Israel as faithless wife becomes an all-female term. The ignominy of faithlessness is then apprehended as applying to women alone: cf. Chapter 3, Section B.
[I]t is a secondary fact, a matter of divine economy, that Christ should be born of Jewish race, and of masculine sexuality. In the circumstances of the time, Christ’s mission required him to be male.\textsuperscript{136}

This is to emphasize inclusiveness at the expense of embodiment. Hayter does not add that, in the circumstances of the time, Christ’s mission required him to be of Jewish race but such a conclusion would logically follow. Her point is that the focus must be on Christ’s humanity rather than on his masculinity, in order to allow for salvation to include both sexes. She continues:

To make the maleness of Christ a christological principle is to qualify or deny the universality of his redemption. It is the humanity, not the masculinity, of the Second Adam into which we are incorporated.

But if the humanity of Christ is separated from the masculinity of Christ, the humanity (to use Graham’s expression) risks being rendered as immaterial and rhetorical, rather than empirical and rooted in social relations.\textsuperscript{137} In this regard Lewis writes: ‘We … tend to slur over the risen manhood of Jesus, to conceive him, after death, simply returning into Deity, so that the Resurrection would be no more than a reversal or undoing of the Incarnation’.\textsuperscript{138}

Ricoeur’s depiction of how an exemplary character may be understood inclusively can be compared with Paul Fiddes’ observation about salvation depending on the particular:

\textsuperscript{136} Hayter, \textit{The New Eve in Christ}, p. 55. The italics are Hayter’s. Cf. Johnson, \textit{SHE WHO IS}, p.73.

\textsuperscript{137} Graham, \textit{Making The Difference}, pp. 137-138. Cf. p. 228 and pp. 38-39. Cf. also C. S. Lewis, \textit{Miracles: A Preliminary Study} (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948), pp. 173-176: ‘The New Testament writers speak as if Christ’s achievement in rising from the dead was the first event of its kind in the whole history of the universe. He is the ‘first fruits’, the ‘pioneer of life’. He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation, a new chapter in cosmic history has opened.’ By contrast, says Lewis, we [as modern readers] expect ‘a risen life which is purely “spiritual” in the negative sense of the word … We mean a life without space, without history, without environment, with no sensuous elements in it’.

\textsuperscript{138} C. S. Lewis, \textit{Miracles}, p. 176, (Lewis’ italics).
So when we say ‘Amen’ to the Father as we meet God in all creation, we are leaning on the particular human response of Jesus, the Jesus of the wilderness beyond Jordan, of Gethsemane and Golgotha, interweaving inseparably with the ecstatic response of eternal sonship. Meeting God through bodies, we are always dependent upon the particular body of Christ.\(^{139}\)

This kind of thinking would appear similar to a biblical notion of inheritance that goes beyond symbolism in a way that is, in Graham’s words, empirical and rooted in social relations. This may be a simple matter of biology as is spelled out in Hebrews 7:9-10: ‘One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him [i.e. the ancestor, Abraham]’. Alternatively, there may be a sense of entering into the inheritance by some action, as in 1 Peter 3:1, 5-6:

> Wives … accept the authority of [ὑποτασσόμεναι] your husbands, so that even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives’ conduct ... It was in this way long ago that the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of [ὑποτασσόμεναι] their husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you.\(^{140}\)

It is this kind of association with a key figure that may underlie the association of women with the motherhood of Christ.

The notion of inheritance appears in 1 Corinthians 15:22: ‘For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ’. Here the spiritual and physical are combined and physical sex is not a boundary to inclusiveness. As noted above, Graham suggests that the Incarnation points to the relevance of bodily experience in spiritual matters. Modern notions of inclusiveness tend to stress a disembodied concept. The biblical

\(^{139}\) Fiddes, *Participating in God*, p. 289.

\(^{140}\) The figure of Sarah presented here is relevant to the *imago Dei* in the sense that she provides an embodied concept of what this might mean for women qua women, in particular in the exhortation not to be intimidated.
idea described above is different. The masculinity of Christ is inclusive as the femininity of the Church is inclusive.

The admonition to wives in 1 Peter 3:1 illustrates the nature of the feminine response. Wives are enjoined to defer to husbands, even if unbelieving, in apparent support of Grudem’s emphasis on masculine authority. Nevertheless, the admonition is addressed to wives, not to husbands. The purpose is to provide a model of a wider order in gendered terms, which may have the effect of leading the unbelieving husband into the Christian faith. The feminine response is not confined to wives since it occurs at the divine-human and divine levels. At the divine-human level humanity as male and female defers to Christ: here the feminine response is a gendered term with an inclusive function and sacramental meaning, since it reflects a response by Wisdom at the divine level. It is important to be clear that this response on the part of the Church is an expression of what I have termed interpersonal contingency. As noted above, this is not the God-creature analogy in the sense that the Church is ontologically inferior to God in Christ: part of the mystery of the imago Dei is the drawing up of humanity into the Godhead.

Graham’s study points to gender as a form of social relations in the context of embodied identity. In the view presented in this thesis, it is because the relationships at the divine-human level offer a picture of divine relationships that they also supply a secondary, embodied context of significance for gendered relationships on the human level. But the correlation between divine through divine-human to the human level detaches gendered relationships from a simple transfer from one level to the next.

\[\text{Cf. Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, p. 178. See Chapter 4, Section C.}\]
Although the language of human gendered relationships provides access to mystery at the divine and divine-human levels, the way in which masculine and feminine cross over at the different levels precludes anthropomorphic projection of gender into the realm of the ‘sacred’: this is illustrated in the way that Wisdom who is feminine to ‘the Lord’ is masculine in relation to the Church.

Gender, according to Graham’s study, ‘is but one manifestation of human social relations; it is not an ontological state, nor an intrinsic property of the individual’. A sacramental presentation of gender is neither tied to the individual nor divorced from the material and historical aspects of lived experience. Inclusiveness is relational, occurring by association with the historical person or people, an association that is not constrained by the limitations of physical sex. As G. K. Chesterton writes: ‘The truth is that it is only because the Nativity is a narrative of one lonely and literal mother and child that it is universal at all. If Bethlehem were not particular it would not be popular.’

Conclusion

Section A of this chapter noted Graham’s observation that there is a lack of clarity about sex and gender and their interrelation both within and outside the church: ‘a deeper and more critical enquiry is necessary into the nature and extent of gender difference, its origin and dynamics, as well as the implications for policy and

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142 Graham, Making The Difference, p.217.
practice.'\textsuperscript{144} She writes that, in attempting to avoid biological determinism, the sex/gender distinction risks universalizing and abstracting the material and historical aspects of ‘lived experience’:\textsuperscript{145} This is to represent a diagnosis rather than a cure: in the quest for embodiment that is empirical and rooted in social relations neither biology nor consciousness can determine human nature. Does it not follow that human nature is determined by what is outside either?

‘Determined’ is perhaps too strong a word for the argument of this thesis. Far from removing the God-given order of creation from the contingent and contextual, this thesis maintains that the God-given order of the creation stories undergoes God-given historical modification. It is suggested here not that external factors be denied in their interrelation with the conscious subject but that this context be broadened to include what has tended to be excluded since the Enlightenment. As the concept of the \textit{imago Dei} assumes a sacramental epistemology, the concepts of creation, covenant and Incarnation assume a spatiotemporal world that is not closed to the transcendent but rather is open to interaction.

Graham’s study postulates human nature as ‘contingent’, embodied and different. McFague’s desire for a ‘lived in quality’ to inhabitation of culture bears witness to something that appears to be missing in feminist thinking: an admission that the creative energizing act of God operates beyond activity within a constructed realm of the ‘sacred’. At the same time the kind of contingent relationship of a created world to a creator must be distinguished from the kind of contingent relations within a created world. Derrida, says Smith, ‘sketches a subject who is constituted by a

\textsuperscript{144} Graham, \textit{Making The Difference}, p. 6.  
\textsuperscript{145} Graham, \textit{Making The Difference}, p. 124.
relation to an exteriority – the alterity of the Other in the communal networks of 
signification.\(^1^{46}\) Supposing our very existence to declare the incessant creative 
energizing act of God, as Derrida comes close to admitting in discussing the activity 
of Yahweh at Babel,\(^1^{47}\) how then might human subjects be constituted in relation to 
the alterity of the other?

This thesis contends that the quest for embodiment, difference and a notion of gender rooted 
in social relations is supplied within a framework of the imago Dei. The concept of humanity 
as male and female being made in God’s image does not imply irrevocable biological 
essentialism;\(^1^{48}\) rather the functions of human nature are subject to change (as for 
instance in the resurrection). Nor is human consciousness the source of personhood: 
the doctrines of creation and covenant allow for ‘the dissolution of the subject’ (i.e. of 
subjectivity in an Enlightenment sense).\(^1^{49}\) To put it positively, personhood is 
moulded, in part at least, not only by human but also by divine discourse. This is the 
enduring but also not unmodifiable personhood that Graham would appear to seek.

Unlike other sources of meaning, sacramental meaning arising from a created world 
contingent on a transcendent creator is the only one that allows for embodiment 
(without the risk of embodiment being rendered as disembodied) while the nature of 
interdependent contingency between male and female allows for difference. 
Graham’s criteria for an enduring notion of personhood are sustained biblically, in 
terms of embodied and contingent human nature (with contingency understood to 
include dependency on God). Unlike Graham’s notion of contingency, which may

\(^{146}\) Smith, Jacques Derrida: Live Theory, p. 45. 
\(^{147}\) Smith, Jacques Derrida: Live Theory, pp. 51-52. 
\(^{148}\) Cf. Graham, Making The Difference, p. 138; 223. 
\(^{149}\) Cf. Graham, Making The Difference, p 223.
place meaning at risk, human contingency on the Self-existing is the source of meaning. The divine-human level presents a social and embodied context for the concept of gender. Further, within this context something new takes place. In the relationship of Mary and Christ, the Self-existing becomes contingent on humanity. This is not the only element of mystery in connection with the *imago Dei*, for meaning itself implies mystery.

In the sacramental approach, mystery accompanying meaning is positive in the sense of what is only partly disclosed, unlike the negative mystery of non-being apparently espoused by Irigaray. The word ‘mystery’ appears several times in the New Testament, e.g. in Ephesians 1:8b-10 (‘With all wisdom and insight [God] has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.’) and in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (‘Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.’) The term ‘mystery’ here refers to high matters of salvation and resurrection. But it is the mystery of man and wife that is specifically referred to as ‘great’: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church.’ (Ephesians 5:31-32).

Schneiders writes:

In the 1950s a French Scholar, A. Néher, wrote a remarkable theological meditation on the meaning of the marital metaphor in the Old Testament. He suggested that the metaphor was so apt for the relation between God and humanity precisely because of the equality of the partners in marriage as two autonomous subjects who freely choose to relate to each other and
because of the historical character of marriage which allows for mistakes
and regressions, recoveries and triumphs, growth and deepening.\footnote{150}

In the wider terms of the ‘great mystery’, though mistakes and regressions certainly
occur, the end of the Christian story is divine-human rapprochement on amazing terms of
partnership.

The love duet of the Song of Songs depicts on the human level the joy of union that
occurs on the divine and divine-human levels. Robin Payne writes in this regard:

Christians can discern the eternal dance \((\textit{perichōrēsis})\) of divine Persons in
the reciprocal love of a man and a woman. This can be taken further. The
love within the very being of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is a love
which draws those who are loved to share in God’s own life and love. God
delights and rejoices in those whom God in love has created and redeemed,
who are caught up into God’s life of love, and they in turn rejoice and delight
in God … This divine loving embraces God’s people who themselves share
in the exchange of joy and delight in God. If the song is applied in such a
way it can only be to affirm that God loves and delights in us on an equal
footing.\footnote{151}

Augustine’s theory of the \textit{imago Dei} may be credited with causing a traditional
misapprehension of the application to women (in particular when his emphasis on ‘mind’
takes on Enlightenment categories of mind-body dualism) but in this area his insight is
more favourable. Augustine describes how, in rejecting a material understanding of God,
he became aware of how creation is drawn up to the level of the Creator. He records that he
heard God’s voice ‘calling from on high, saying, “I am the food of full-grown men. Grow
and you shall feed on me. But you shall not change me into your own substance, as you do

\footnote{150} Schneiders, \textit{Women and the Word}, p. 35, citing A. Néher, ‘Le symbolisme conjugal:
Religieuses} 34 (1954) 30-49.

\footnote{151} Robin Payne, ‘The Song of Songs: Song of Woman, Song of Man, Song of God’, \textit{The
with the food of your body. Instead you shall be changed into me”.¹⁵² This process of change is described in terms of head and body in City of God XIII, 23:

[Afterwards will come the spiritual body, like that which has gone ahead of us in the person of Christ, who is our head; this spiritual body will follow in the person of those who are ‘members of Christ’ at the final resurrection of the dead.

In asking what it means for women to be created in the image of God, it must be borne in mind that the horizon is open to new meaning and further uncovering of mystery. Lewis writes: ‘In denying that sexual life … makes any part of the final beatitude, it is not … necessary to suppose that the distinction of sexes will disappear. What is no longer needed for biological purposes will be expected to survive for splendour.’¹⁵³ What kind of splendour will only be known hereafter.

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¹⁵² Augustine, Confessions, VII.1. See also Pierre Grelot, The Language of Symbolism: Biblical Theology, Semantics and Exegesis, translated by Christopher R. Smith (Peabody, Massachusetts, 2006), p. 219: ‘It is particularly in the Gospel of John that we hear Jesus using expressions such as “to be in,” “to abide in,” “to be with,” and “to be near.” Clearly, these local metaphors do not have a meaning that is materially local; rather, they suggest the intimacy of the believer’s relationship with Christ and, through him, with God … To live fully in this relationship is the height of the spiritual life … When this happens, what Augustine summarized in an amazing formula, which he puts in the mouth of Christ himself, takes place: … “I will not be changed into you, but you will be changed into me.”’

¹⁵³ Lewis, Miracles, p. 191.