

AN ANALYSIS OF KARL BARTH'S UNDERSTANDING OF
MALE AND FEMALE AS CO-HUMANITY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines and presents a critique of Karl Barth's doctrine of the male-female relationship. The pertinent texts are to be found primarily in three volumes of the Church Dogmatics within his doctrine of creation: III/1, III/2 and III/4.

Through his analysis of the Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:21-25 creation stories, Barth sees the division of humanity into two sexes as fundamental to an understanding of God's purpose for humanity. This division into male and female is meant to inform us about ourselves and about our relationship with one another and with God. Barth's ultimate concern is understanding humanity as a covenant partner in relationship with God .

The true nature of humanity cannot be clearly seen in ourselves or others because of our sinful nature. The human creation is understood by looking to that which has been revealed about humanity in the true man Jesus.

Barth's discussion of the creation of co-humanity and the relationship between man and woman covers three major areas. First, is the creation of humanity in the "image of God" as a sexually differentiated creature. Second, is our relationship as man and woman as an analogy of the triune being, the relationship between God and Israel and Jesus and the Church. The third, concerns God's command for us as men and women.

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INTRODUCTION

The Swiss Reformed theologian, Karl Barth, has been described as the "greatest theologian since Thomas Aquinas, and certainly the most influential of the twentieth century."¹ Not even his critics deny the greatness of Barth as a theologian. "Barth's theology represents a Copernican turn in the history of human thought about God, the universe and man." One would not exaggerate by saying that a new theological era was begun by it.² "Barth stands as a prophetic voice in the tradition of Athanasius, Augustine, and Calvin, calling the church back to the Bible and its foundation in Jesus Christ."³

Introduced to the theology of Karl Barth during my theological studies, I quickly became stimulated by his thinking. I took a great interest in gaining a deeper understanding of different aspects of his theology and proceeded to do research on his doctrine of the Trinity and his thoughts on the authority of Scripture and prayer.

I have always been one to observe society and the various struggles of humanity. Understanding the nature of the relationship between the sexes has been a problem that has existed throughout history. I became interested in researching Barth's thoughts on this very delicate but practical and pertinent area of theology.

¹Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol. 2 (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987) 60.

²Herbert Hartwell, The Theology of Karl Barth (Gerald Duckworth, London, 1964), 179.

³Encyclopedia of Religion, 68.

Today, the women's movement is in full force and feminist theologians are at the forefront of the discussion. Although Barth wrote before the women's movement, I believe his insights are still as relevant today, as they were at the time of his writing. The purpose of this study is to examine and critique his view of the male-female relationship and to highlight the contribution that this great theologian can make to this important subject.

Chapter I will focus on Barth's theological development up to the time of his writing on the male-female relationship. This will provide the background needed for a proper understanding of his thought. Chapter II will concentrate on Volume III, part 1 of Church Dogmatics in which he discusses the image of God as a reflection of male and female as co-humanity. Chapter III will focus on Volume III, part 2 of Church Dogmatics in which Jesus is seen as a paradigm for the male-female relationship. Also examined is Barth's ordering of the sexes and his understanding of the male-female relationship as an analogy of Christ's relationship to the Church. Chapter III will concentrate on Volume IV, part 4 of Church Dogmatics. Examined is the male-female relationship set within the context of ethical freedom and the command of God. The three principles layed down by Barth concerning the ethical behavior of the sexes will be explored. Chapter IV offers an evaluation and critique of Barth's treatment of the male-female relationship. This will include an examination of proposed problems and Barth's responses, as well as a section on the positive contributions of his theology and its relevance for today. A final section will draw

together the elements discussed in the preceding sections and offer some further remarks by way of a conclusion.

A subject as delicate and as timely as the relationship between men and women is certain to generate much interest and debate. It most certainly has. Barth's view of this relationship is no different. His theology in general and his theology of male and female as co-humanity in particular, has been the topic of a great number of dissertations, articles and books. Many of these materials have proven very helpful for my study.

While over fifty sources have been consulted and subsequently integrated into this thesis, in hopes of offering a thorough and balanced presentation of the subject matter, a number of these materials have been particularly useful. With regard to the first chapter of this thesis, concerning Barth's life and theological development, these include John Bowden, Karl Barth (1971), George Casalis, Portrait of Karl Barth (1963), Arnold Come An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers (1963), Eberhard Jungel, Karl Barth, A Theological Legacy (1986), David L. Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth (1972), and Thomas C. Oden, The Promise of Karl Barth (1969).

As well, a number of sources gave valuable assistance by providing significant insights and a framework for the body of the thesis, contained in chapters II, III and IV. Doctoral dissertations by Cynthia Campbell, Christine Ford, Elouise Fraser, Octavius Gaba, and Willie Jennings, as well as Paul Jewett's Male and Female (1975) were particularly helpful in this regard. Also,

periodical articles by Jung Young Lee and Stuart D. McLean provided valuable insight into Barth's theology.

In terms of chapter V, the doctoral dissertations previously mentioned proved very useful in presenting the various problems that have been proposed concerning Barth's theology of the sexes. Also very helpful, with respect to evaluating Barth's method, were periodical articles by John Bennett, Kathleen Bliss, Emma Justes, Clifford Green, and Andrew J. McKelway. A number of other works have also made a significant contribution to this critical study. These include, Ray S. Anderson's On Being Human (1982), Come's work previously mentioned, Herbert Hartwell's The Theology of Karl Barth, An Introduction (1964), Oden's work previously mentioned, and Robert Willis' The Ethics of Karl Barth (1971).

It is my belief that we have much to gain from Karl Barth's theology of the male-female relationship. It is my hope that this thesis will provide a few steps in that direction.

CHAPTER I
BARTH'S THEOLOGICAL PILGRIMAGE

Theological Studies

Theologically, Barth was brought up within the tradition of the Swiss Reformation. Born in Basel, Switzerland, on May 10, 1886, he was the eldest son of Fritz Barth. He came from a long line of ministers. Barth's father and both his grandfathers were ministers as well. Fritz Barth also taught at the Evangelical School of Preachers in Basel.⁴ When Barth was three years old his father accepted a position as Professor of Church History and New Testament at Bern.⁵

As was customary in Germany, Barth spent time at several universities.⁶ At the urging of his father, Barth began his theological studies at the University of Bern in 1904, at the age of eighteen. At this point in his development, his father proved to be the greatest influence in his life. He studied systematic theology under the liberal theologian Herrmann Ludemann, but was not very interested in him. Rather, it was the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher's theology of religious experience which began to stimulate his thinking, after

⁴David L. Mueller, Makers of the Theological Mind / Karl Barth (Waco: Word Books, 1972), 14.

⁵Colin Brown, Karl Barth and the Christian Message (London: Tyndale Press, 1967), 14.

⁶Ibid.

having read their work.⁷

After two years of study at the University of Bern, Barth wanted to continue his studies with the greatest neo-Kantian theologian of this period, Wilhelm Herrmann of Marburg. His father was opposed to this idea because he wanted him to be exposed to more conservative theologians. Instead, they both agreed on Berlin. He started his studies there in the fall of 1906. It was here that he studied under the great liberal church historian, Adolf von Harnack.⁸ With only one semester to study at Berlin, he devoted every waking hour trying to digest the wisdom and insights of Harnack. He concentrated so much of his attention on his seminars on "The Acts of the Apostles" that he spent absolutely no time coming to know the city.⁹ Arnold B. Come has commented on Harnack's influence:

Harnack epitomized the spirit of liberal optimism, assuming that man is essentially good and that history was getting better and better. It was against this naive optimistic romanticism and the portraiture of Jesus as a bourgeois religious humanist that Barth's theology was later to rebel. But when he rebelled, it was against a stream in which he had been thoroughly immersed.¹⁰

Even as Barth studied under Harnack at Berlin he saw in Harnack's thought a "simplified cultural moralism" which did not

⁷John D. Godsey, "Introduction," in How I Changed My Mind, by Karl Barth (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1966), 18.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Arnold B. Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics For Preachers (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963), 25.

¹⁰Thomas C. Oden, The Promise of Barth (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1969), 23.

really stimulate his thinking, as he was sure Wilhelm Herrmann would, after having read his Ethic during that same semester. But instead of going directly to Marburg to study under Herrmann, Barth once again, out of respect for his father, followed his advice and spent another semester at Bern in the spring of 1907 and a semester at Tübingen to study with the more conservative Biblical scholar, Adolf Schaller. ¹¹

Finally, in 1908, he was given permission from his father to study under the liberal systematic theologian, Wilhelm Herrmann at Marburg for three full semesters. Herrmann was extremely concerned with "ethical responsibility as a dimension of communion with God".¹² According to Herrmann,

anthropology was at the center of personal life, and human problems could not be resolved apart from encounter with the living God. It was by contact with the inner life of Jesus, who had a perfect religious personality, that one's own personal religious life could be born and mature. A decisive religious experience is thus brought about by contact with an exceptional person, even though historical investigation cannot fully uncover what he was like nor fully communicate his real power.¹³

Barth called him "the theological teacher of my student years."¹⁴ Although Barth later expressed his theology in a very different manner from his teacher, he nevertheless granted Herrmann the credit for showing him the direction in which he should go, for as

¹¹Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers, 26.

¹²Oden, The Promise of Barth, 24.

¹³Georges Casalis, Portrait of Karl Barth (Westport: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1963), 41.

¹⁴Mueller, Makers of the Theological Mind/ Karl Barth, 16.

Thomas C. Oden comments: "implicit in Herrmann was an awareness of the absolute transcendence of God, a rejection of any scientific proof of God's existence, and the uniqueness of faith as the basis of theological reflection".¹⁵

First Years as a Pastor

Although Barth completed his examinations and was ordained in 1908, he did not feel quite ready to become a pastor. This was partly because of Herrmann's insistence that all true preaching arises from experience. Barth felt that he lacked this special religious experience. Therefore, instead, he became the assistant editor of "Christliche Welt" (Christian World), an influential liberal periodical.¹⁶ Barth then spent two years as an assistant pastor in Geneva. In 1911, he was appointed as pastor of Safenwil, a small farming and industrial town in Aargaud, Switzerland. A series of crises followed which transformed Barth's thinking, and thereby changed twentieth century theology.¹⁷

For the first five years at Safenwil, Barth made no real break with the liberal theology learned during his student days. At the same time, however, he did not forge ahead with any new developments within it. His entire time and energy were spent in

¹⁵Oden, The Promise of Barth, 24.

¹⁶Godsey, "Introduction", 19.

¹⁷Brown, Karl Barth and the Christian Message, 17.

dealing with the difficulty of preaching and the social problems involving labour-management relations.¹⁸

In 1913, two significant events occurred. Barth married Nelly Hoffmann and a friendship began between Barth and the Swiss Eduard Thurneysen, a fellow student at Marburg, who became a pastor in a neighboring village. One cannot stress enough the importance of Thurneysen for Barth's theological development. He introduced Barth to Christoph Blumhardt, the son of Johann Christoph Blumhardt who had continued his father's work at a retreat center at Bad Boll and related "his eschatological message of the kingdom of God with the socio-political movements of the time." Thurneysen also introduced Barth to Herrmann Kutter and Leonhard Ragaz, those at the head of the religious-socialist movement in Switzerland, as well to the works of Dostoevsky, the great Russian existentialist novelist, without which, Barth says the writing of The Epistle to the Romans would not have been possible.¹⁹

Most of Barth's parishioners were factory workers. Like Blumhardt and Ragaz, Barth often took "socialist" stands in the conflicts between the workers and owners. He was involved in union activity, demanded wage increases for the workers and eventually became a member of the Social Democratic Party in 1915.²⁰

¹⁸Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers, 29-30.

¹⁹Godsey, "Introduction", 20.

²⁰Casalis, Portrait of Karl Barth, 43.

After a period of political involvement, Blumhart became convinced that what was really needed in society was a spiritual transformation in man, not radical modifications of social and political structures. He, therefore, turned his attention solely to pastoral matters. His pastoral activity centered on the "objective reality of God and his Kingdom and [was] characterized by a simple Biblical faith."²¹ This development, in turn, influenced Barth. It was in reading Blumhart on pastoral care that "his understanding of the Christian hope became redirected toward the absolutely transcendent God, instead of hope for historical progress and human good will." Barth began to question the tendency of religious socialism to "reduce Christianity to a political movement and to allow the gospel to be absorbed into limited cultural forms."²² On May 19, 1913, Barth delivered a lecture entitled "Faith in a Personal God" at a pastors' conference in Lenzburg. His liberal stance is still seen in his view that religious experience can provide the foundation for faith in God, but already one can begin to see a foreshadowing of what is to come in his belief that religious experience is something that is achieved in man by God. Although Barth was becoming more and more troubled with respect to his theological position, it took World War I to bring about the break with his theological roots. On what Barth refers to as a

²¹Ibid., 42.

²²Oden, The Promise of Barth, 25.

"black day" in August 1914, ninety-three German intellectuals declared their support for the Kaiser's war policy.²³

Among them I found to my horror the name of nearly all my theological teachers whom up to then I had religiously honored. Disillusioned by their conduct, I perceived that I should not be able to any longer accept their ethics and dogmatics, their exegesis, their interpretation of history, that at least for me the theology of the 19th century had no future.²⁴

The Epistle to the Romans and Dialectic Theology

This was the turning point which led to his break with liberal theology and his refusal to relate the Kingdom of God with social action.²⁵ Barth had to find another way. Like Luther before him, in his frustration and confusion Barth turned to the Bible for help, specifically, to Paul's Epistle to the Romans.²⁶ He came to realize that the Bible

is primarily concerned not with man's view of God but with God's view of man, not with religion but with revelation, not with how man finds God, but how God has sought and found man. In short the Bible for Barth became the Word of God.²⁷

²³Godsey, "Introduction", 21.

²⁴Karl Barth, God, Grace and Gospel, (S.F.T. Occasional Papers No.8), trans. J.S. McNab of 'Gospel and Law', 'The Humanity of God' and 'Evangelical Theology in the 19th Century' (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959).

²⁵Eberhard Jungel, Karl Barth, A Theological Legacy, trans. Garrett E. Paul (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), 25.

²⁶Brown, Karl Barth and the Christian Message, 17.

²⁷Godsey, "Introduction", 22.

His rediscovery of the Bible led to the publication of The Epistle to the Romans, in 1919.²⁸

With the first edition came an offer of a position as associate professor of Reformed theology, at Gottingen, which he accepted in 1921.²⁹

Barth listened attentively to his critics, "but as was often to be the case, he remained his own severest critic." He was so dissatisfied with what he had said previously in the first edition of The Epistle to the Romans, that he completely revised it. In the second edition he wrote, "it may be claimed that no stone remains in its old place." It was this second edition of Romans which marked the beginning of a new theological age identified with the name of Karl Barth. When talking about the impact of the book, Karl Adam said that "it fell like a bomb on the playground of the theologians."³⁰

"In the Preface to the second edition Barth gave his own list of [influences]: Overbeck, Plato and Kant, Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky, and - the Bible itself."³¹ Franz Overbeck was a New Testament and church history professor at the University of

²⁸Jungel, Karl Barth, A Theological Legacy, 25.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 23.

³¹Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers, 36.

Basel.³² Soren Kierkegaard was a Danish religious philosopher. He is often regarded as the first great existentialist.³³ It is clear that Barth uses many of his main terms and phrases. We hear a lot in the second edition, and in the following works, about

God's revelation as 'paradox', about the inexplicable 'moment' of 'crisis' in which God judges and man is brought into 'decision'. There is the constant play of the Kierkegaardian dialectic of simultaneous No and Yes, incognito and revealed, doubt and faith, sinner and righteousness.³⁴

John D. Godsey points out that Barth develops

a dialectic understanding of the relation between God and man and uses the concept of paradox to keep the two sides distinct and to allow God's revelation to remain God's revelation. The use of paradox was his ultimate attempt to make the incomprehensible way of God to man comprehensible precisely as the incomprehensible.³⁵

Because of the prominence of dialectics in this commentary, Barth's thought came to be known as "dialectic theology" or "crisis theology."³⁶

In 1922, Barth, in collaboration with Thurneysen, Friedrich Gogarten, and Georg Merz, founded the journal "Zwischen den Zeiten" [Between the Times], which served as a platform for "dialectic theology." It also contained articles by Rudolf Bultmann, the

³²Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 37.

³³Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 4 (New York: The MacMillan Company & The Free Press, 1967), 336.

³⁴Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers, 40.

³⁵Godsey, "Introduction," 31.

³⁶Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 25.

German Biblical historian and theologian.³⁷ It was during this time that Barth was greatly inspired by Gogarten. He was a profound thinker with various interests, and under the influence of Martin Buber he started to use the concept of I-Thou.³⁸ Buber was a Jewish religious existentialist from Austria.³⁹ Thurneysen met him and in turn, encouraged Barth to do likewise. Barth met Buber and was greatly influenced by him. As a result, the entire language and concept of the "I-Thou" and "person" became a fundamental and permanent part of Barth's theology.⁴⁰

Transition to Dogmatics

Barth's letters during this time reveal an entirely new and different struggle in his theological development. He began teaching with great enthusiasm but also with a sense of inadequacy. He was there to teach Reformed dogmatics so he would eventually have to move beyond lecturing on Paul's letters.⁴¹ Desiring to familiarize himself with the Reformed tradition, Barth decided to lecture on the Heidelberg Catechism, Calvin, Zwingli, and Schleiermacher in consecutive semesters. He complemented these courses with scriptural expositions of Ephesians, Hebrews, James,

³⁷Jungel, Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy, 25.

³⁸Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers, 46.

³⁹Philosophy of Religion, Vol. 6, 409.

⁴⁰Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers, 46.

⁴¹Ibid., 46.

and I Corinthians. During the same period, he diligently worked to learn the history of ancient and modern theology.⁴² In 1924, when Barth felt it was time to start lecturing in dogmatics or systematic theology, he did not know which way to turn.⁴³ Later, he expressed in writing how he felt during this period: "No one," he says, "can ever have been more plagued than I was with the problem, could I do it? and how?"⁴⁴

In the midst of this crisis, Barth stumbled upon a new edition of Heinrich Heppe's Reformed Dogmatics, a collection of Protestant orthodox theology from the seventeenth-century. Though Barth had a negative opinion towards orthodoxy, having learned and rejected it in his earlier days, he writes of his new revelation⁴⁵:

I read, I studied, I reflected; and found that I was rewarded with the discovery that here at last I was in the atmosphere in which the road, by way of the Reformers, to the Holy Scriptures, was a more sensible and natural one to tread than the atmosphere, now only too familiar to me, of the theological literature determined by Schleiermacher and Ritschl. I found a dogmatics which had both form and substance, oriented upon the central indication of the Biblical evidences for revelation, which it also managed to follow out in detail

⁴²Godsey, "Introduction", 28.

⁴³Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 31.

⁴⁴Karl Barth, "Foreword", in Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Theology, trans. Ernst Bizer and George Thomas Thomson (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1950), v. Taken from Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 31.

⁴⁵Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 31.

with astonishing richness.⁴⁶

Barth was very aware of the great limitations of orthodox dogmatics, yet in the following years, he gained much in reading them and the more recent conservative theologians such as Kohlbrugge, Bohl, and Lecerf. The enduring impression of this study is evidenced in the long footnotes of the early volumes of Church Dogmatics. Although he criticized orthodoxy as much as liberalism in these volumes, Arnold B. Come maintains that "he had been convinced that orthodoxy at least set the right problems and the right method for theology."⁴⁷

In 1925, Barth became a professor of dogmatics at the University of Munster. It was here that he met Charlotte von Kirschbaum, who, in 1929, became his secretary. Come states that "[w]ithout her capacities for scholarship, her keen intelligence, her friendly and patient spirit, the Church Dogmatics would never have assumed the breadth of scope and excellence of quality they now possess."⁴⁸ It was here, as well, that he came into contact with "living Roman Catholic theology." This would have an important and enduring impact on his thought. It was also at Munster that we can see evidence of the fact that he had made a significant step beyond his dialectical theology in turning to dogmatics. This was

⁴⁶Barth, in Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, v. Taken from Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 31.

⁴⁷Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers, 47.

⁴⁸Ibid., 47-48.

a result of his studies of Calvin and of conservative dogmatics.⁴⁹

With the publication of his The Doctrine of the Word of God: Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics in 1927, it became apparent that the distance between Barth and the other members of his "school" was widening. During the next ten years, all of them but Thurneysen would leave to follow different paths.⁵⁰ "Eventually, the debate between Barth and Bultmann was to mark the great divide in the theology of mid-century".⁵¹

David L. Mueller lays out the basis of Barth's approach to dogmatics when he states that it was Barth's intention

to base his theology upon a position opposed both to Roman Catholic theology which allows for a natural theology and to the theology of the religious self-consciousness characteristic of Protestant liberalism after Schleiermacher. What is more, he rejects allowing any metaphysic or philosophy to dictate the theologian's starting point or method. Therefore, he intends to develop a theology grounded upon the Word of God. Indeed, the entire prolegomena is conceived as an exposition of the doctrine of the Word of God. In contrast to liberalism's concern with the Christian self-consciousness, Barth's concern is with the Word of God addressed to man.⁵²

In Christian Dogmatics, Barth is already talking in terms of the Word of God in its threefold form: the proclaimed Word, the

⁴⁹Ibid., 48.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 33.

written Word, and the revealed Word.⁵³ In every case, one is to understand the Word of God "as the speech of God, or the act of God, in which God is always subject. Since God is the Lord of his Word, it never becomes the possession of man in the way in which neo-Protestants were eager to affirm." In beginning with the Word of God, Barth radically breaks from his liberal heritage. Liberalism started with the examination of the Christian's piety. For Barth, the "proper subject of theology is this Word, and not the faith of the believer," as he once maintained. The Word of God is not, as liberalism affirmed, found in the faith of the believer, but "faith is grounded and upheld by the Word of God."⁵⁴

The key points of Barth's mature doctrine of revelation are evident. Jesus Christ, who is the revealed Word of God, is already seen as the "objective possibility of revelation". It is through the work of the Holy Spirit, the "subjective possibility of revelation" that this Word becomes known. As well, Barth already understands God in his revelation with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. Holy Scripture teaches that the God who reveals himself is triune. Therefore, Barth considers the doctrine of the Trinity to be the main and necessary defence against all anthropocentric and natural theology. Anyone who would affirm a natural theology must demonstrate that it has reference to the

⁵³Karl Barth, Die christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf. Vol. I. Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes, Prolegomena zur christlichen Dogmatik (Munich:Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1927), vi-vii in Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 33-34.

⁵⁴Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 34.

triune God who discloses himself in his revelation.⁵⁵ Godsey states that according to Barth,

God's inalienable subjectivity in the revelation is maintained and expressed precisely by the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus for him, the doctrine of the Word of God, which is prolegomena to dogmatics proper, could only be an elaboration of the doctrine of the Trinity.⁵⁶

"As such, this doctrine is the starting point and grammar for all Christian knowledge of God, and not merely an appendix, as in Schleiermacher."⁵⁷ Barth is somewhat unclear in this volume as to when an individual receives the Word of God. His main concern appears to have been "to teach that God, the Holy Spirit makes it possible for man to hear and respond to the Word of God which is proclaimed or written."⁵⁸

Anselm: Faith in Search of Understanding

Critics of Barth quickly brought to his attention that according to his Christian Dogmatics, there appeared to be "two bases for significant assertions about the Word of God, the revelation of God in Jesus and the hearing man; as well as two methodologies, the phenomenological and the existential." Barth

⁵⁵Ibid., 34.

⁵⁶Godsey, "Introduction", 32.

⁵⁷Encyclopedia of Religion, 70.

⁵⁸Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 34-35.

realized to his great dismay that he failed "to avoid at least the appearance of grounding theology in anthropology." He must begin again. Just like his Epistle to the Romans, his Prolegomena to Dogmatics needed to be rewritten.⁵⁹

St. Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury at the end of the 10th century, was "the originator of the Ontological Argument for the existence of God and one of the foremost figures of medieval theology."⁶⁰ Barth began examining the question of method in theology by a careful study of his Proslogion. In 1931, he published his findings in Fides quaerens intellectum (Faith Seeking Understanding). Barth refers to the significance of this book for his theology:

The deepening [of my theological position] consisted in this: in these years I have had to rid myself of the last remnants of a philosophical, i.e., anthropological (in America one says "humanistic" or "naturalistic") foundation and exposition of Christian doctrine. The real document of this farewell is, in truth, not the much-read...Nein!, directed against Brunner in 1934, but rather the book about the evidence for God of Anselm of Canterbury which appeared in 1931. Among all my books I regard this as the one written with the greatest satisfaction. And yet in America it is doubtless not read at all and in Europe it certainly is the least read of any of my works.⁶¹

In the preface, Barth says that he believes Anselm's proof for the existence of God to be a "perceptive and sound piece of theology," which if followed, could be helpful both for modern

⁵⁹Godsey, "Introduction", 32-33.

⁶⁰Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 6, 28.

⁶¹Karl Barth, How I Changed My Mind, Introduction and Epilogue by John D. Godsey, (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), 42-43.

Protestant and Catholic theology with regard to what makes up an adequate theological method. It can be said that "Anselm helped Barth develop the theological method characteristic of the entire Church Dogmatics."⁶²

Like Anselm, Barth maintains that faith seeks understanding because this movement is representative of faith as such. Barth states this as follows: "'Credo ut intelligam' [I believe in order that I might understand] means: It is my very faith itself that summons me to knowledge."⁶³

Barth paraphrases Anselm's understanding of faith as follows:

Faith is the right act of the will if it is that which is owed to God and demanded by God, and bound together with a saving "experience"; that is, in so far as it is faith in God, in so far as it believes that which is true. Faith comes from hearing, and hearing comes from preaching. Faith is related to the "Word of Christ" and it is not faith if it is not the reception, that is, knowledge and acknowledgement of the 'Word of Christ'.⁶⁴

Therefore, for Barth and Anselm, we do not start our search for knowledge of God independent of faith. Instead, we have to start with "faith in the Word of Christ or the Word of God which has been spoken." The Bible and the ancient church Confessions are the best expressions of the church's faith. For an individual Christian to have true faith, he must understand Christ through

⁶²Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 37-38.

⁶³Karl Barth, Anselm: Fides quaerens intellectum, trans. I W. Robertson (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1962), 18.

⁶⁴Ibid., 22.

these norms.⁶⁵ From this point on, Barth's theology is to be completely Christocentric. "God is to be found only in Jesus Christ - and Jesus Christ is to be found only in and through the scripture that witnesses to him."⁶⁶

Church Dogmatics

It was at Bonn, where he moved in 1930, that the Church Dogmatics began to be published in 1932. Barth selected his title carefully. He wanted it to relate precisely to the emphasis, so fundamental for Barth's thought; theology as entirely "based on the message and life of the church."⁶⁷ He wanted to show that "dogmatics is not a 'free' science, but bound to the sphere of the church where and where alone it is possible and sensible." At the same time, he took away everything that would appear "to give theology a basis, support or even justification in philosophy."⁶⁸

The significant event in the thirties which impacted Barth's life was the installation of Hitler as Chancellor of Germany in 1933. In order to have a platform to voice their fierce opposition to Hitler and the German Christians, Barth and Thurneysen founded a theological journal entitled Theologische Existenz heute

⁶⁵Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 39.

⁶⁶John Bowden, Karl Barth (Naperville: SCM Press Ltd., 1971), 62.

⁶⁷Casalis, Portrait of Karl Barth, 49.

⁶⁸Bowden, Karl Barth, 89.

(Theological Existence Today), in July, 1933. The German Christians pressed for "a synthesis of German National Socialism and the gospel." Hitler acknowledged them as the official church of Germany. Barth called for the Christian church in Germany to pledge allegiance to Jesus Christ alone. He became the theological leader of the Confessing Church which spoke out against the German Christians and Hitler. Barth and the other members refused to identify the gospel with Naziism. In 1934, the Confessing Church gathered at Barmen, Germany, and declared its faith in a written confession. Barth wrote the draft which later was approved and circulated as the Barmen Confession.⁶⁹

Critical differences arose, however, between Barth and influential members in the Confessing Church. "Theologically, these differences basically revolved around Barth's 'No!' to Emil Brunner's postulate of a natural 'point of contact' for the Christian proclamation."⁷⁰ Barth's break with Brunner in 1934 was so acute because he felt that "any form of natural theology would lend support to the German cause and detract from the supremacy of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ."⁷¹

Barth defied the German government by not starting his classes in Bonn with the customary Heil Hitler! and by not taking an

⁶⁹Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 42.

⁷⁰Jungel, Karl Barth, A Theological Legacy, 26. See also Karl Barth, "No! Answer to Emil Brunner," in Natural Theology, trans. by Peter Fraenkel (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946), 65-128.

⁷¹Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 43.

unconditional oath of loyalty to Hitler. As a result, he was fired from his teaching position and expelled from Germany. Directly afterward, he was asked to become the professor of theology at the University of Basel where he began teaching in 1935 at the age of forty-nine and where he remained until his death in 1968.

Most of his time and energy was devoted to the Church Dogmatics. He finished two more volumes during the thirties. The last volume of the prolegomena, developed as an exposition of The Doctrine of God, was published in 1938. The first volume of The Doctrine of God was published in 1940. After the outbreak of World War II, in the late thirties and early forties, Barth was in contact with Czechs, French Protestants, and with the English, Norwegians, Dutch and Americans warning them of the dangers of Naziism.⁷²

After the war, Barth realized that he needed to choose between devoting the rest of his life to helping rebuild the German nation or remain in Basel and complete the Dogmatics. In the end, he felt that his theological work had to take priority. As he approached sixty years of age, he began to accept the fact that he no longer had the energy he once did. He was growing older and his time was limited.⁷³

The forties were important in terms of "Barth's theological maturation and production." After having made the decision to stay in Basel, Barth began working continuously on the Church Dogmatics.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers, 57.

The publication of the doctrine of The Election of God in 1942 reveals an important "intensification of Barth's Christological concentration." From here onward, in the development of the Dogmatics, there is "a greater dynamic and movement" than previously. This Christological focus is quite apparent in the other volumes published in the forties and the early fifties. The Doctrine of Creation was published in 1945. The second part of the third volume, concerning the doctrine of man, followed in 1948. Barth's treatment of the doctrine of providence and of evil was published in 1950.⁷⁴

In 1951, Barth finished the doctrine of creation in a volume concerning ethics, in particular, the command of God the Creator, and the response of man with regard to his God-given freedom in 1961.⁷⁵

Use of Analogy

Barth's use of analogy became "the most distinctive trait of his theological method". Since A. Quenstedt, Barth was possibly one of the first Protestant theologians who deals with its use.⁷⁶ In common language the term "analogy" is used to refer to any form of comparison. In an analogy, however, it is clear that we are dealing

⁷⁴Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 45.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Jung Young Lee, "Karl Barth's Use of Analogy in Church Dogmatics", Scottish Journal of Theology, 22:2, June 1969, 129-130.

with a partial correspondence. While there are points that are alike or similar, there are also points that are different or unlike. Barth abides by this straightforward definition through the whole of the Dogmatics.⁷⁷

For Barth, the only way that he can "accept the inevitability of analogical language in theology," is if it can be done in a manner that rejects all natural theology. All analogies must be given by God in faith. Therefore, Barth put the "analogia fidei" (analogy of faith) in opposition to the "analogia entis" (analogy of being) of Thomistic theology. Barth wanted to assert that the "correspondence between God and our language is established only by the grace of God through faith, not by man's natural reason which compares the being of God with the being of man."⁷⁸

Hans Urs von Balthasar maintains that the work of Barth is a slow process from his dialectic method to a complete idea of analogy.⁷⁹

There are two radical turning points in the history of Barth's thinking. The first is in his publication of [The Epistle of the Romans], where he has turned from liberal to dialectical thinking through the reinterpretation of Kierkegaard's concept of the infinite qualitative distinction between time and eternity; and the second is in his study on Anselm's Fides Quaerens Intellectum, where he turned from dialectical to analogical

⁷⁷Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics For Preachers, 142.

⁷⁸Ibid., 145.

⁷⁹Lee, "Karl Barth's Use of Analogy in His Church Dogmatics," 132, referring to Hans Urs von Balthasar, Karl Barth--Darstellung Und Deutung Seiner Theologie, Verlag, Jakob Hegner in Koln, 1951.

thinking.⁸⁰

Barth came to realize that it was virtually impossible to describe or come to understand the relationship between God and man using the dialectical method. Therefore, it was almost inevitable for Barth to turn from dialectic to analogy. It was from his study on Anselm in 1931 that this change took place. Since then, Barth "meaningfully expressed in his Church Dogmatics the concept of Divine revelation with regard to the human condition;" something that the dialectical method was unable to do.⁸¹

Barth finally became convinced by von Balthasar that Aquinas never intended what Barth had accused him of in the concept of the "analogy of being".⁸² Therefore after 1945, Barth no longer was involved in polemic against it. Instead, he begins to focus his attention on the concepts of covenant and creation. The creation is not something completely strange but the "actualisation of Divine grace and reality in Christ." Barth begins to view the concept of being in a more positive light.⁸³

The type of analogy that most concerns us, is an analogy that "can pass from being the form or structure of the act of knowing

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers, 145.

⁸³Lee, "Karl Barth's Use of Analogy in His Church Dogmatics", 132.

into being the very content or substance of what is known."⁸⁴ This is the kind of analogy that Barth started to develop when he adopted Bonhoeffer's term "analogia relationis" (analogy of relation).⁸⁵ Barth contends that the "image of God" is found in mankind's being created male and female, or in more general terms, in their being created to live "with" one another. This fundamental relationship of man to woman is a reflection of the relationship of God to man in Jesus Christ, and this in turn is a reflection of the relationship of Father and Son in the Trinitarian life of God. This will form the basis of our discussion of Barth's understanding of the relationship between man and woman.

⁸⁴Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers, 146.

⁸⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER II
THE IMAGE OF GOD
EXPOSITION OF CD III/1

Genesis 1

In Part One of the Doctrine of Creation, we have Barth's exegesis of Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness." Barth states that "the point of the text is that God willed to create man as a being corresponding to His own being--in such a way that He Himself (even if in His knowledge of Himself) is the original and prototype, and man the copy and imitation."⁸⁶ Therefore, the Imago Dei refers primarily to God not to man. Only secondarily does it refer to the human being. Robert Brown states that "this provides the foundation for the trinitarian anchorage of this important doctrine by setting God Himself as pattern and prototype."⁸⁷

Barth says that the key to understanding the original Imago Dei is found in the "us" and the "our" of the creation statement of Genesis 1:26 since these words indicate the "non-solitariness of God on the one hand and His free agreement with himself on the other".⁸⁸ Barth goes on to state that, "[i]n God's own being and

⁸⁶Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, III/1, translated by G.W. Bromiley et al. (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1970), 197.

⁸⁷Richard Geoffrey Brown. "The Image of God: Theological Ethics For Human Creative Genetic Engineering," (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Dissertation, 1989), 132.

⁸⁸CD III/1, 183.

sphere there is a counterpart: a genuine but harmonious self-encounter and self-discovery; a free co-existence and co-operation; an open confrontation and reciprocity."⁸⁹ Barth is emphasizing that although God is one, he is not alone for within his unity there is a counterpart. This encounter and discovery within God is copied and imitated in God's relation with humankind.⁹⁰ The Imago Dei, then, is first to be traced to its origin in God himself who is prototype and pattern.

The I-Thou Relationship

According to Barth, the "Let us" speaks of a genuine plurality in the divine being. It is an approximation to the doctrine of the Trinity. God is one, yet at the same time there exists within himself the differentiation and relationship of I and Thou.

The saga undoubtedly speaks of a genuine plurality in the divine being, but it does not actually say that it is a Trinity. On the other hand, it may be stated that an approximation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity--the picture of a God who is the one and only God, yet who is not for that reason solitary, but includes in Himself the differentiation and relationship of I and Thou--is both nearer to the text and does it more justice than the alternative suggested by modern exegesis in its arrogant rejection of the exegesis of the Early Church.⁹¹

Barth argues that the image refers to man's creation and being as man and woman in Genesis 1:27. "God created man in his own

⁸⁹CD III/1, 185.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹CD III/1, 192.

image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Gen. 1:27). For Barth this is a self-evident statement:

Could anything be more obvious than to conclude from this clear indication that the image and likeness of the being created by God signifies existence in confrontation, i.e. in this confrontation, in the juxtaposition and conjunction of man and man which is that of male and female...?⁹²

Analogy of Relation

According to Barth, there is an analogy of relation between the I and Thou within the Godhead, and humanity as male and female.⁹³ Barth states:

There can be no question of anything more than an analogy. The differentiation and relationship between the I and the Thou in the divine being, in the sphere of the Elohim, are not identical with the differentiation and relationship between male and female. That it takes this form in man, corresponding to the bi-sexuality of animals, too, belongs to the creatureliness of man rather than the divine likeness. It also belongs to his

⁹²CD III/1, 195.

⁹³Lee, "Analogy in Barth's Church Dogmatics", 143-144. See also Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," (Evanston: Northwestern University Dissertation, 1984), 20 and Robert Willis, The Ethics of Karl Barth (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 72-73 and 225-227. For an interesting discussion on the relevance of the analogy of relation with regard to pastoral concerns see David Miell, "Barth on Persons in Relationship: A Case for Further Reflection?," Scottish Journal of Theology 42 (1989), 541-555.

creatureliness that the relationship between the I and the Thou in man takes place only in the form of the differentiation and relationship between the two different individuals, whereas in the case of God they are included in the one individual.⁹⁴

For Barth, the fact that we were created male and female means that God gave the human being the capacity for encounter. Barth calls this confrontational relationship the image of God because the same kind of relationship exists between God and man.

Man is created by God in correspondence with this relationship and differentiation [between the I and the Thou] in God Himself: created as a Thou that can be addressed by God but also an I responsible to God; in the relationship of man and woman in which man is a Thou to his fellow and therefore himself an I in responsibility to this claim.⁹⁵

Barth refers to this analogy as the "tertium comparationis."

Thus the "tertium comparationis", the analogy between God and man, is simply the existence of the I and the Thou in confrontation. This is first constitutive for God, and then for man created by God. To remove it is tantamount to removing the divine from God as well as the human from man.⁹⁶

Barth specifies the kind of analogy to which he is referring. "Analogy, even as the analogy of relation, does not entail likeness but the correspondence of the unlike."⁹⁷ Because the human as creature cannot be "like" God, analogies can only be comparisons of "unlikes." Therefore for Barth, there is an analogia relationis not an analogia entis; an analogy of two relations, not of two beings.

⁹⁴CD III/1, 192-196.

⁹⁵CD III/1, 198.

⁹⁶CD III/1, 185.

⁹⁷CD III/1, 196.

Barth insists on this distinction.⁹⁸

Barth's use of both I-Thou and male-female relations to describe human relatedness is definitely not unique. Barth notes in Church Dogmatics that these terms can be found in the works of both Emil Brunner and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.⁹⁹

Robert Umidi and Cynthia Campbell point out, however, that there are differences between Barth and Brunner and Bonhoeffer concerning the importance of this I-Thou structure and its relation to the male-female relation. In general, the other two theologians are more concerned with the I-Thou relation as a basis for the responsible self or individual, while Barth uses these concepts to describe his basic argument that there is no humanity without "co-humanity," no human without human relationships. Both Bonhoeffer and Brunner give serious attention to the male-female relation as a unique form of existence, but neither give it the symbolic importance that Barth does.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Harold Wells, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Analogy," Canadian Journal of Theology 15 (1969), 211. Referring to CD III/1, 195.

⁹⁹Barth acknowledges his debt to Bonhoeffer (III/1, 194f) for relating the male-female relation to the imago and understanding the human as a "copy" of the divine "original," "a counterpart realized in free differentiation and relationship" (195).

¹⁰⁰Cynthia Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity" (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1981), 151. See also, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, trans. John C. Fletcher (London: SCM Press, 1959) and Heinrich Emil Brunner, Dogmatics, vol. II: The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952). See also Robert Umidi, "Imaging God Together: The Image of God As 'Sociality' in the Thought of Deitrich Bonhoeffer" (Drew University Dissertation, 1993), 219-237.

As well, Barth was influenced by Martin Buber who also held that the I-Thou relation was fundamental to humanity. While there are differences between Barth's theological anthropology and the philosophical anthropology of Buber, much of Barth's language "echoes what Buber says about the two levels of being in his classic work I and Thou."¹⁰¹

Relevant New Testament Passages

As the exegesis of Genesis 1 develops, Barth discusses New Testament passages to demonstrate the I-Thou relationship of Christ to God and to humanity in the Christian community. Paul describes Jesus as the image of God in II Cor. 4:4 and Col. 1:15. Campbell explains that this means two things:

first, Jesus is 'real man,' the prototype of Adam, and thus as human the human who truly reflects God. But second, Jesus Christ as the head of the Church, is the fulfillment of God's covenant relationship with humanity.¹⁰²

In I Cor. 11:7 man is seen as the image and glory of God. However, alongside this man, there is a woman who is his glory as he is the glory of God. This man and this woman together represent the image of God. Barth goes on to say that

¹⁰¹Ray S. Anderson, On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 45-52. See Martin Buber, I and Thou Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner, 1958).

¹⁰²Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 153.

[i]f we are to understand this, we must not overlook the fact that according to I Cor. 11:7 Paul always thought of the man who is God's [image and glory] (even in passages where this is not immediately obvious) in conjunction with his wife, and therefore of Jesus, not as an isolated figure, but as Israel's Christ, the Head of His community.¹⁰³

Christine Ford stresses that Barth's exegetical method supports his analogy of relation.¹⁰⁴ He says that Paul did not find a lone male in Genesis 1:16 (Rom. 5:14), (I Cor. 11:7) but a man and a woman. Jesus Christ is the image of God and therefore real humanity.¹⁰⁵

If Jesus Christ is the image of God, and therefore man, to say 'Jesus Christ' is necessarily to speak also of the other - pneumatically, of course, and not physically - who was divinely created with man, who with him is addressed by God as a Thou and made responsible to God as an I, the other who confronts him as a Thou and whom he himself confronts as an I. It is in this way that Paul actually speaks of Jesus Christ when he describes Him as the image of God and therefore man.¹⁰⁶

Therefore, as Ford explains, "the community of Christians are also present in all that Jesus Christ is and therefore in the fact that he is the image of God as the man is not without the woman." Man is the head of the woman and the woman is his glory as he himself is the glory of God (I Cor. 11:7). In this relationship all that applies to the man also applies to the woman. Barth asserts

¹⁰³CD III/1, 203.

¹⁰⁴Joann Christine Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," (Evanston: Northwestern University Dissertation, 1984), 23.

¹⁰⁵Ibid. Referring to CD III/1, 203-204.

¹⁰⁶CD III/1, 203-204.

that Paul speaks of the male-female relationship in connection with the relationship between Jesus Christ and his community (Eph. 5:22-33). Male and female together are the image of God.¹⁰⁷

Genesis 2

Barth concludes that Paul's teaching is in agreement with Genesis 1:26-27 and in this manner establishes an analogy of relation which prepares the ground for his further elaboration of the male-female relationship in the specific order of man as A and woman as B in CD III/4.

Barth also discusses the second creation account in Genesis 2 to expand upon Genesis 1. Genesis 2:18-25 is the creation of the woman out of the rib taken from man by God. Here he finds further support for his claim that human creation in the Imago Dei is defined by the statement, "male and female he created them."

Richard Brown states that in his exegesis, "Barth focuses upon the unity and distinction which qualify the relation between man and woman."¹⁰⁸ The second creation story centers on the completion of human creation by the addition of the woman to the man. "Everything aims at the one fact, to wit, that God did not create man alone, as a single human being, but in the unequal duality of

¹⁰⁷Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 23-24. Referring to CD III/1, 204-205.

¹⁰⁸Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics For Human Creative Genetic Engineering," 170. Referring to III/1, 288ff.

male and female."¹⁰⁹

It tells us that "it is not good that the man should be alone" because without the woman , his own humanity is incomplete. Barth states that "[i]f created man were solitary, creation as a whole would not be good, because it would then lack its internal basis in the covenant. To be God's partner in this covenant, man himself needed a partner."¹¹⁰

To be created good, the man needs a being like himself and yet different from him, so that in it he will recognize himself but not only himself, since it is to him a Thou as truly as she is an I and he is to it a Thou as truly as it is an I.¹¹¹

Brown explains that the unity of the man and woman is

disclosed in that she was taken from him and was recognized by him as 'bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.' Moreover, this unity of man as male and female establishes them both as equals. Among the animals, no fit helper was found, because their very servility made them unequal to the task of completing humanity. Only the woman is equal.¹¹²

Even though it is the woman who is needed, and that creation depends on both man and woman to be complete, Barth maintains that the male-female relationship is ordered because it is the woman who is "taken out of" man and the man who "chooses" and acknowledges his partner. Barth states:

The fact that the relationship is not one of reciprocity and equality, that man was not taken out of woman but

¹⁰⁹CD III/1, 288.

¹¹⁰CD III/1, 290.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics For Human Creative Genetic Engineering," 170.

woman out of man . . . must not be misunderstood. The supremacy of the male is not a question of value, dignity or honour. It does not denote a higher humanity of the male.¹¹³

Barth's meaning of "equality" is not quite clear here. His definition does not seem to reflect the common, everyday usage of the term. One can see traces of his dialectic approach in his application of the words "equality" and "inequality".

Cynthia Campbell sheds some light on Barth's understanding of "inequality":

The crux of this distinction seems to be that 'equality' carries more than one meaning for Barth: it denotes rank on the one hand, and 'sameness' or identity on the other. His point is to affirm the first while denying the second: man and woman are never 'the same' even in their common humanity; but they are always, as human beings 'equal'.¹¹⁴

Paul Jewett argues that Barth attempts to underplay or justify this "inequality" by stressing that it is the man who leaves his father and mother to follow his wife. The man becomes "utterly dependent" on the woman for completing his humanity. "In the marriage relationship, by God's will and plan, the man becomes the seeking, desiring, sacrificing one; the 'weaker' one, if you will, who finds his fulfillment in his relationship to the woman."¹¹⁵

For Campbell, Barth is simply stressing "the interdependent

¹¹³CD III/1, 301.

¹¹⁴Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 87.

¹¹⁵Paul Jewett, Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 73. Referring to CD III/1, 305.

character of the male-female relation." The woman is not merely "taken out of" and therefore dependent upon him; both the man and woman are dependent on each other for fulfillment. She says that what must be assumed about the relationship between man and woman is that it is one of "interdependence, reciprocity and mutuality." While "Barth does not indicate this identity with the I-Thou relation at great length," she insists that "the logical implication is clear."¹¹⁶

Barth argues that subordination of the woman must be viewed in the way that it was intended in creation; subordination without humiliation or domination. He states that it was the sin of man which disturbed the male-female relationship.

Humanity became a sexless and therefore an anaemic and finally a soulless ideal hopelessly confronting abstract masculinity on the one side and abstract femininity on the other, and leading to the conflicts between the blind dominion of man and the jealous movement for feminine emancipation.¹¹⁷

We note that, once again, Barth is making use of a common term, in this case, "subordination" and defining it in a different way. We must be careful how we interpret Barth, for it is clear, that many words that he employs cannot be taken on their face value.

Barth brings his discussion of the male-female relationship to a close with an appeal to return to the creation decree of man's

¹¹⁶Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 75.

¹¹⁷CD III/1, 310.

supremacy without domination and the woman's submission without humiliation.

Summary of CD III/1

Barth says that the key to understanding the original Imago Dei is found in the "us" and the "our" of the creation statement of Genesis 1:26. God is one, yet includes within himself the differentiation and relationship of I and Thou. Barth argues from his exegesis of Genesis 1:27 that the image refers to man's creation and being as man and woman. He maintains that an analogy of relation exists between the I and Thou in the divine being, and the being of humanity, male and female. Because the human as creature cannot be "like" God, analogies can only be comparisons of "unlikes."

Barth discusses New Testament passages to demonstrate the I-Thou relationship of Christ to God and to humanity in the Christian community. He concludes that Paul's teaching is in agreement with Genesis 1:26-27 and in this manner establishes an analogy of relation which prepares the ground for his further development of the male-female relationship in the specific order of man as A and woman as B in CD III/4.

Barth also discusses the second creation account in Genesis 2 to elaborate on Genesis 1. While men and women are "equal" before God, they are at the same time "unequal" because of the fact that the woman is the one "brought to" the man, whom the man "chooses."

The man is the initiator and the woman is the one to respond. Barth argues that the subordination of the woman must be viewed in the way that it was intended in creation; subordination without humiliation or domination. He concludes with an appeal to return to the creation ordinance.

CHAPTER III
MALE AND FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS IN
PARADIGM AND PRACTICE
EXPOSITION OF CD III/2

Jesus as a Paradigm for Understanding Human Nature

III/1 deals with the general theme of "Covenant" and the creation of man and woman as co-humanity. III/2 deals entirely with the subject of man. Once again, Barth begins with the covenant. He takes the humanity of Jesus as his paradigm for understanding human nature in general.

Richard Brown stresses that Barth's deep concern is to uncover the real man; the man God created. Barth contends that neither the study of human phenomena nor the exact science of man can lead to the discovery of real man. Barth argues that sin prevents us from knowing the truth about ourselves until we allow ourselves to be told it by God revealed in Christ. The revelation of God asserts that not only are we unable to know ourselves, who and what we are in reality, but also that we are blinded because of our sinful nature. It is impossible for us to see the true nature of humanity as God willed and created it. It is only through the revelation of Jesus Christ that the real man may be found.¹¹⁸

Barth, therefore, rejects the idea of an independent anthropology. Christian anthropology, as compared to all others, is

¹¹⁸Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics For Human Creative Genetic Engineering," 150. Referring to CD III/2, 19-25.

concerned with the human being who is in covenant relation to God through Jesus Christ. Since the covenant relation is fulfilled and only made clear in Jesus Christ, for Barth, the only adequate anthropology is a Christological anthropology.¹¹⁹

Jesus, as a sinless man, reveals the nature of man "in its original form."¹²⁰ It is only in first acquiring knowledge of Jesus as a man that we can then gain an understanding of all other men.¹²¹

Barth discusses the humanity of Jesus from the standpoint of His relation with others. He describes Jesus as being "for" other persons¹²²:

What distinguishes Him as a cosmic being, as a creature, as a true and natural man, is that in existence He is referred to man, to other men, His fellows, and this not merely partially, incidentally or subsequently, but originally, exclusively and totally. When we think of the humanity of Jesus, humanity is to be described unequivocally as fellow-humanity. In light of the man Jesus, man is the cosmic being which exists absolutely for its fellows.¹²³

Barth uses such terms as "deliverer", "neighbor," and "savior"

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 124. Referring to CD III/2, 52.

¹²¹Bromiley, Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth, 124. Referring to CD III/2, 38ff.

¹²²For a detailed discussion of the implications of Jesus as the man "for" man see Stuart D. MacLean, "The Humanity of Man in Karl Barth's Thought," Scottish Journal of Theology 28 (1975), 127-130. See also Eberhard Jungel's discussion of Barth's "Royal Man" in Karl Barth, A Theological Legacy, 127-135.

¹²³CD III/2, 208.

when describing how Jesus is "for" humanity.¹²⁴ Campbell states that the use of such terms

indicate that not only does Jesus come from humanity, but also that his life is dedicated to working on humanity's behalf. In this sense, the being of Jesus is unique: he alone can be savior and deliver (or "for" humanity); the form which this will take for the rest of humanity is that we are "with" one another in the I-Thou relationships.¹²⁵

The way in which Jesus is for other persons corresponds to the relationships which take place within the triune God.

Correspondence and similarity consists in the fact that the man Jesus in His being for man repeats and reflects the inner being or essence of God. . . . There is an analogia relationis. The correspondence and similarity . . . consists in the fact that the freedom in which God posits Himself as the Holy Ghost, is the same freedom as that in which He is the Creator of man Thus the divine original creates for itself a copy in the creaturely world. The Father and the Son are reflected in the man Jesus. There could be no plainer reference to the analogia relationis and therefore the imago Dei in the most central, i.e., the Christological sense of the term.¹²⁶

We would stress, however, that Barth is careful to point out that the relation of God and man is not identical or equal to the relation of Father and Son. Because Jesus is as fully human as he is divine, he is a reflection of the divine but only as an analogia relationis. The image of God is not identical with God; it is similar but also dissimilar. It is, nevertheless, states Barth, a true image:

¹²⁴CD III/2, 210.

¹²⁵Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 47.

¹²⁶CD III/2, 219-221.

The humanity of Jesus, His fellow-humanity, His being for man as the direct correlative of His being for God, indicates, attests and reveals this correspondence and similarity. . . It is this inner being of God which takes form ad extra in the humanity of Jesus, and in this form, for all the disparity of sphere and object, remains true to itself and therefore reflects itself.¹²⁷

Jesus is described in the New Testament as being totally "for" others. Although human beings cannot be "for" others in the same manner as Jesus can, there is a means in which they relate to each other that enables their relationship to Jesus as well. This manner of relating is described as being with others. For it to be possible for Jesus to be totally for others, he had also to be able to be with others. This is where Barth sees a similarity between the structure of Jesus' humanity and the structure of human existence in general.¹²⁸

Barth concludes that human nature is to be understood as co-humanity. Any life which is not determined in this way, Barth defines as "inhumanity".

A man without the co-human, or radically neutral or opposed to the co-human, or under the impression that the co-existence of his co-human has only secondary significance, is a being which ipso facto is fundamentally alien to the man Jesus and cannot have Him as Deliverer and Savior.¹²⁹

For Barth, we were created with the intention of being in

¹²⁷CD III/2, 220.

¹²⁸Elouise Renich Fraser, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Humanity: A Reconstructive Exercise in Feminist Narrative Theology" (Vanderbilt University Dissertation, 1986), 152. See also Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics For Human Creative Genetic Engineering," 163-164.

¹²⁹CD III/2, 227.

relationship. To be human is to be "in encounter." To be human as co-humanity means for Barth to be created for and fulfilled in I-Thou relationships. "I cannot say 'I' even to myself, without also saying 'Thou,' without making that distinction and connexion in relation to another."¹³⁰

Criteria for Every I-Thou Relationship

Barth states that the encounter between I and Thou does not occur in all human activities. There are many activities that are all human such as being born, eating, sleeping, working and playing. However, these do not in themselves confirm humanity since "they tell us nothing about being in encounter and therefore about that which is properly and essentially."¹³¹ Barth maintains that it is possible to take part in all these activities and still be inhuman, since participation in these activities is only the field upon which one may or may not affirm one's true humanity as co-humanity. For Barth,

this whole field with all that takes place or does not take place on it is an empty page on which there has still to be written the answer to the question of the humanity of human being. And this answer is written with the enactment of the history, the realisation of the encounter, in which 'I am as Thou art.'¹³²

Barth identifies and discusses four "decisive and necessary"

¹³⁰CD III/2, 245.

¹³¹CD III/2, 249.

¹³²CD III/2, 250.

categories of co-humanity which are present in every I-Thou relationship.¹³³ In each instance, the element of reciprocity is emphasized. First, the human is a being who looks another directly in the eye. Each person is to be open and candid toward the other. Each person sees the other clearly as he or she is.¹³⁴

Second, being in encounter means the occurrence of speech and hearing which is reciprocal. The I-Thou encounter is a relationship of address and response. It is through speech that we allow others to come to know us. To hear the other is to acknowledge that we are in need of that person and that we accept what that person has to offer.¹³⁵

Third, being in encounter means the giving of mutual assistance. One makes oneself available in order to act on the other's behalf. Offering help to another and the recognition that one is in need of help are essential to the determination of co-humanity.¹³⁶

Finally, being in encounter means doing all of the above gladly. According to Barth, the human cannot choose to be in encounter or not, for we cannot reject relationship. Our only option is to encounter others "gladly" or "reluctantly." It is our

¹³³CD III/2, 250-271. For a more detailed discussion of these categories see MacLean, "The Humanity of Man in Karl Barth's Thought," 137-146. See also Miell, "Barth on Persons in Relationship: A Case for Further Reflection?", 545-547.

¹³⁴CD III/2, 250-252.

¹³⁵CD III/2, 252-260.

¹³⁶CD III/2, 260-265.

sinful nature that allows us to believe that the essence of humanity can be found in isolation, apart from the I-Thou encounter.¹³⁷

Ordering of the Sexes

Barth proceeds to give further treatment to the male-female relation. The fundamental conclusions drawn in III/1 are restated and elaborated with a somewhat different emphasis. His purpose is to define the male-female relationship in terms of order.

Barth begins by restating that humanity in its basic form is co-humanity. It is not human if it is not co-humanity, or if it is not in some way an approximation to being in the encounter of I and Thou. Humanity exists in sexual differentiation. "[W]e cannot say human without having to say male or female. The human exists in this differentiation, in this duality."¹³⁸

[Man's] creatureliness is to be male or female, male and female, and human in this distinction and connexion. He certainly exists in other essential and non-essential differentiations. He is necessarily a child, and this individual as opposed to others. But these distinctions as such are not structural in character. On the other hand, he does not need to be father or mother, brother or sister, young or old, gifted or not gifted, endowed in this way or that, a man of this or that particular time or sphere or race. Even if he is, it is again not on the basis of structural distinction. In all these essential and non-essential but secondary relationships and distinctions, however, he is primarily male or female.¹³⁹

¹³⁷CD III/2, 271.

¹³⁸CD III/2, 286.

¹³⁹CD III/2, 286.

Because humanity was created in differentiation as male or female, human beings cannot get away from the fact that they are in sexual encounter as male and female. This encounter takes place in many ways from casual interactions of everyday life to the life partnership in marriage. Barth states:

It is to be noted that the sphere of this special difficulty and interest, of this play and counter-play of the sexes, is much greater than the circle of what is usually understood more narrowly as sexual love in more or less close connexion with the problem of marriage. In the wider circle around the narrower it is to be found in the relationship of fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, brothers and sisters, and similar relationships it plays its fruitful but perhaps disturbing and even dangerous role in the whole sphere of education and instruction, and the life of churches of all confessions.¹⁴⁰

As suggested, this encounter may prove fulfilling and stimulating or irritating and full of difficulty. In either case, nothing can be known concerning true humanity if one knows nothing about the I and Thou encounter.¹⁴¹ As Barth says,

it is obvious that the encounter between man and woman is fully and properly achieved only where there is the special connexion of one man loving this woman and one woman loving this man in free choice and with a view to a full life-partnership. . . . Here all that we have described as humanity has its proper locus, the home from which it must continually go out and to which it must continually return.¹⁴²

Here, Barth further states that there is a definite order in

¹⁴⁰CD III/2, 288.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Ibid.

their relationship but hesitates to state in concrete terms what this implies:

What distinguishes man from woman and woman from man even in this relationship of super- and subordination is more easily discovered, perceived, respected and valued in the encounter between them than it is defined. It is to be constantly experienced in their mutual exchanges and co-existence.¹⁴³

The Male-Female Relationship as an Analogy of
Christ's Relationship to the Church

Barth turns to the Bible to find support for his understanding of the male-female relationship. From the Old Testament, Barth draws an analogy between the relationship of the God Yahweh-Elohim with his people and the relationship between man and woman.¹⁴⁴

Behind this relationship of man and woman as we meet it in the picture of Genesis 2 and the Song of Songs there stands the controlling original of the relationship between the God Yahweh-Elohim and His people Israel. Behind these passages there stands Old Testament prophecy. And according to the insight which continually breaks through, the sum of all truth and actuality, which is thus also the beginning and end of all things, the secret of creation and its consummation is the very different duality merely reflected in the nature of man—that of God and man in their co-existence in the concrete form of the covenant established by God between Himself and His people Israel. This duality, the covenant, is the

¹⁴³CD III/2, 287.

¹⁴⁴Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 72-73. See also Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 28 and Fraser, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Humanity: A Reconstructive Exercise in Feminist Narrative Theology," 128-129. All referring to CD 291-297.

centre of the Old Testament. And it is the original of which the essence of the human as the being of man and woman can only be the reflection and copy. Man is primarily and properly Yahweh, and woman primarily and properly Israel.¹⁴⁵

In the New Testament, Barth says that the covenant between Jesus Christ and his community existed from the beginning;

it is the first and proper object of the divine will and plan and election and the internal basis of creation. This covenant is the original of the Old Testament original, the relationship between Yahweh and Israel and therefore the original of the relationship between man and woman.¹⁴⁶

Barth points to several New Testament statements of Paul to reinforce the order in the male-female relationship with his analogy between Christ and the Church and Christ's relationship to God in the Trinity.¹⁴⁷

The discussion, once again, focuses on I Cor. 11:1-16.¹⁴⁸ "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord". Going on Paul states, "For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God". These things are said with regard to the question of liturgical order, and headcovering. Paul urges to maintain the distinctions between male and female which involves a

¹⁴⁵CD III/2. 297.

¹⁴⁶CD III/2, 299.

¹⁴⁷CD III/2, 301-316.

¹⁴⁸Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 74-75. See also Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 28-29.

true super- and subordination, which woman as wearer of the veil represents. In verse three, Paul says that Christ is the head of every man and that the head of a woman is her husband. The head of Christ is God. Barth concludes from this statement that both superordination and subordination are proper in Christ. The subordination of woman to man is followed by a statement which talks of the subordination of Christ to God. Barth also makes reference to Phil. 2:5ff to demonstrate that Christ's subordination to God is analogous to woman's subordination to man.¹⁴⁹

Barth states: "Thus it is grounded and explained in Christ whether it speaks of the superordination of man or the subordination of woman. Both superordination and subordination are primarily and properly in Christ."¹⁵⁰

Barth argues that Paul refers back to Genesis 2 in I Cor. 11:7-9,

The determination and limitation of the relationship of man and woman as established in Christ emerge already in the work of creation. Woman is fashioned out of man and for the sake of man. She is not created as he is out of the dust of the earth but (more humanly, we might almost say) out of man himself, in order that he should not be alone but have a helpmeet (vv. 8-9). Thus he is the 'image and glory of God,' yet not alone or without or against the woman, but together with the woman who is his glory (v. 7). This basic order of the human established by God's creation is not accidental or contingent. . . . It is solidly and necessarily grounded in Christ, with a view to whom heaven and earth and finally man were

¹⁴⁹Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 28-29. Referring to CD III/2, 309-311.

¹⁵⁰CD III/2, 311.

created.¹⁵¹

Barth contends that since in Christ all things are created new, "Galatians 3:28 is still valid, in spite of shortsighted exegetes, like the Corinthians themselves, who shake their heads and think they can claim a contradiction".¹⁵² There is mutuality within the male-female relationship, only it exists in the manner in which it is described in I Cor. 11:11-12. Man and woman are equal in the order in which God has appointed man and woman to their proper place. This is the true knowledge of differentiation and mutuality.¹⁵³

The final passage that Barth draws upon to illustrate further the male-female relationship as it is analogous to Christ's relationship to the Christian community is Ephesians 5:22-33, "the locus classicus for the point at issue" in the New Testament.¹⁵⁴ Barth stresses the connection between the relationship of man and woman on the one side and Jesus and his community on the other. From this standpoint, all other biblical passages previously examined can be properly understood. Barth states:

From it we can survey the whole landscape which we have traversed: the New Testament relationship of man and woman in light of the relationship between Christ and the community, and conversely the elucidation of the relationship between Christ and His people by the

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²CD III/2, 312.

¹⁵³Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 76. Referring to CD III/2, 312.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

reference to the man-woman relationship.¹⁵⁵

Ephesians chapter 5 "is the introduction to the so-called Ephesian Haustafel¹⁵⁶, a list of specific admonitions to wives, husbands, children, parents, slaves and masters, as members of the Christian community."¹⁵⁷ The immediate context for the passage is the command of reciprocal subordination as found in verses 18 through 21. "Be filled with the Spirit . . . submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ" (vv. 18,21). This mutual subordination flows from the practical experience of the Gospel, and means that each person "gives to the other that which is proper to the other."¹⁵⁸

The Haustafel, says Barth, "has nothing really to do with patriarchalism, or with a hierarchy of domestic and civil values and powers. It does not give one control over the other, or put anyone under the dominion of the other."¹⁵⁹ Rather, Barth insists that it refers to mutual respect before the Lord.

He is the exalted but also the Lowly, the Lowly but also the Exalted, who causes each to share in His glory but also His burden, His sovereignty but also His service. And here there is only mutual subordination in full reciprocity. In this way order is created within the creaturely sphere, and humanity

¹⁵⁵CD III/2, 313.

¹⁵⁶A term first used in Luther's Catechism, meaning literally "house-table," a table of rules for the Christian household, and referring to Eph. 5:22ff., Col. 3:18f., Tit. 2:5f., I Pet. 2:18f. Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 78.

¹⁵⁷Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 78.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹CD III/2, 313.

established.¹⁶⁰

The order for the relationship of male and female which is established by God in creation, as observed in reference to Genesis 2, is upheld in the relationship between Christ and his Church as illustrated in the Ephesians 5 passage. Barth insists that the woman must be subordinate to the man as the community is subordinate to Christ. The comparison is found in Ephesians 5:23: "For the husband is the head of the wife (statement taken from I Cor. 11:3) even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the Savior of the body." Barth contends that because woman's subordination stands under this comparison, it must be maintained. The woman's subordination to the man is analogous to the Christian community's subordination to Christ.¹⁶¹

Here, the woman's position as subordinate is enhanced. According to Barth, the woman has an advantage in her subordination. The woman represents the Christian community, of which, Jesus Christ is the head.¹⁶² Barth states:

The advantage of the wife, her birthright, is that it is she and not the man who, in relation to her husband and

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 30.

¹⁶²Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 81-82. See also Fraser, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Humanity: A Reconstructive Exercise in Feminist Narrative Theology," 134-135. As well, see Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 30-31 and Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 78-79.

subordination to him, may reflect, represent, and attest to this reality of the community. The exhortation specifically addressed to her is simply a particular form of the basic admonition which applies to all. She is subordinated to her husband as the whole community is to Christ. The whole community can only take up the position in relation to Christ which is proper to the wife in relation to the husband.¹⁶³

Thus, it is the woman who represents the Christian community, not the man. Her obedience is a model of the discipleship and service required of all believers, women and men alike. In reference to this, Paul Jewett states:

Thus, the wife is not less but greater than her husband in the Christian community; not second but first, since the husband has no option but to order himself after the example of his wife, in the church, as she is subordinate in this way.¹⁶⁴

Therefore, what is said to the husband in this passage is said in the context of this admonition to the wife. The attitude of the husband, who as the "head" is "the superior, the first, the leader, the bearer of primary responsibility" is understood in light of the statement "mutual subordination in the fear of Christ." Barth states that "in this respect he is . . . the Author, and the Lord of the community, of the Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23).¹⁶⁵ This is not to mean, however, that the man is to be the lord or the savior of the woman anymore than he is of himself. Christ in his majesty and his lowliness with respect to humanity reflects the particular responsibility of husbands with regard to their wives.

¹⁶³CD III/2, 313.

¹⁶⁴Paul Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 78.

¹⁶⁵CD III/2, 314.

Man is placed in this superior position to guarantee that the order is preserved and that the woman is subordinate to him as unto the Lord. The husband is to love the wife as Christ loves the Church.¹⁶⁶

The relationship between Christ and the Church illustrates the relationship between God and humanity as the covenant-partner of God. For Barth, the relationship between man and woman is a copy of Christ's relationship to the Church and God's relationship to humanity established in creation.¹⁶⁷ Barth states:

For the creation of man and for this climax, for this form of humanity the normative pattern, the basic decree and plan of all plans of God is 'Christ and the community.' This stands inaccessibly before and above the copy of man and woman.¹⁶⁸

This is what Barth calls the "great mystery" of Ephesians 5:32.

Barth concludes his discussion of Ephesians 5 with the following reminder:

Man cannot be the Creator and Savior of men, or the man of the woman. On the other hand, it belongs to the very essence of the copy modelled on this pattern that the man should be with the woman, that he should not will to be without her, and that he should therefore love her as himself.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 78-79. See also Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 108-109. Both Referring to 314.

¹⁶⁷Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 109-110. Referring to CD III/ 2, 315-316.

¹⁶⁸CD III/2, 316.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

Summary of CD III/2

Barth takes the humanity of Jesus as his paradigm for understanding human nature in general. He maintains that real man can only be found through Jesus Christ as the revealing Word of God. Jesus' humanity is discussed from the standpoint of His relation with others. Barth describes Jesus as being "for" others. Although human beings cannot be "for" others in the same way as Jesus can, there is a way in which they relate to each other that makes possible their relationship to Jesus as well. This way of being is described as being with others. In order for Jesus to be totally for others, he had also to be capable of being with others. Barth concludes that human nature is to be understood as co-humanity.

Any life which is not determined in this way, Barth defines as "inhumanity". He proceeds to identify and discuss four "decisive and necessary" categories of co-humanity which are present in every I-Thou relationship.

Next, the fundamental conclusions drawn in III/1 are restated and developed with a somewhat different emphasis. His purpose is to define the male-female relationship in terms of order.

Barth turns to the Bible to reinforce his understanding of the male-female relationship. In the Old Testament, he sees that the relationship of the God Yahweh-Elohim with his people Israel is like the relationship of the man with the woman. He then points to several New Testament statements of Paul to reinforce the order in the male-female relationship with his analogy between Christ and

the church and Christ's relationship to God in the Trinity.

Barth calls the Ephesians 5:22-23 passage "the locus classicus for the point at issue" in the New Testament. Barth stresses the connection between the relationship of man and woman on one side and Jesus and his community on the other. From this standpoint, all other biblical passages can be properly understood. Barth states that the woman must be subordinate to the man as the community is subordinate to Christ. The woman has an advantage in her subordination, says Barth. It is the woman who represents the Christian community, not the man. Her obedience is a model of the discipleship and service required of all believers, women and men alike. In his relationship to his wife as the "head", the husband represents for Barth, "the superior, the first, the leader, the bearer of primary responsibility." The husband's superior position is to insure that the order is maintained and that the wife is subordinate to him as unto the Lord. The husband must love the wife as Christ loves the Church and the community.

CHAPTER IV

THE ETHICS OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

EXPOSITION OF CD III/4

In this section, Barth examines the ethical implications of human sexuality. Expanding upon what he said in CD III/1, and CD III/2, in this section he brings the particular ordering of the male-female relationship to the fore with the male being designated as A and the female as B.

Ethical Freedom and The Command of God

Barth's concept of human freedom figures in very prominently to his whole discussion of the male-female relationship.¹⁷⁰ He speaks about freedom in fellowship with regard to the relationship between man and woman. He states:

As God the Creator calls man to Himself, He also directs him to his fellow-man. The divine command affirms in particular that in the encounter of man and woman, in the relationship between parents and children and outwards from near to distant neighbors, man may affirm, honour and enjoy the other with himself and himself with the

¹⁷⁰Octavius Annan Gaba, "Being and Order: An Analysis of the Relation of Triune Being and Creaturely Order in the Theology of Karl Barth," (Atlanta: Emory University Dissertation, 1984), 173-175. See also Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics For Human Creative Genetic Engineering," 176-182 and Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltman," 32-36. All referring to CD III/4, 116-121.

other.¹⁷¹

Barth goes on to state that man as a covenant-partner of God in creation, is characterized as being in encounter with fellow-man.¹⁷² "His ordination to be in covenant relation with God has its counterpart in the fact that his humanity, the special mode of his being is by nature and essence a being in fellow-humanity."¹⁷³

Barth continues:

As God calls man to Himself, as He summons him to serve Him, He also addresses him concerning his vocation to be a covenant-partner with Himself, and therefore concerning his vocation to be covenant-partner with Himself. . . . He wills that man's being should fulfil itself in the encounter, the relationship, the togetherness of I and Thou. He commands him, invites him and challenges him not merely to allow his humanity as fellow-humanity to be his nature, but to affirm and exercise it in his own decision, in action and omission. He commands him to be what he is. But this means that He takes man so seriously in his vocation to be in covenant with Him that He calls him to freedom in fellowship, i.e., to freedom in fellowship with others.¹⁷⁴

Barth stresses that "He calls him to find himself by affirming the other, to know joy by comforting the other, and self-expression by honouring the other."¹⁷⁵ God is a Triune God who calls humanity to fellow-humanity. He states:

Humanity which is not fellow-humanity is inhumanity. For it cannot reflect but only contradict the determination

¹⁷¹CD III/4, 116.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

of man to be God's covenant-partner, nor can the God who is no Deus solitarius but Deus triunus, God in relationship, be mirrored in a homo solitarius. As God offers man humanity and therefore freedom in fellowship, God summons him to prove and express himself as the image of God--for as such He has created him. This is the deepest and final basis on the form of the divine command which we have now to consider.¹⁷⁶

Therefore, "the first and typical sphere of fellow-humanity, the first and typical differentiation and relationship between man and man, is that between male and female."¹⁷⁷

According to Barth, the relationship between male and female rests upon a structural and functional distinction. To be functionally male and female means to exist within the sexual boundary and limitation particular to each. He states:

We have to say both that man is necessarily and totally man or woman, and that as such and in consequence he is equally necessarily and totally man or woman. He cannot wish to liberate himself from the differentiation and exist beyond his sexual determination as mere man; for in everything that is commonly human he will always be in fact either the human man or the human female.¹⁷⁸

While the male and female exist in distinction, they also exist in unity. Barth further states:

No other relationship is so obvious, self-explanatory and universally valid as that whose force resides precisely in the presupposed underlying otherness. The female is to the male, and the male to the female, the other man and as such fellow-man.¹⁷⁹

The command of God orders that humanity recognize the dualism

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷CD III/4, 117.

¹⁷⁸CD III/4, 118.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

of male and female. Barth states:

Whatever [the command of God] asks of man, it certainly requires him to affirm this natural dualism; not to deny it nor to pervert it, but simply to express and reveal it as it is in his existence. As he does so, this sphere, and man within it, comes under control, and the task of man--for it is his own affair--is to exercise this control. To do so is the act of obedience required of him.¹⁸⁰

Barth adds that when confronted by the divine command, humanity is called to freedom in the encounter of male and female. He states, "As God gives him His command at this point, as He is concerned for him and submits him to that radical relativisation, He gives him here too this freedom."¹⁸¹

Barth sees that the command of God rules out particular ideas concerning the male-female relationship, specifically in marriage.

Barth rejects

the concept of Romantic love in Scheiermacher, the sacramental concept of marriage of the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Churches, the fusion of religion and eroticism in Schubert, the understanding of marriage as 'primary experience' in Bovet, and its divinization in Leenhardt.¹⁸²

Barth goes on to warn of the dangers of focusing our attention on sex within the male-female relationship.¹⁸³ The functional

¹⁸⁰CD III/4, 121.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

¹⁸²Bromiley, Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth, 161. Referring to III/4, 121-128.

¹⁸³Bromiley, Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth, 160. See also Willie Jennings, "Reclaiming the Creature: Anthropological Vision in the Thought of Athanasius of Alexandria and Karl Barth," (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1993), 333-335 and Gaba, "Being and Order: An Analysis of the Relation of Triune Being and Creaturely Order in the Theology of Karl Barth," 184-186. See as

distinction of male and female involves the entire person, not just "the use he makes or does not make of his physical sexual organs."¹⁸⁴ Sexual intercourse is "not that which alone and in itself can make the male male, the female female and therefore man fellow-man."¹⁸⁵ Sexuality must be put in proper perspective; as it pertains to the co-humanity of male and female. Barth states, "All this takes place only in the totality and context of the life of each of the partners including the whole sphere of this encounter and co-existence: man and his fellow, Thou and I as man and woman."¹⁸⁶

Octavius Gaba explains that "while the human sexual act may serve as a means of distinction of male and female, it cannot be made abstractly and absolutely the norm of male-female differentiation." He says that it is here, that "Barth disappoints natural law advocates by claiming once more that it is the Command of God that is the basis of the distinction of male and female."¹⁸⁷

For Barth, the male-female relationship encompasses more than sex and also more than marriage. While he sees marriage as the "center or telos" of the male-female relationship, unmarried people are not excluded from this relation. Barth insists that celibacy

well Willis, The Ethics of Karl Barth, 341-342. All referring to CD III/4, 130-134.

¹⁸⁴CD III/4, 130.

¹⁸⁵CD III/4, 131.

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

¹⁸⁷Gaba, "Being and Order: An Analysis of the Relation of Triune Being and Creaturely Order in the Theology of Karl Barth," 184.

must be seen as an acceptable alternative, as does Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7.¹⁸⁸ It is Barth's intention to discuss the male-female relationship in general, even outside marriage. This view on marriage and sex, with regard to the male-female relationship, would seem to have much to merit it within society today.

Our main concern is Barth's understanding of the male-female relationship in general in the I and Thou encounter. Although his view of marriage is outside the bounds of this thesis, a brief summary is necessary.

According to Barth, marriage is a particular form of the male-female relationship. As such, he provides seven definitive statements concerning this relationship.

The first statement defines marriage as a response to a divine calling. Barth states:

when marriage is seen in the light of the divine command, it is surely evident that the decision for the way of marriage is for some, as the choice of the unmarried state for others, the matter of a supremely particular divine vocation.¹⁸⁹

Therefore, the decision to marry or not are both genuine responses to the divine command. Barth insists that "there is no necessity of nature nor general divine law in virtue of which every man is permitted or commanded to take a wife, or every woman a husband."¹⁹⁰ If marriage is God's will for a couple, it is to be

¹⁸⁸Bromiley, Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth, 160-161. Referring to CD III/4, 140-148.

¹⁸⁹CD III/4, 183.

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

seen as "a special distinction, special divine calling, a gift and grace."¹⁹¹ This "special life-partnership established and maintained between a particular man and a particular woman," must be sustained by love. It is "a matter of repeating in all seriousness the Yes of love." This seriousness of love forms the basis of marriage. Barth states that "when love stands the test of this seriousness, it means that marriage is a partnership which is fulfilled not merely according to the claims of duty, but gladly, joyfully and willingly, in repetition of the Yes of love."¹⁹²

The second statement concerning marriage asserts that it is a task. Barth states:

When marriage is seen in the light of the divine command, and it is plain to men and women united in marriage that here too, and especially, they are called to be obedient to God, then the fulfilment of this life-partnership becomes for them a task. They cannot and will not expect that just because they have entered upon marriage the partnership will already be there, or that marriage will automatically produce it. It does not arise automatically, not even from genuine love itself, let alone without it.¹⁹³

For a marriage to succeed it has to be worked at. It implies a sense of responsibility and commitment on the part of both partners. The goal of marriage is for the husband and the wife to become one. "Marriage as a life-partnership is work - labour at the work of art of their common being."¹⁹⁴ Barth adds that "if anything

¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²CD III/4, 187.

¹⁹³Ibid.

¹⁹⁴CD III/4, 188.

else, whether it be sexuality, male comfort, female domesticity, or even child and family, is permitted to become a principal aim, it is disruptive of marriage."¹⁹⁵

The third statement declares that marriage is complete. Barth states that "when marriage is seen in the light of the divine command, then it is apparent that it is full life-partnership. If the love which lies at its basis is genuine, it willed and wills total and all-embracing fellowship for life."¹⁹⁶ Husband and wife experience freedom in fellowship. Barth states that

the fullness of this life-partnership consists in the fact that man and woman keep in step in this gladly demonstrated and experienced freedom. It is a question of freedom in fellowship, of the genuine freedom which here as elsewhere is identical with responsibility. What is aimed at in this partnership is the concretely fulfilled orientation of the man on the woman and the woman on the man. Marriage as a life-partnership is being and persistence in the orientation of a specific man on a specific woman and 'vice versa'.¹⁹⁷

This, says Barth, has a bearing on fidelity in marriage. He states that "if love was and is genuine, it is capable of this being and persistence in orientation, and it shows itself to be faithful love by achieving it. Faithful love means that one has to do with this other in mutual totality."¹⁹⁸

Barth also stresses the order within the relationship of husband and wife. Barth states that "to marriage, as the perfect

¹⁹⁵CD III/4, 189.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

¹⁹⁷CD III/4, 191.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

life-partnership of one man and one woman, it also belongs that the order in which he is first and she second is valid and effective particularly in this sphere."¹⁹⁹ He concludes this third statement by emphasizing once again that

The main thing is to accept, understand and practise the order. The main thing is not to ignore or violate it. It may be relatively concealed in many other relationships between man and woman, but in marriage it may and should and must be clear and effective. The man who chooses marriage must know that he implicitly accepts this norm. And the man who wishes to live in marriage must know that he cannot do so without living according to this norm.²⁰⁰

The fourth statement concerning marriage is that "when marriage is seen in the light of the divine command, it is clear that it is an exclusive life-partnership."²⁰¹ The couple must not allow any "third party" to interfere with them becoming one. Therefore, "marriage is essentially monogamy." The decision to marry ultimately goes back to the love shared between a man and a woman. Therefore, "if marriage is the proof of love, it is the proof, confirmation and expression of the choice made in love. It is life on the basis of this choice. Hence it is monogamy."²⁰² The husband and wife "accept for life the fact that they are meant for each other and no one else."²⁰³ Marriage is the special reflection or image of the fellowship between God and man. Barth states:

¹⁹⁹CD III/4, 193.

²⁰⁰CD III/4, 194-195.

²⁰¹CD III/4, 195.

²⁰²Ibid.

²⁰³CD III/4, 196.

Not only in marriage, to be sure, but primarily and supremely in marriage, God manifests Himself in His unity as Creator-God and God of the covenant, who as such is the God of free, electing grace. When this is realised and we see marriage and not only marriage but its foundation in love, in the light of the command of this God, then it is not difficult to appreciate that the content of the divine command in respect of marriage is inflexibly monogamy.²⁰⁴

The fifth statement concerns the permanence of marriage. "When marriage is seen in the light of the divine command, then it is clear that it is a lasting life-partnership."²⁰⁵ The bond which exists between husband and wife is meant to endure for their entire lives. Barth states that "to enter upon marriage is to renounce the possibility of leaving it."²⁰⁶ For Barth, "the marriage which rests upon the command of God and therefore upon His calling and gift cannot be dissolved by man even if he wishes."²⁰⁷ He does, however, believe that there may be married couples who have not been joined by God. Therefore, the possibility of divorce does exist for these couples, albeit under very extreme circumstances. Barth states:

It can arise only as an extreme case. But we must not deny that it can ever arise at all. Even this negative decision, the acceptance of a condemnation of a marriage recognized to be final, can be possible and necessary in the freedom and therefore in the obedience of faith.²⁰⁸

Barth's sixth statement with regard to marriage is that "when marriage is seen in the light of God's command, this is decisive

²⁰⁴CD III/4, 197-198.

²⁰⁵CD III/4, 203.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷CD III/4, 207.

²⁰⁸CD III/4, 211.

for the question of its genesis."²⁰⁹ While "it is not their love for each other but God's calling and gift which is the true basis of marriage," marriage as God intended it, will have its genesis in the "specific and mutual recognition, choice and love of two human beings of opposite sexes."²¹⁰ Marriage is a special image of the electing love of the Covenant between God and man, Yahweh and his people and Jesus Christ and his community. The specific love between a husband and wife is made up of the

free decision in which a man and woman in marriage may engage in mutual understanding, self-giving and desire as they are joined together by God in the life-partnership of marriage - and therefore called and endowed to lived for one another.²¹¹

For Barth, marriage is "something which can be ventured only in faith in the divine wisdom and grace."²¹² The love and desire which exist between husband and wife, within this context, can properly and legitimately be called "eros."²¹³ The desire that one partner has for the other is "sanctified by the command of God." Barth adds:

If the observance of these standards and the fulfilment of these conditions constitutes true love between man and woman, united not merely in 'eros' but also and primarily in 'agape,' in the Lord and in the community of His brethren.²¹⁴

²⁰⁹CD III/4, 213.

²¹⁰CD III/4, 214.

²¹¹CD III/4, 218.

²¹²Ibid.

²¹³CD III/4, 219.

²¹⁴CD III/4, 223.

The seventh, and final statement concerning marriage is that "when marriage is seen in the light of the divine command, this finally implies that its eventuality must have the character of a responsible act outwards in relation to those around."²¹⁵ Barth first discusses the institutional aspect of marriage. "This outward responsibility of marriage is symbolised in its external form, and from this standpoint it includes the institutional act and status of marriage."²¹⁶ He warns that the wedding ceremony cannot be equated with marriage for "a wedding is only the regulative confirmation and legitimation of a marriage before and by society. It does not constitute marriage."²¹⁷

Marriage also has a domestic aspect. Marriage presents itself as the "foundation of a distinct and special circle, a family, a new sociological unity which can be broadened by the addition of children."²¹⁸ There is a legal aspect as well. "The state demands notification, ratification and official proclamation."²¹⁹

Finally, marriage has an ecclesiastical side. Barth states that "it is of importance to make clear in some special formal way the responsibility of a marriage concluded in the sight of God as a responsibility before the Christian community."²²⁰ Barth

²¹⁵CD III/4, 224.

²¹⁶CD III/4, 225.

²¹⁷Ibid.

²¹⁸CD III/4, 224.

²¹⁹CD III/4, 227.

²²⁰CD III/4, 228.

maintains that the "conclusion and existence of a marriage honors or dishonors, promotes or disturbs, edifies or scandalizes the whole community."²²¹

Barth concludes his treatment of marriage by stating what true observance of the command involves.

He makes three points: (1) It means acknowledging the validity of the command. (2) It then means recognizing one's failure in relation to it. (3) it means allowing oneself to be raised up and directed to a willing and doing of what is commanded. Thus the final word can be one of confidence. He who commands not only judges but also forgives, heals, helps, so that 'even where man does not keep the command, the command keeps man.'²²²

Faithfulness to One's Own Sex

Barth maintains that God commands three principles with regard to the male-female relationship of structural and functional differentiation.²²³ First, God commands that the distinction of the sexes should be maintained. Man and woman must acknowledge and

²²¹Ibid.

²²²Bromiley, Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth, 162-163. Referring to CD III/4, 231-240.

²²³Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 81. See also Bromiley, Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth, 161 and W.A. Whitehouse, "The Command of God the Creator: An Account of Karl Barth's Volume on Ethics," Scottish Journal of Theology 5 (1952), 60. See as well, Gaba, "Being and Order: An Analysis of the Relation of Triune Being and Creaturely Order in the Theology of Karl Barth," 174-199, Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 37-45 and Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics For Human Creative Genetic Engineering," 170-183. All Referring to CD III/4, 149-181.

accept their sex. Barth states:

We may begin with the simplest point that since man has been created by God as male and female, and stands before God in this Either-Or, everything that God wills and requires of him is contained by implication in this situation, and the question of good and evil in his conduct is measured by it. God His Creator requires that he should be genuinely and fully the one or the other, male or female, that he should acknowledge his sex instead of trying in some way to deny it, that he should rejoice in it rather than be ashamed of it, that he should fruitfully use its potentialities rather than neglect them, that he should stick to its limits rather than seek in some way to transcend them.²²⁴

Barth refers again to the second creation story in Genesis 2:18 to speak of the creation of male and female.²²⁵

And the Lord said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him' (Gen. 2:18), i.e., a being of his own species, but within this species fundamentally different, so that in it he can see himself, but as reflected in another. He requires this helpmeet not for this or that end but for his life as a man. It would not be good for him - indeed, he would not be man - without it. His own creation and existence as a man would not be complete without the creation and co-existence of this helpmeet.²²⁶

Barth goes on to state the following:

He can only be an I through and for this Thou. The Thou which is not an I and therefore constitutive for the I is woman. Thus man in his divinely created sexuality is a similitude of the covenant, which rests upon the fact that God Himself does not want to be alone but with man.²²⁷

²²⁴CD III/4, 149.

²²⁵See Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 37. Referring to CD III/4, 149-150.

²²⁶Ibid.

²²⁷Ibid.

Therefore, the creation of humanity as male and female relates to the fact that God exists in relationship with humanity and within himself, in the intra-trinitarian relationship.

Humanity created as male and female also means that there is a particular order within the male-female relationship; an order that must be acknowledged. Barth states:

No shame can cling to the nature of man created by God, to male and female as He created them, to the due sequence and order of their relationship. This can never be an object of shame. . . . On this basis the command of God the Creator in the sex-relationship has always the dimension that man and woman must both of them be what they are, the man accepting his sex and the woman hers.²²⁸

Man and woman exist in differentiation and they are to be true to this differentiation. Barth, however, does not want to describe the differences between men and women for he says that they are more easily experienced than described. "What God's command wills for man and woman is that they should be faithful to this their nature and to the special gift and duty indicated in and by it."²²⁹ Barth states that he rejects any kind of "phenomenology or typology"²³⁰ of the sexes." He is particularly critical of Emil Brunner and Bovet who attempt to assign specific characteristics to the sexes. Barth provides Brunner's use of sexual typologies as an

²²⁸CD III/4, 150.

²²⁹CD III/4, 152.

²³⁰"Typologies of the sexes are claims to ontological differences between men and women displayed in some so-called universal [or unifying] characteristics of men and women." Taken from Jennings, "Reclaiming the Creature: Anthropological Vision In the Thought of Athanasius of Alexandria and Karl Barth", 337.

example of the kind of typology that he rejects:

The man is the one who produces, he is the leader; the woman is receptive, and she preserves life; it is the man's duty to shape the new; it is the woman's duty to write it and adapt it to that which already exists. The man has to go forth and make earth subject to him, the woman looks within and guards the hidden unity. The man must be objective and universalize, woman must be subjective and individualize; the man must build, the woman adorns; the man must conquer, the woman must tend; the man must comprehend all with his mind, the woman must impregnate all with the life of her soul. It is the duty of man to plan and to master, of the woman to understand and to unite.²³¹

Barth states that no such generalizations can be made: "They cannot be stated in such a way that probably every third man and certainly every second woman does not become agitated and protest sharply against the very idea of seeing themselves in these sketches."²³² Willie Jennings states that

For the most part, the use of typologies attempts to display the rationality of the male/female relation. However, as Barth detects, this attempt builds on an illusion. Barth's realization that this and all similar attempts are illusionary is not based on a total rejection of any distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Rather, Barth's realization seems to be rooted in recognizing the danger of moving away from the creaturely character of this relationship. We move away from this character once we define female and male on the basis of an assumed universality and autonomy of the relation isolated from covenant with the triune God. This assumption becomes the ground of ideological constructions of male and female roles.²³³

Barth maintains that the male and female are really distinct and that the order of their relationship is part of the command of

²³¹CD III/4, 152.

²³²CD III/4, 153.

²³³Jennings, "Reclaiming the Creature: Anthropological Vision In the Thought of Athanasius of Alexandria and Karl Barth," 338.

God. He argues that the sexes cannot exchange places with one another. Barth states:

Each man and woman owes it not only to himself but also to the other always to be faithful to his own sexual characteristics. Fellowship is always threatened when there is a failure at this point either on the one side or the other. Of course, it is not a question of keeping any special masculine or feminine standard. . . . Just because the command of God is not bound to any standard it makes this distinction all the more sharply and clearly. This distinction insists upon being observed. . . . The command of God will always point man to his position and woman to hers.²³⁴

Barth continues, "in every situation, in face of every task and every conversation, their functions and possibilities, when they are obedient to the command, will be distinctive and diverse, and will never be interchangeable."²³⁵

Barth refers once again to Paul in I Cor. 11, with regard to the woman refusing to wear the veil to support his point of faithfulness to one's own sex.²³⁶ He states that

The Command of the Lord does not put anyone, man or woman, in a humiliating, dishonourable or unworthy position. It puts both man and woman in their proper place. Interpretations may vary as to where this place is, for the Lord is a living Lord and His command is ever new.²³⁷

He adds that

The essential point is that the woman must always and in

²³⁴CD III/4, 154.

²³⁵Ibid.

²³⁶Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 40. Referring to CD III/4, 156.

²³⁷CD III/4, 156.

all circumstances be woman; that she must feel and conduct herself as such and not as a man; that the command of the Lord, which is for all eternity, directs both man and woman to their own proper sacred place and forbids all attempts to violate this order.²³⁸

In faithfulness to one's own sex, Barth criticizes all efforts to overcome the differences between men and women. Barth condemns bi-sexuality and abstract humanity, therefore, rejecting the work of Nicholas Berdyaev²³⁹ and the feminist Simone de Beauvoir²⁴⁰ who both share an androgynous view of sexuality. Since this is the case, the question of what constitutes the sexual distinction of male and female arises. Barth must respond by saying that the distinction of male and female is to be found in nature. We are reminded by Octavius Gaba that, "these are difficult words for Barth to say, given his denouncing of natural distinctions (natural law) and the possibility of knowing beforehand the content of the differentiation of male and female."²⁴¹

No Humanity Without Co-Humanity

Barth proceeds to discuss the second principle which defines the male-female relationship. He states:

Looking now in the opposite direction, we maintain that in obedience to the divine command there is no such thing

²³⁸Ibid.

²³⁹CD III/4, 159.

²⁴⁰CD III/4, 161.

²⁴¹Gaba, "Being and Order: An Analysis of the Relation of Triune Being and Creaturely Order in the Theology of Karl Barth," 184.

as a self-contained and self-sufficient male life or female life. In obedience to the divine command, the life of man is ordered, related and directed to that of the woman, and that of the woman to that of the man.²⁴²

Barth states further that, "One cannot occupy it, nor fulfill the requirement of fidelity to one's sex without being aware of woman if one is a man or of man if a woman."²⁴³

With regard to the "freedom in the community of man and woman," Barth examines the implications of Galatians 3:28.²⁴⁴ He argues that the truth of this passage is that

in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, which means that like Jew and Gentile, or slave and free, they are one in him, and stand upon an equal footing. But if they are one in him, standing upon an equal footing, this means that they are what they are for themselves as they are ordered, related and directed to one another. The Jew is a Jew in the Lord only, but precisely, to the extent that he confronts and is confronted by the Greek. The free man is free in the Lord only, but precisely, to the extent that the slave is associated with him and he with the slave. Similarly the male is a male in the Lord only, but precisely, to the extent that he is with the female, and the female likewise. That they are one in the Lord holds them together. It allows and commands them to be together.²⁴⁵

He adds that

it is the basis of their distinction, which is rooted in the fact wherein they have their essence, namely, that they are directed to be in fellowship. Because their freedom is that which they have from and before and for

²⁴²CD III/4, 163.

²⁴³Ibid.

²⁴⁴Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics For Human Creative Genetic Engineering," 183. See also Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 42-43.

²⁴⁵CD III/4, 164-165.

God, therefore it can take shape only in their fellowship with each other, and their humanity can consist concretely only in the fact that they live in fellow-humanity, male with female and female with male.²⁴⁶

Moreover, "every right of man and woman stands and falls with the observance and maintenance of this rule, and every wrong consists in its contravention."²⁴⁷ Richard Brown comments that

it is easy to sense here why Barth would have affirmations of respect mixed in as a complementary notion of freedom. Such affirmations are seen to arise out of the context of man's 'freedom for life'.²⁴⁸

According to Barth, true humanity can only be achieved in the relationship of male and female as they interact, one with the other. This definition appears to exclude all other relationships.

Barth states:

As against this, everything which points in the direction of male or female seclusion, or of religious or secular orders or communities, or of male or female segregation - if it is undertaken in principle and not consciously and temporarily as an emergency measure - is obviously disobedience. All due respect to the comradeship of a company of soldiers! But neither men nor women can seriously wish to be alone, as in clubs and ladies' circles.²⁴⁹

Barth also rejects permanent relationships between people of the same sex. He describes homosexuality as a "physical, psychological and social sickness."²⁵⁰ Barth sees all relationships in terms of

²⁴⁶CD III/4, 165.

²⁴⁷Ibid.

²⁴⁸Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics for Human Creative Genetic Engineering," 183.

²⁴⁹CD III/4, 165.

²⁵⁰CD III/4, 167.

the male-female relationship.

Male and Female in an Order of A and B

This brings us to Barth's discussion of the third principle in the male-female relationship which is that of order.

According to Barth, humanity was created as male and female and as such, they each stand in a particular position in a definite order.²⁵¹ Barth states:

The disjunction and the conjunction of man and woman, of their sexual independence and sexual interrelationship, is controlled by a definite order. As the attitude and function of the man and those of the woman must not be confused and interchanged but faithfully maintained, and as on the other hand they must not be divorced and played off against each other but grasped and realized in their mutual relatedness, so they are not to be equated, nor their relationship reversed. They stand in a sequence. It is in this that man has his allotted place and woman hers.²⁵²

Barth's ordering of the sexes is given its full expression in his designation of man as A and woman as B. He states:

Man and woman are not an A and a second A whose being and relationship can be described like the two halves of an hour glass, which are obviously two, but absolutely equal and therefore interchangeable. Man and woman are an A and a B, and cannot, therefore, be equated. In inner dignity and right, and therefore in human dignity and right, A has not the slightest advantage over B nor does it suffer

²⁵¹Clifford Green notes that it is Barth's concept of order that is responsible for the charge that Barth considers women as "ontologically subordinate" to men. Green, "Liberation Theology? Karl Barth on Women and Men" Union Seminary Quarterly Review 29 (Spring and summer 1974), 227.

²⁵²CD III/4, 168-169.

the slightest disadvantage.²⁵³

Male and female are "equal" in "inner dignity" but "unequal" in that they are different and occupy a particular and individual position which cannot be exchanged.

Barth proceeds to expand upon his definition of equality within the male-female relationship. He affirms that

man and woman are fully equal before God and therefore as men and therefore in respect of the meaning and determination, the imperilling, but also the promise, of their human existence. They are also equal in respect to their mutual dependence upon each another. They stand or fall together. They become and are free or unfree together.²⁵⁴

Barth continues:

They are claimed and sanctified by the command of God together, at the same time, with equal seriousness, by the same free grace, to the same obedience and the reception of the same benefits.²⁵⁵

Nevertheless, the fact remains, says Barth, that in this regard "there is no simple equality." He states that "they are claimed and sanctified as man and woman, each for himself, each in relation to the other in his own particular place, and therefore in such a way that A is not B but A, and B is not another A but B." It is at this point, Barth argues, that there is an irreversible "order outside which man cannot be man, nor woman be woman, either in themselves

²⁵³CD III/4, 169.

²⁵⁴Ibid.

²⁵⁵Ibid.

or in their mutual orientation and relationship."²⁵⁶

Clifford Green insists that there are translation problems with the paragraphs discussing order, particularly here in III/4. Barth uses a variety of meanings for Gleichheit: equality, sameness, and similarity. Barth seems to assert equality but denies sameness and interchangeability as in the above passage. He claims that translators use "equality" when they should use sameness as in the phrase "there is no simple equality". It should read "there is no simple sameness." This error makes Barth contradict himself and appear to deny the equality of the sexes.²⁵⁷

Like the letters A and B, they are always repeated in the same sequence: "A precedes B, and B follows A. Order means succession. It means preceding and following. It means super- and subordination."²⁵⁸ Barth argues that

man does not enjoy any privilege or advantage over woman, nor is he entitled to any kind of self-glorification, simply because in respect to the order he is man, and therefore A, and thus precedes and is superior in relation to man.

Rather, Barth insists that

this order simply directs him to the position which if he is obedient he can occupy only in humility, or materially only as he is ordered, related and directed to woman in preceding her, taking the lead as the inspirer, leader

²⁵⁶Ibid.

²⁵⁷Green, "Liberation Theology? Karl Barth on Women and Men," 229. Green also mentions other errors in this section.

²⁵⁸CD III/4, 169.

and initiator in their common being and action.²⁵⁹

"Only as he accepts her as fellow-humanity, only together with her, can he be the first in his relationship to her--the first in sequence which would have no meaning if she did not follow and occupy her own place in it."²⁶⁰

Barth argues that the woman does not "come short of man in any way, nor renounce her right, dignity and honour." Because she is woman, and therefore B, she is necessarily behind and subordinate to man. This order directs her to her place; a place of which she should be proud and accept in freedom like the man. "She, too, has to realise that she is ordered, related and directed to man and has thus to follow the initiative which he must take." Barth continues by saying that, "properly speaking, the business of women, her task and function, is to actualise the fellowship in which man can only precede her, stimulating, leading and inspiring."²⁶¹ The woman is "the second, the led, the one who must follow up the initiative."²⁶²

Barth, however, continues to stress the inner equality of man and woman:

When it is a question of the true order which God the Creator has established, succession, and therefore precedence and following, super- and sub-ordination, does not mean any inner inequality between those who stand in this succession and are subject to this order. It does

²⁵⁹CD III/4, 170.

²⁶⁰Ibid.

²⁶¹CD III/4, 171.

²⁶²CD III/4, 173.

indeed reveal their inequality. But it does not do so without immediately confirming their equality. In so far as it demands subjection and obedience, it affects equally all whom it concerns. It does not confer any privilege or do any injustice. It lays a duty on all, but it gives to all their right. It does not deny honour to any, but gives to each his own honour.²⁶³

With regard to the order, which is not merely a self-imposed order but an order in the image of the Covenant which exists between Creator and creature, Jesus Christ and Church, Octavius Gaba insists that Barth

reverts to his modalistic christology in which real distinctions and differences may be reduced to a monistic unity, e.g., Jesus Christ the Lord, to God the Absolute I or Subject. Barth's modalistic christology allows him, in Christ, to ignore the domination of the super- and subordination of male over female, and to regard them on equal footing. The reasoning of this kind of modalistic christology is similar to that of the Hegelian logic which in spite of the obvious disparity and injustice of the Master-slave relation, is able to regard each as free, and to treat each as if both were on an equal footing.²⁶⁴

In relation to the order, Barth refers to the Epistles of Paul. He refers to passages already discussed in III/1, and III/2 to describe the specific ordering of man as A and woman as B, as grounded in Christ.²⁶⁵

Barth focuses on the Greek verb used to describe the woman's relationship to the man. Literally it means "'to stand under,' and

²⁶³CD III/4, 170.

²⁶⁴Gaba, "Being and Order: An Analysis of the Relation of Triune Being and Creaturely Order in the Theology of Karl Barth," 190-191.

²⁶⁵Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 79-80. See also Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 48-50.

translated, 'to submit to,' 'to be in subjection to,' 'to be subject to,' 'to keep one's place.'²⁶⁶ He states that subordination is the recurrent term for the description of woman's relation to man in passages I Cor. 14:34, Col. 3:18, Eph. 5:22, 24, I Tim. 2:11, Titus 2:5 and I Peter 3:1. Barth explains that

What is here expected of women in their relation to men - and mostly, but not exclusively, of wives towards their husbands - is in no sense to be conceived on the analogy of the relationship between subject and prince, subordinate and superior, or chattel and owner. Of course, the word does speak of subordination, but in such a way that the emphasis is on a mutual adaption and co-ordination.²⁶⁷

We would stress that he states that the authority to which woman bows in her subordination to man is not that of the man, per se, but rather to that of the order to which both are subject. Barth adds that "as far as man in his sphere is obedient to the direction of the same Lord . . . he subordinates himself to woman." He stresses that "it is nowhere said that men should assume a position of superiority in relation to women, but that they should love them (Col. 3:19, Eph. 5:25)."²⁶⁸

With regard to the woman and her place as B, Barth further states that:

Women are exhorted to and invited to accept their subordination to men not merely as a given fact but in clear self-consciousness, with free will and full responsibility, and especially to carry it out in the obedience of faith. It takes place in a free decision. And finally it is their decision, not in respect to men,

²⁶⁶Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 79.

²⁶⁷CD III/4, 172.

²⁶⁸Ibid.

but of the Lord and His ordinance. This subordination of woman is primarily and essentially to the Lord and only secondarily and unessentially to man.²⁶⁹

The relation of the woman to the man is only a special form of obedience which the church owes to Jesus Christ.²⁷⁰ We see here that Barth is drawing an analogy between the woman's subordination to the man and the Church's obedience to Christ.

Barth stresses that the subordination is real and it cannot be avoided. He makes reference once again to I Cor. 11:3 (Eph. 5:23) which says that the man is the head of the woman.

In I Cor. 11:3 "the statement stands between the two Christological statements: The head of Christ is God and the head of every man is Christ."²⁷¹ Christ represents woman's subordination to Christ's subordination to God. He states:

Paul here asserts the existence of a ladder, man being for woman what Christ is for him and God for Christ, so that woman's relationship to Christ and God is mediated through her relationship to man, is not only intrinsically absurd but excluded by the order. This makes it plain that both the superiority and also the subordination in question first take place in Christ himself.²⁷²

Barth illustrates that it is Christ, not man, who is the basis of all subordination in the male-female relationship.

On the one hand, Christ is the [head] of all authority and all power (Col. 2:10), and therefore that of man. As the visible image of the invisible God, and therefore as the firstborn of the whole created world, He is the basis

²⁶⁹Ibid.

²⁷⁰Ibid.

²⁷¹Ibid.

²⁷²CD III/4, 173.

and sum of all authority in the world of creation. In incomparable exaltation, He stands above the dignity of man, and if the latter is a bearer of an [authority] in relation to woman, this authority does not belong properly to him but to Christ, whom he can only attest and represent as the true bearer of [authority].²⁷³

Barth states that the woman is "surpassed in inferiority by the same Lord who surpasses the superiority of man. And if she has not the [authority] to man . . . she attests and expresses the incomparable lowliness of Christ."²⁷⁴

That the man is the head of the woman is therefore true in the unity between the deity and humanity, the sovereignty and service, the majesty and humility of the Lord. It is defined and limited by the superiority and inferiority which are actualised in Him.²⁷⁵

Therefore, if the man is to be the head of the woman this means that he is "the first, the leader, the initiator, the representative of the order which embraces them both." For the woman, this means that she is "the second, the led, the one who must follow up the initiative, standing in order represented by him."²⁷⁶ Barth stresses that "their adaption to the order of which Jesus Christ is the Lord can lead neither to an over-estimation and glorification of man, nor give occasion to the suppression and oppression of woman. It is the order of freedom for both."²⁷⁷

²⁷³Ibid.

²⁷⁴Ibid.

²⁷⁵Ibid.

²⁷⁶Ibid.

²⁷⁷CD III/4, 173-174.

Barth proceeds to discuss Ephesian 5:23, the other passage in which man is called the head of the woman. He mentions that it differs from I Cor. 11 by the fact that it addresses the particular relationship between husband and wife but insists that the ordinance of marriage has exemplary significance for the entire relation between man and woman.²⁷⁸

Barth points to the main statement of verse 23, "even as Christ is the head of the Church," to illustrate the correspondence between the relationship of woman with regard to man and the Church with regard to Christ. Barth sees that the subordination of woman to man is grounded in Christ. Man is the head of the woman in the same way that Christ is the head of the Church. It is the woman not the man who represents the Church's obedience and subordination to Christ. Barth states:

The concretely expressed reason for the order in question is thus characterised as obligatory on both sides, and therefore it is primarily the man who is summoned to assume and maintain his proper place within this order. It is also to be noted that especially since woman here is described as the body of man, and as such compared with the community in its relation to Christ, the advantage in this case seems to lie with the woman in her subordination to man.²⁷⁹

The woman's call to submission is "a special form of the basic exhortation addressed to all Christians". She is the model that others are to follow. Barth states:

A kind of primacy of woman not only in relation to man but to all these others emerges in the fact that she especially is invited to subordinate herself, for as she

²⁷⁸CD III/4, 174.

²⁷⁹Ibid.

does so, she is the prototype of the community in its obedience to Jesus Christ.²⁸⁰

The Strong Man and the Mature Woman

Campbell makes the following point with regard to Barth's use of the term subordination:

Because Barth is careful to place limitations on the meaning of subordination (and superordination), specification of these terms in actual human conduct is somewhat difficult. Indeed, Barth seems to avoid specificity in an attempt to avoid abuse. As with most of his ethical considerations, the 'order' between women and men is a 'command' of God which cannot be ignored and which also cannot be confused with the encrustations of social customs. The most important, positive statement Barth can make is that the command is, in all circumstances, to maintain the order itself, because through order come both dignity and worth.²⁸¹

Barth states that the divine command will "always require from man that he should observe and maintain this order, whatever and in whatever circumstances man and woman meet and live together."²⁸²

According to Barth,

The man who confronts the woman in accordance with this order and therefore in obedience is always the strong man, which means the man who is conscious of his special responsibility for the maintenance of this order, and is engaged in practising it. It should be noted that it is not a question of his manly dignity and honour, even less of his masculine wishes and interests, but rather of his

²⁸⁰CD III/4, 175.

²⁸¹Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 85.

²⁸²CD III/4, 176.

masculine responsibility for this order."²⁸³

The strong man will encourage the woman to assume her role.

He will not leave it to chance whether the order subsists and prevails. Nor will he wait for woman to do her part in serving it. On the contrary, he will forestall her in this.²⁸⁴

The strong man will not display an attitude of superiority toward his wife.

And because for him, too, it is only a question of service, he will do so without arrogance or pretentiousness, but naturally and without embarrassment. In doing so, he will not feel superior to woman. He will really be superior only in so far as he will primarily accept as his own a concern for the right communion of the sexes as secured by this order, and therefore for the order itself.²⁸⁵

For Barth, the strong man corresponds to the mature woman.

This is the woman

whose only thought is to take up the position which falls to her in accordance with this order, desiring nothing better than that this order should be in force, and realising that her own independence, honour and dignity, her own special wishes and interests, are best secured within it.²⁸⁶

The mature woman is not resentful but content in her assigned position in relation to the man.

She feels no sense of inferiority or jealousy in relation to her position. She will not just accept the man's concern for the order and for herself, but she will be joyful and take pride in being a woman alongside man

²⁸³Ibid.

²⁸⁴CD III/4, 176-177.

²⁸⁵CD III/4, 177.

²⁸⁶Ibid.

and in fellowship with him.²⁸⁷

Barth states that "if things go well, the strong man will summon woman to this maturity, and the mature woman will summon the man to be a strong man."²⁸⁸

Barth proceeds to paint a contrasting picture of the man and woman who are disobedient to this order. The weak man is a tyrant.

The tyrant is always disobedient in relation to this order. He need not be cruel or bad-tempered. There are quiet, gentle, amiable, easy-going tyrants who suit women only too well, and it is an open question in which form the male tyrant is worse or more dangerous. The distinctive characteristic of the tyrannical as opposed to the strong man is that he does not serve the order but makes the order serve himself. It interests him only in so far as he falsely supposes that it confers distinction upon him and gives him an advantage over woman. He changes it into an instrument for the seizing and exerting of power in favour of his supposed masculine dignity and honour, wishes and interests. It is not for him a duty, but a need and a pleasure, to take precedence of woman. It is for him an end in itself to take advantage of her.²⁸⁹

The disobedient woman is the complacent woman who "plays up to him allowing such behavior to impress and please her, and in fact actually inviting it."²⁹⁰ She is "his pliable kitten, his flattering mirror." She forgets that she, too, has a role to play in maintaining the order.²⁹¹

A male-female relationship which is not based on the proper

²⁸⁷Ibid.

²⁸⁸Ibid.

²⁸⁹CD III/4, 177-178.

²⁹⁰CD III/4, 178.

²⁹¹Ibid.

understanding and application of the order will only lead to "weakness, rebelliousness and a struggle for power."²⁹² For Barth, the order is maintained only by the strong man and the mature women who in ultimate submission to Christ, serve the order together.²⁹³

Summary of CD III/4

Barth talks of freedom in fellowship, in the male-female relationship. He states that man is destined to be a covenant-partner of God in creation, thus this characterizes man's being as being in encounter with fellow-man. God is a triune God who calls humanity to fellow-humanity.

Barth reminds us that the male-female relationship rests upon a structural and functional distinction. He adds that when faced by the divine command, humanity is directed to freedom in the encounter of male and female. In light of this, Barth sees that the command of God rules out certain views of the male-female relationship, particularly in marriage. Barth also warns against an

²⁹²Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 54. Referring to III/4, 178-180.

²⁹³For further discussion on Barth's strong man and mature woman see Gaba, "Being and Order: An Analysis of the Relation of Triune Being and Creaturely Order in the Theology of Karl Barth," 194-196. See also Jennings, "Reclaiming the Creature: Anthropological Vision In the Thought of Anthanasius of Alexandria and Karl Barth," 367-368 and Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Trinity," 87-88.

overemphasis on the male-female relationship, particularly on sex within the relation. Sexuality must be put in proper perspective. For Barth, marriage is a form of the male-female relationship. He provides seven definitive statements.

Barth maintains that God commands three principles with regard to the male-female relationship. The first is faithfulness to one's own sex. Within this context, he says that he rejects any kind of phenomenology or typology of the sexes. Barth reinforces his point of faithfulness to one's sex with reference again to Paul in I Cor. 11, with women refusing to wear the veil. He criticizes all attempts to overcome the differences between men and women condemning bi-sexuality, homosexuality and abstract humanity.

Barth proceeds to discuss the second principle which defines the male-female relationship. True humanity can only be achieved in the relationship of male and female, as man relates to woman and as woman relates to man.

With regard to the freedom in the community of men and women, Barth examines Galatians 3:28. According to Barth, this passage is still true. The difference is that for Barth, being one in Christ, and standing upon an equal footing means that male and female are what they are for themselves, as they are ordered, related and directed to one another.

The third principle of the male-female relationship is that humanity was created as male and female and as such, they each stand in a particular position in a definite order.

Barth's ordering of the sexes is given its full expression in

his designation of man as A and woman as B. He states that male and female are equal in "inner dignity" but "unequal" in that they are different and occupy a particular and individual position which cannot be exchanged. He stresses that they are equal in respect to their mutual dependence upon each other.

Like the letters A and B, they are always repeated in the same sequence. Order means succession. Therefore, the male is called to be the inspirer, leader and initiator. The woman is the second, the led, the one who must follow up the initiative. This order simply directs both to their proper position. Man is to occupy his position in humility. The woman is to be proud of her position and accept her place in freedom like the man.

In relation to the order, Barth refers to the Epistles of Paul and states that subordination is the recurrent term for the description of woman's relation to man. Barth argues that the word must be interpreted as meaning mutual adaption and co-ordination. The authority to which woman bows in her subordination to man, is not to that of the man, per se, but rather to that of the order to which both are subject. Barth illustrates that Christ is the basis of all subordination in the male-female relationship.

Barth proceeds to discuss Ephesians 5:23 drawing an analogy between the subordination of woman to man and the Christian community's subordination to Christ.

Barth states that the divine command will always require that the man observe and maintain this order, no matter the circumstances in which man and woman are together. According to

Barth, the order is maintained only by the strong man and the mature woman who in ultimate submission to Christ, serve the order together.

CHAPTER V

Evaluation and Critique of Karl Barth's Treatment of the Male-Female Relationship

The first part of this chapter deals with a number of proposed problems related to Barth's understanding of the male-female relationship. They are divided into subsections according to subject area. Each section is followed by a discussion on how Barth would respond to these criticisms. Each section concludes with an evaluation of the preceding arguments. The second part discusses the positive aspects of Barth's theology and its relevance for today. A third and final part draws together the elements in the preceding sections and offers some further remarks by way of a conclusion.

PART I

The Problem of Analogy

Barth draws an analogy between Christ's subordination to God the Father on the cross with woman's subordination to man. Man corresponds to God the Father and woman corresponds to Christ. However, Joann Ford, Elouise Fraser and Emma Justes argue that the male-female relationship cannot correspond to the divine-human relationship represented in Christ.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 97. See also, Fraser, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Humanity: A Reconstructive Exercise in Feminist Narrative Theology." See also

Barth refers to Phil. 2:6f to illustrate Christ's obedience on the cross. Christ is the foundation of all subordination in the realm of creation. Barth asks:

Who can stand lower before God than the One whom God made to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21)? Certainly not woman in her subordination to man! She is surpassed in inferiority by the same Lord who surpasses the superiority of man. And if she has not the [authority] of man, this very fact must be the means by which she attests and expresses the incomparable lowliness of Christ. That the man is the head of the woman is therefore true in the unity between the deity and humanity, the sovereignty and service, the majesty and humility of the Lord. It is defined and limited by the superiority and inferiority which are actualized in Him.²⁹⁵

For Barth, Christ is the ultimate representative of this order. Barth refers to I Cor. 11:3 as well. I Cor. 11:3 states, "The head of every man is Christ and the head of woman is man." Barth demonstrates that Christ is subordinate to God the Father as woman is to man. Robert Willis also points out that Christ's subordination to God is analogous to woman's subordination to man.²⁹⁶

There is a superordination and subordination between the Father and the Son in Christ's obedience on the cross, however it is within the one being of the Godhead within the different modes of existence. Barth states:

In his mode of being as the Son, he fulfills the divine subordination (gottliche Unterordnung) just as the Father in His Mode of being as the Father fulfills the divine

Emma Justes, "Theological Reflections on the role of Women in Church and Society," Journal of Pastoral Care 33 (1979), 52.

²⁹⁵CD III/4, 173.

²⁹⁶Robert Willis, The Ethics of Karl Barth, 338.

superiority (gottliche Uberordnung). In humility, as the Son who complies, He is the same as in the Father in majesty, as the Father who disposes. He is the same consequence (and obedience) as the Son as in the Father in origin. He is the same as the Son, i.e. as the self-positing God, (the eternally begotten of the Father).²⁹⁷

Barth compares this subordination of Christ to God the Father in his obedience on the cross with the woman's subordination to the man. Barth states:

Why not rather a particular being in the glory of the one equal Godhead in whose inner order there is also, in fact, this dimension, the direction downwards, which has its own dignity? Why should not our way of finding a lesser dignity and significance in what takes the second and subordinate place (male-female) (the wife to her husband) need to be corrected in the light of the homousia of the modes of divine being? . . . As we look at Jesus Christ we cannot avoid the astounding conclusion of a divine obedience. Therefore, we have to draw the no less astounding deduction that in the equal Godhead, the one God is, in fact, the one and also another, that He is indeed a First and a Second, One who rules and commands in majesty and one and the Other.²⁹⁸

Ford maintains that this is a false analogy. She states that "Christ represents all creaturely sin and abasement before God. In his reconciliation, the God-man, Jesus Christ does for us on the cross what we cannot do in reconciliation. It is an intra-trinitarian event between God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son."²⁹⁹ Jesus Christ as the divine-human cannot represent a human-human relationship.

²⁹⁷CD IV/1, 209.

²⁹⁸CD IV/1, 202-203.

²⁹⁹Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 101.

Barth also argues that male superiority over the female relates to both God's lordship over Israel and Christ's over the Church. An analogy is drawn. God's authority over humanity in their covenantal relationship is the basis for the male's authority over the female.

While Emma Justes states that Barth's use of analogy to explain the imago dei is effective, the analogy in which he compares the male-female relationship with the relationship between God and Israel, Jesus Christ and the Church is faulty. She states,

Barth is involved in a comparison of a relationship between God and humanity with a relationship within humanity. The apples and oranges are all mixed up and the result is misleading. Man begins to look more like God than like the human being he is. And Barth provides fuel for a tyranny which he has tried to defeat.³⁰⁰

In the New Testament, the relationship between God and humanity is reflective of the relationship between Christ and his community. The relation between Christ and the Christian community arises from the relation between Yahweh and Israel. The male-female relationship is based on Christ's relation to the Church as it mirrors God's relation with Israel.³⁰¹ Ford says that

Barth appears to make the analogy of relationship between the Creator-creature apply to the male-female relationship. In the subordination which exists between God and his creatures between God and his creatures, we see that Barth makes the same relationship apply to the

³⁰⁰Justes, "Theological Reflections on the Role of Women in Church and Society," 52.

³⁰¹Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 106. Referring to CD III/2, 299.

male-female relationship.³⁰²

She goes on to quote Barth:

It will always be this man who is confronted with the command of God in the ethical event--God's creature and covenant partner, the pardoned sinner, the child of God who even in the present is already expectant and certain of his eternal future. This man is the other participant in this event. He is wholly secondary and subordinate to the first; indeed, it is only by the first that he is what he is. Yet it is he with his concrete characteristics who is this participant [as male and female].³⁰³

This analogy further shows, she says, that woman's subordination to man is established in Christ. Man is the head of the female like Christ is the Head of the Church. The Christian community's subordination to Christ is analogous to female subordination to man. She insists that this is a false analogy because "Barth establishes an untenable correspondence between the creaturely relationship of male-female with the divine-human relationship: the Christ-Church typology implies a God-creature relation (Yahweh with Israel)."³⁰⁴ She finds it difficult to understand how the relationship of male and female, which is a relationship between two humans, can be analogous to a relationship between humans and a divine being. She argues that "this analogy borders on idolatry since it makes the male representative of Christ or God in relation to the woman who represents the Church."³⁰⁵ Fraser would agree. She

³⁰²Ibid., 106.

³⁰³Ibid. Referring to CD III/4, 26.

³⁰⁴Ibid., 107.

³⁰⁵Ibid, 113.

states that "although Barth insists that he has not given the man divine status, it is still the case that the man has a Godlike status in relation to the woman in that he is accorded irreversible priority over her."³⁰⁶

In response to these criticisms, we must first review Barth's understanding of the source of theology. For Barth, all knowledge about God derives from God himself. Human experience can not lead us to the truth. Because of sin, we do not have access to direct knowledge about our Creator. It is only through divine revelation through Jesus Christ that we can come to know God and ourselves.

There is, however, the possibility of knowledge of God and language about God. It is only by God through the "restorative or recreative power of the Word, Jesus Christ" that this is made possible. Because of the Word, the human which is entirely unlike God comes to share an affinity with God; it is

an adapting of man to the Word of God. In faith, as he really receives God's Word, man becomes apt to receive it. . . . There can be no receiving of God's Word unless there is something common to the speaking God and hearing man in this event, a similarity for all the dissimilarity implied by the distinction between God and man, a point of contact between God and man, if we may now adopt this term too.³⁰⁷

Therefore, from the beginning of the Dogmatics, Barth makes two important assertions with regard to humanity. First, humans are entirely different from God and incapable of direct or independent

³⁰⁶Fraser, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Humanity: A Reconstructive Exercise in Feminist Narrative Theology," 207.

³⁰⁷Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 26. Referring to CD I/1, 238.

knowledge of God because of sin. But second, "through the free self-expression of God in the Word, humans are able to know God and to be related to God."³⁰⁸ Therefore, humanity's attempts to compare the being of God with the being of man through natural reason are destined to fail, for a relation between God and our language exists only by the grace of God through faith.

Barth argues that it is only through analogy that our words and concepts concerning God find their true meaning. "We cannot open our mouths," he says, "to speak about God without recourse to the promise that we shall speak the truth in the analogy of his truth itself."³⁰⁹

Barth stresses, however, that he is speaking of an analogy, nothing less and nothing more. He states:

There can be no question of anything more than an analogy. The differentiation and relationship between the I and Thou in the divine being, in the sphere of the Elohim, are not identical with the differentiation and relationship between male and female. That it takes this form in man, corresponding to the bi-sexuality of animals too, belongs to the creatureliness of man rather than the divine likeness. It also belongs to his creatureliness that the relationship between the I and Thou in man takes place only in the form of the differentiation and relationship between the two different individuals, whereas in the case of God they are included in the one individual.³¹⁰

We often use the term "analogy" to refer to any form of comparison. It is understood that in an analogy we are dealing with a comparison which is only partial. At the same time, there are

³⁰⁸Ibid.

³⁰⁹CD I/1, 231.

³¹⁰CD III/1, 192-196.

points of likeness or similarity as well as points of difference or unlikeness. Barth applies this simple definition throughout the *Dogmatics*.³¹¹ Without a doubt, Barth makes it very clear the kind of correspondence to which he is referring. "Analogy, even as the analogy of relation, does not entail likeness but the correspondence of the unlike."³¹² Because the creature cannot be "like" God, analogies can only be comparisons of the "unlikes." Between God and man there is, therefore for Barth, not an analogy of being (*analogia entis*) but an analogy of relation (*analogia relationis*).

We cannot forget that Barth insists that an analogy refers to both likeness and unlikeness. Barth states:

Man cannot be the creator and Savior of men, or the man of the woman. On the other hand, it belongs to the very essence of the copy modelled on this pattern that the man should be with the woman, that he should not will to be without her, and that he should therefore love her as himself.³¹³

Barth always reminds us that God and humanity are two completely different kinds of being who never have been and never will be exactly the same. Their similarity makes their fellowship possible and their dissimilarity insures the identity of each.³¹⁴ Arnold B. Come stresses the fact that, "Barth wrote most of the *Dogmatics* as

³¹¹Come, *An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics For Preachers*, 142.

³¹²CD III/1, 196.

³¹³CD III/2, 316.

³¹⁴Come, *An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers*, 151.

a slashing attack against a theology that he accused of leaving man's destiny in his own hands and of suggesting even a deification of man."³¹⁵

We, therefore, conclude that the charge that Barth draws a false analogy is unjustified. Barth qualifies the kind of analogy to which he is referring. The analogy is valid according to the commonly understood definition of analogy.

We maintain that these analogies hold and that we can get a relatively clear idea of what Barth had intended by his concept of analogy as it applies to these relationships. As Robert Willis points out, however, the problem that might emerge would be at the point of determining what "complete similarity along with complete dissimilarity" would mean, and where the emphasis, respectively, would fall.³¹⁶ David Miell would agree. The difficulty is in making the boundary between similarity and difference explicit and clear enough. A lot of the criticism of Barth's analogy of relations concerns exactly this kind of ambiguity.³¹⁷

Regarding the relation between the Father and the Son in the Trinity, Willis and Come assert that it is difficult to understand how it can possibly be argued that it is an occurrence, much less the basic occurrence of the I-Thou encounter without going against Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. Barth maintains that the

³¹⁵Ibid.

³¹⁶Willis, The Ethics of Karl Barth, 237.

³¹⁷Miell, "Barth on Persons in Relationship: A Case for Further Reflection?," 555.

distinctions allowable within the Trinity do not denote "persons" but rather are suggestive of eternal "modes of being" within the one person of God.³¹⁸ It is here that Willis and Come say that Barth is in grave danger of compromising his doctrine of the Trinity or his doctrine of man. If the relations between man and woman and man and God are I-Thou relations, if these are considered to be an analogy of the relationship between Father and Son in the Trinity, then it is difficult to see what sense can be made of this unless Father and Son are regarded as distinct persons. If this is the case, then Barth's doctrine of the Trinity is compromised. This, of course, Barth rejects. Therefore, in carrying out the analogy to its basis, one must, instead, see the intra-Trinitarian relation between the modes of Father and Son as the supreme occurrence of the I-Thou encounter. This, in Willis' opinion, "is an extremely queer formulation and it is quite unclear what meaning can be attached to it." And Barth's definition of analogy as "complete similarity along with complete dissimilarity" does not make things any clearer.³¹⁹ Arnold B. Come agrees. He states:

Barth cannot have it both ways and still speak meaningfully. Either the relation enclosed within God is not like the interpersonal relation I have with another man, and then the I-Thou terminology is improperly applied to God, or Father, and Son are in an interpersonal relation as men are and then the Trinity consists of three real persons.³²⁰

³¹⁸CD I/1, 359-360.

³¹⁹Willis, The Ethics of Karl Barth, 238-239.

³²⁰Come, An Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics for Preachers, 157.

In response, Barth would say that the manner in which we speak about God, can never fully possess the complete truth of God. Humanity can never control or manipulate the Creator. Our language is only a reflection of the truth of God's being as we speak of him through faith in Jesus Christ.

We would maintain that the stress on likeness of being despite differentiation is a useful concept in understanding both the inner-trinitarian relationship and the male-female relationship, even if it entails a certain degree of ambiguity. Is this not inevitable due to the subject matter?

The Problem of Language

Cynthia Campbell takes up the question of language.³²¹ She discusses whether or not the concept of subordination necessarily involves the ideas of inferiority and inequality. She points out that our ordinary language and experience would seem to affirm that it does. She illustrates this by quoting a standard definition of "subordinate." It states that a "subordinate" is one "belonging to an inferior rank, grade, class, order, and hence dependent upon the authority or power of the other."³²² Therefore, if one is the subordinate of another, this means that he or she must obey the orders of the other. To be a subordinate implies that one has less

³²¹Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 166-170.

³²²Oxford English Dictionary, 1933 ed., s.v. "subordinate."

rights and privileges. Even the roots of "inferior" and "subordinate" are comparable. "Inferior" is related to a Latin root meaning "situated below," while "subordination" means to be "located under."³²³

Taking up the more difficult question of whether or not a subordinate can be the equal of a superordinate, she affirms that it depends on the situation and proceeds to cite examples. She states that "subordination and equality can be compatible as long as subordination is construed in a functional rather than an ontological way."³²⁴ She contends that the problem for Barth is that, while he argues that subordination does not contradict equality of male and female in terms of their basic humanity, he also argues that the difference between them is not functional. The difference between man and woman is the result of creation. This is a distinction which cannot be changed. "The problem is that this is an idiosyncratic use of language differing from ordinary experience so much as to create significant doubt as to what is in fact meant."³²⁵ Campbell argues that the term "subordination" should not be used to describe a relationship which is also described as "equal" or "mutual." She states that "each of the latter terms implies a reciprocal interchange upon which both depend in a way that is not the case for a relation of 'subordination' where the

³²³Ibid., s.v. "inferior" and "subordinate."

³²⁴Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 168.

³²⁵Ibid., 170.

dependence is clearly all on one side."³²⁶

Clifford Green stresses that superordination and subordination must take on almost the opposite of their "ordinary" meanings to be compatible with Barth's definition.³²⁷ We must, therefore, review Barth's understanding of language in order to respond to this criticism.

According to Barth, God uses human language in the form of analogies to reveal himself to humanity. God is the source of the similarity so the words employed really do make known something of the reality of God: "man with his human word 'similarity' participates in the (as such) incomprehensible similarity which is posited in God's true revelation, so that in it God participates in man and his human word."³²⁸

Barth maintains that it is God who initiates language about himself. It is not the result of human observation or reason. For example, Barth insists that when we call God "Father" and "Son" this usage is not dependent on "underlying views and concepts in our thought and language;" rather, "in a way which is incomprehensible and concealed from us, but in the incontestable priority of the Creator over the creature, God Himself is the

³²⁶Ibid.

³²⁷Clifford Green, "Liberation Theology? Karl Barth on Women and Men," 229.

³²⁸CD II/1, 227.

Father and the Son."³²⁹ Not only does God use human words, he is the source of their real meaning. Kathleen Bliss also recognizes that for Barth "an essential part of progress . . . is to rescue words and conceptions from corruption by restoring to them their proper meaning."³³⁰

Therefore, Barth argues that the structure of superordination and subordination is consistent with either the equality of men and women or the mutuality of the relationship. Barth insists that the subordination of the Son to the will of the Father does not indicate any inequality. Therefore, the order may be applied to the male-female in the same way, without there being any contradiction between equality and subordination. Barth states:

Does subordination in God necessarily involve an inferiority, and therefore a deprivation, a lack? Why not rather a particular being in the glory of the one equal Godhead, in whose inner order there is also, in fact, this dimension, the direction outward, which has its own dignity?³³¹

Perichoresis is a term which means "mutual indwelling" or "mutual interpenetration". It refers to the understanding of both the Trinity and Christology. "The Son can be subordinate to the Father but yet equal to Him in His full participation in the

³²⁹Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 211. Referring to CD II/1, 229.

³³⁰Kathleen Bliss, "Male and Female," Theology 55 (June 1952), 212.

³³¹CD IV/1, 202.

dignity, power and glory of divinity."³³² Barth says of this, that "the divine modes of being mutually condition and permeate one another so completely that one is always in the other two."³³³ Both Cynthia Campbell³³⁴ and Robert Willis³³⁵ point out that Barth places great stress on the idea of perichoresis as a way of explaining the three-in-oneness (triunity) of God.

In the ordering of the sexes subordination without inferiority is required. A.J. McKelway³³⁶ and Richard Brown³³⁷ both believe that Barth has applied perichoresis to anthropology, namely the functions of male and female. Brown states:

In reflecting back on perichoresis, however, if created man as male and female actually is the image of God, and if there thus does exist an analogia relationis between our co-humanity and the divine life in which the latter impinges upon the former, then one may expect, in light of the Dogmatics' inherent consistencies, that the perichoretic interpenetration of subordination and equality in the Trinity must also be expressed in human being. Thus, this renders Barth's subordination-without-inferiority more understandable.³³⁸

We have explained that for Barth, ordinary language does not

³³²Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics for Human Creative Genetic Engineering," 139.

³³³CD I/1, 370.

³³⁴Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 174.

³³⁵Willis, The Ethics of Karl Barth, 122.

³³⁶A.J. McKelway, "The Concept of Subordination in Barth's Special Ethics." Scottish Journal of Theology 32 (1979), 345.

³³⁷Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics for Human Creative Genetic Engineering," 139.

³³⁸Ibid., 140-141.

apply to God except by God's own use of human language. He argues that an appeal to ordinary language has little or no relevance. He contends that words need to be rescued from corruption by restoring to them their proper meaning. For Barth, subordination does not involve the idea of inferiority and inequality. He has expressed this very clearly in his treatment of the male-female relationship. We would, therefore, argue along with Barth that his use of the word subordination, in the context in which it is used, is entirely appropriate.

Selection of Biblical Texts

Barth is accused of deliberately interpreting scripture in a way which supports the ordering of male and female in Christ. Clifford Green maintains that

he systematizes, and hence stabilizes, the whole range of New Testament texts on men and women. Accordingly, texts which have a radically liberating impact on sexual roles are synthesized with those which speak of women's subordination - though Barth strives mightily and to a considerable degree succeeds, to subvert the latter by the former.³³⁹

Green insists that Barth undermines liberating texts such as Gal. 3:28, I Cor. 11:11-12, Eph. 5:51, 25f., Col. 3:19 with subordination texts such as I Cor. 11:1-9, 14:34-36, Eph. 5:22ff, Col. 3:18, I Tim. 2:11ff, Tit. 2:5, I Peter 3:1 in order to stabilize the meaning of the New Testament to insure woman's

³³⁹Green, "Liberation Theology? Karl Barth on Women and Men," 220.

subordination to man in Christ.³⁴⁰ Paul Jewett agrees.³⁴¹

Joann Ford cites Barth exegesis of Gal. 3:28 as a clear example of this. For Barth, this passage supports the order as established by Christ. The statement "in Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female," but they are "one in Him" to mean that both man and woman may exist in the freedom of Jesus Christ, if they accept their proper place which is dictated by order. Barth, therefore, concludes that the passage does not do away with the distinction of male and female but further supports the order based in Christ.³⁴²

The same can be said of the I Cor. 11 passage. Patricia Remy contends that Barth's exegesis is biased to support his ordering of the male-female relationship. She states:

With respect to the I Cor. 11 passage, it is interesting to note that Barth uses those verses which suggest a hierarchical ordering of man to woman, i.e. 7 and 8, but not those verses, i.e., 11 and 12 which suggest the 'opposite' of the order: reciprocity and equality.³⁴³

Ford argues that Barth chooses to accept the New Testament texts uncritically. She insists that he fails to apply the

³⁴⁰Ibid.

³⁴¹Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 84-86.

³⁴²Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 101.

³⁴³Patricia Remy, "Karl Barth's Theology of Man and Woman," uncompleted dissertation, University of Basle, Switzerland, 1978, Section I, 46. Taken from Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 62.

historical-critical method "to recognize that he is using culturally conditioned texts which reflect an ancient patriarchal social bias." She points to Barth's own understanding of the Bible. In Church Dogmatics I/1 he states that "the Bible is a witness of divine revelation which is written by humans." According to Barth, "the Holy Scriptures must be read and understood historically as written in a specific place and time, by humans in a particular historical context."³⁴⁴ Barth states:

The demand for a 'historical' understanding of the Bible necessarily means, in content, that we have to take it for what it undoubtedly is and meant to be; the human speech uttered by specific men at specific times in a specific situation in a specific language with a specific intention.³⁴⁵

In his exegesis for the male-female relationship, Barth does not follow his own guidelines for interpreting the Bible in an historical context. He does not use the historical-critical approach "to differentiate the Word of God from the words of Scripture."³⁴⁶

Green agrees. He states that Barth "will not take seriously the social and historical conditioning which the subordination texts presuppose and promote."³⁴⁷ He maintains that if Barth had just admitted that there is an obvious conflict between

³⁴⁴Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 62.

³⁴⁵CD I/1, 464.

³⁴⁶Ibid.

³⁴⁷Green, "Liberation Theology? Karl Barth on Women and Men," 230.

patriarchal-subordination texts and those which speak of full equality, freedom and partnership of women and men, he could have disregarded the concept of subordination completely.³⁴⁸ Krister Stendahl proposes that if Barth would have gone further along this line, "he would have better fulfilled the liberating spirit and intent of his ethic of the sexes."³⁴⁹ Paul Jewett expresses the same sentiment. He states that if Barth had just followed through with his own theology of man as male and female he would have arrived at the obvious conclusion; "that there is no absolute, invariable super- and subordination between the sexes at the human level."³⁵⁰

While it does appear that Barth systematizes the New Testament texts, in response, he would argue that in interpreting the passages he has used a trinitarian hermeneutic which is more foundational than a cultural one. Once again, he would insist that subordination is an acceptable biblical concept when understood correctly.

Marriage as the "Telos" of the Male-Female Relationship

Barth examines the relationship between man and woman, both

³⁴⁸Ibid.

³⁴⁹Krister Stendahl, The Bible and the Role of Women: A Case Study in Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 25ff. Taken from Green, "Liberation Theology? Karl Barth on Women and Men," 230.

³⁵⁰Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 85.

within the marriage context and outside of this particular relationship. He patterns every male and female relationship to some extent, after the relationship between husband and wife. Since the male-female relationship serves as a model for the relationship between God and humanity, as well as all human relationships, "marriage as a potential if not actual relationship is made central for determining the humanity of all relationships." Elouise Fraser points out that by making marriage central, Barth does not mean that every relationship between a man and a woman should be a marriage relationship. Rather, he means that "all relationships of any type must somehow affirm marriage between one man and one woman as the relationship within which cohumanity is capable of its highest expression."³⁵¹ Therefore, there are degrees of cohumanity. Not all relationships are capable of full cohumanity. She contends that it follows, then, that a nonmarriage relationship can never achieve full cohumanity. In making male and female as

the basic structural differentiation between human beings, Barth choose a distinction that both cuts across and includes all other distinctions between human beings. However, by using husband and wife as the paradigm for male and female, Barth compromises his original choice by making it more exclusive than it needs to be.³⁵²

Fraser insists that

Instead of applying equally to every human being, it suggests that there is one relationship in particular which has an exalted status insofar as it offers the only context within which full cohumanity can be experienced. Thus, the husband-wife model shares in the problems

³⁵¹Fraser, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Humanity: A Reconstructive Exercise in Feminist Narrative Theology," 217.

³⁵²Ibid., 219.

associated with male priority; it makes an automatic division between the favored (males, married people) and the not so favored (women, single people), leaving the latter to be grateful for what they have received, while simultaneously being forced to acknowledge that the better portion lies elsewhere, and that they must constantly render it due honor for no apparent reason at all.³⁵³

In response to this criticism, Barth would deny that some people are favored over others. Everyone is equal, regardless of status, when viewed within the context of the command of God.

To Barth's credit, we would argue that he has put marriage and sexuality in proper perspective by making male and female the basic structural differentiation between human beings. He sees the male-female relationship as "not coincident with marriage,"³⁵⁴ and discusses the male-female relationship within this broader context as well as within marriage. He removes sexual intercourse from the focus of the male-female relationship, claiming for it its proper place.³⁵⁵

Willie Jennings states that, for Barth, "marriage is not its basis nor does marriage authenticate the male-female relation, rather the relation is the basis of marriage."³⁵⁶ It is within this primary relationship that men and women may hear God's call to marriage. He states:

Marriage, for Barth, is nothing more or less than God's

³⁵³Ibid.

³⁵⁴CD III/4, 140.

³⁵⁵CD III/4, 118-119.

³⁵⁶Jennings, "Claiming the Creature: Anthropological Vision in the Thought of Athanasius of Alexandria and Karl Barth", 341.

specific call to some to life-partnership. Such a true partnership is meant to reflect the contingent and flexible nature of the male-female relation. It is partnership open toward God, attentive to the divine command and yielded to obedience. Because marriage is an open reality subject to the contingency of our fellowship with the living God, it cannot be a necessity, rather it is a call that is displayed only in our choice to marry or not to marry. We, in this proper scope of the male-female relation, are free to marry or not to marry.³⁵⁷

While people are free to marry or not to marry it cannot be denied that most Christians choose to marry. We contend that Barth is justified in making marriage central. He puts both marriage and sexuality in proper perspective.

Problems Related to the Order

Barth stresses that both man and woman have equal dignity, but that they are not interchangeable. While man has a priority which must not undermine the equal dignity of male and female, Barth presents an irreversible order of A and B. According to Barth, the difference between male and female exists primarily in the position and in the particular role that each is assigned, not in their nature per se. There is a functional inequality in this order; the man must be the one to lead and the woman the one to follow. While Barth's intention is for mutual adaption and co-ordination of man and woman within an ordered sequence, he uses the words superordination and subordination to describe this order. This ordering of the sexes is the element of Barth's treatment of the

³⁵⁷Ibid., 142.

male-female relationship which has led to the most criticism, from feminist and non-feminist theologians alike.

Rosemary Ruether speaks of the limiting effect of this analogy for women. She states:

But this same analogy, read back as normative for marriage and social relations, shows its limiting effects for women. The analogy confines women to only one type of personality development: Submission in relation to God, clergy and husband. Men, on the other hand, are allowed to develop their personalities out of both sides of the analogy, they cultivate female traits in relation to God or divinely ordained authority figures over them. But they can also cultivate the traits of lordship over women and children or servants, for whom they represent God's Word.³⁵⁸

Elizabeth Clark says that according to Barth, people are in some way "basically determined in their functions and personality characteristics by their sex."³⁵⁹ She points out that the idea that there is "a special 'vocation' attached to one's sex is particularly irksome to feminists."³⁶⁰ She argues that Barth appears to be completely ignorant of "the great variation in sexual roles and behavior as uncovered by psycho-sexual research."³⁶¹ Robert Willis also notes that Barth does not take into account modern disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology and the

³⁵⁸Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Marriage as a Sign of the Covenant," in The Liberating Bond, Covenants-Biblical and Contemporary by Wolfgang Roth and Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Friendship Press, 1978), 56.

³⁵⁹Elizabeth Clark, Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 243.

³⁶⁰Ibid.

³⁶¹Ibid.

social sciences which help theological interpretation.³⁶² Jurgen Moltmann³⁶³ and Clifford Green agree. Barth's "theological method, whatever its other virtues, does not seek out and engage relevant material from disciplines like psychology and sociology."³⁶⁴

For Barth, God allows for human freedom only within the confines of a particular framework with assigned positions and functions for man and woman. He seems to permit freedom of male and female only within the order of A and B. Man initiates, then woman, in freedom, can only respond.³⁶⁵ Christine Ford states that "this is not authentic mutuality in freedom since there is no genuine reciprocity in which man and woman in different situations can either initiate or respond."³⁶⁶

Clifford Green asserts that "initiatives and responses should come from both partners depending on their particular gifts, temperaments, previous experience, and sensitivities." In his opinion, Barth compromises Christian freedom by designating the role of "leading" to the man and "following" to the woman. "For in spite of all his denials, it is limiting the woman (not to mention burdening the man) to correlate initiative and response to

³⁶²Willis, The Ethics of Karl Barth, 385.

³⁶³Jurgen Moltmann, A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 254-255.

³⁶⁴Green, "Liberation Theology? Karl Barth on Women and Men," 230.

³⁶⁵Willis, The Ethics of Karl Barth, 339.

³⁶⁶Ford, "Toward an Anthropology of Mutuality: A Critique of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Male-Female Order as A and B with a Comparison of the Panentheistic Theology of Jurgen Moltmann," 88.

sexuality in this way."³⁶⁷

Octavius Gaba warns of the problem of domination. This problem, he says, "is rooted in the pride (superbia, hubris) of 'man' in which he seeks to be Lord (God)." According to Barth, the male is so completely infected with this pride that it affects his whole being.³⁶⁸ Therefore in the male-female relationship, "domination as a function of pride, manifests itself in 'man's' desire to possess woman as his own, and for his selfish ends."³⁶⁹

While Gaba states that it is not Barth's intention to directly contribute to domination with his insistence on order, he contends that it may. Order may lead to domination because of sin. In an attempt to defend this order, Barth paints the abstract picture of the "strong man" in contrast to the "tyrannical man", and the "mature woman" in contrast to the "complacent woman." Gaba insists, however, that Barth's "doctrine of total sinful depravity shows that there are no such abstract men and women." He even recognizes this in maintaining that reconciled "man" is a disturbed sinner.³⁷⁰ As long as the "strong man" is the same man who is tyrannical, and

³⁶⁷Green, "Liberation Theology? Karl Barth on Women and Men," 229.

³⁶⁸Women are infected by hubris, but differently. Historically, if women have intended to "lord" it over men, this intent has been repressed by male domination and power. Male pride has been translated into male domination of females more than female pride in domination of males. In Gaba, "Being and Order: An Analysis of the relation of Triune Being and Creaturely Order in the Theology of Karl Barth," 211.

³⁶⁹Gaba, "Being and Order: An Analysis of the Relation of Triune Being and Creaturely Order in the Theology of Karl Barth," 211-212.

³⁷⁰Ibid. Referring to CD IV/2, 254ff.

the "mature woman" the same woman who is complacent, the order of super- and subordination is vulnerable to the domination of women by men. According to Gaba, it is imprudent and naive to expect the man who seeks to be Lord to stop "lording" it over women. He contends that it is a disfavour to man to offer the position of lord in an order of super- and subordination, when from the beginning he has shown and continues to show that he is tyrannical and incapable of lordship. "It is wishful thinking to call 'man' the 'strong man', since the history of his strength has been the history of the domination and abuse of women and nature."³⁷¹

In response to these criticisms, Barth would first argue that the understanding of man and the discovery of his true meaning come only through faith in Christ, the new Adam. In order to discover "real man", we need to look first at "Jesus, the Man for God" not at man the sinner.³⁷² "As the man Jesus is Himself the revealing Word of God, He is the source of our knowledge of the nature of man as created by God."³⁷³ Therefore, Barth's concern is truly Christological anthropology.

David Mueller speaks of Barth's rejection of all other anthropologies:

Nontheological anthropologies, whether of the speculative, philosophical type or of the nonspeculative, scientific type, may contribute to a technological understanding of man and the 'phenomena of the human,' but they cannot uncover man's true being. They may help

³⁷¹Ibid., 212-213.

³⁷²CD III/2, 55-71.

³⁷³CD III/2, 3.

in interpreting certain aspects of human existence, but their presuppositions preclude discovering the mystery of 'real man.' In order to know the mystery of human nature, we cannot begin with man's natural self-understanding.³⁷⁴

We must now discuss Barth's understanding of human freedom. Barth's idea of freedom is rooted in the command of God which brings true freedom not captivity. Thomas C. Oden gets to the heart of Barth's understanding of freedom: "Essentially man's freedom consists in his being elected by God to be free for God, free for life, and free for his neighbor. To be obedient to God means to be free to be a true man, as God has chosen man to be."³⁷⁵ Richard Brown says that for Barth

freedom is essentially and primarily a process of living and making decisions, a process of moving about in the intimacy of divine freedom. It is not a neutral stance vis-a-vis God, operated by a neutral free will. For Barth, if it is real freedom, it involves dwelling within the mysterious realm where self-determination and obedience, independence and imitation, act upon to clarify each other.³⁷⁶

Freedom is the essential characteristic of man. Christ restores, confirms, and reveals the freedom which is already ours by creation:

According to Barth the gospel calls men to become what they already are--sons of God by virtue of their creation in the image of Christ and redemption through the atonement of Christ. The gospel summons man to act in accordance with the law of his own being. . . . [F]or Barth this law is personified and revealed in Jesus

³⁷⁴Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 113-114.

³⁷⁵Oden, The Promise of Barth, 66.

³⁷⁶Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics for Human Creature Genetic Engineering," 180.

Christ.³⁷⁷

Real freedom is self-determination under the total determination of the summons of God in Jesus Christ.³⁷⁸ "The free man never acts as if he himself had to decide autonomously, by himself, concerning the nature of the moral good, for the good is not something for man first of all to do, but for him to acknowledge as already having been done."³⁷⁹

God then has a right to claim us since He has shown Himself to be the God who is for us. The basis of obedience to God is not that God is powerful, or our highest good, or the end of all our striving, although He is all of these. It is rather that 'He has given Himself to us.'³⁸⁰ He has declared and shown Himself to be, in the fullness of his deity for us, and as such he is the One upon whom we may rely. Thus, the gospel, and nothing else, is the ground of our obedience. It is only this God, who is unmistakably for us, whom we can obey with all confidence.³⁸¹

We see that Barth's understanding of human freedom differs from that of his critics. He argues that the concept of human freedom must be seen ultimately within the context of the command of God and not through the humanistic or worldly understanding of the term. According to his definition of human freedom, which he maintains is the meaning of true freedom, man and woman are truly free only when they respect the inherent order which exists within

³⁷⁷Donald G. Bloesch, Jesus Is Victor! Karl Barth's Doctrine of Salvation (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 75.

³⁷⁸Ibid.

³⁷⁹Oden, The Promise of Barth, 66.

³⁸⁰CD IV/1, 3ff.

³⁸¹Brown, "The Image of God: Theological Ethics for Human Creative Genetic Engineering," 181.

their relationship.

With respect to the charge that his ethic of the sexes might lead to domination, Barth would argue that to be ordered and to respect this order, is to live in obedience to the Son of the Father and to be enabled and guided by the Spirit. Barth rejects the idea of knowing the created order apart from revelation. This "allows us to guard against the ideological use of notions of created order to sustain cultural, socio-political, economic or inter-personal forms of oppression."³⁸²

We cannot find fault with the logic of Barth's response to his critics. However, we must consider another question that has been raised. Is Barth's view of the man, as the one who leads, and the woman, the one who follows, a clear and practical enough guide to daily living? To this question we now turn.

With regard to the irreversible order of A and B, John Bennett states:

I do not know what Barth makes of concrete situations in which women may be the 'inspirer, leader and initiator,' and I see in him a failure to grasp the possibilities of mutuality in decision as between men and women.³⁸³

Linda Mercandante would agree. She says that it is evident that Barth did not determine an ethic of dominance and submission. Rather, she states that

in CD his stress always lies on the freeing power of

³⁸²Jennings, "Claiming the Creature: Anthropological Vision in the Thought of Athanasius of Alexandria and Karl Barth," 364.

³⁸³John C. Bennett, "Review of Church Dogmatics III/4 by Karl Barth," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 18:1 November 1962, 75-77.

Christ's work and God's love. It is true, too, that one can choose to follow, that following can be a free response and, in that sense, a form of initiative. But one must ask whether it is freeing to restrict the responsive route to females and the initiatory route to males.³⁸⁴

Having said that, we must now point out that Barth states that the differences between men and women are more easily experienced than described. "What God's command wills for man and woman is that they should be faithful to this their nature and to the special gift and duty indicated in and by it."³⁸⁵ Barth rejects any kind of phenomenology or typology of the sexes, therefore he does not provide much help when it comes to saying what precisely it means to be male as opposed to female. This is not his intention. Rather, it is to point men and women to God in search of the answer. He states that,

each man and woman owes it not only to himself but also to the other always to be faithful to his own sexual characteristics. Fellowship is always threatened when there is a failure at this point either on the one side or the other. Of course, it is not a question of keeping any special masculine or feminine standard. . . . Just because the command of God is not bound to any standard it makes this distinction all the more sharply and clearly. This distinction insists upon being observed. . . . The command of God will always point man to his position and woman to hers.³⁸⁶

Barth continues, "in every situation, in face of every task and every conversation, their functions and possibilities, when they are obedient to the command, will be distinctive and diverse, and

³⁸⁴Linda Mercandante, From Hierarchy to Equality (Vancouver: GMH Books, 1978), 80-81.

³⁸⁵CD III/4, 152.

³⁸⁶CD III/4, 154.

will never be interchangeable."³⁸⁷ Therefore, the precise nature and working out of this "leading" and "following" will be revealed to both man and woman as they live together according to the command of God. Ray S. Anderson states that for Barth,

whatever [masculinity and femininity] means . . . must be determined by the man and woman in pursuing the concrete instance of their own humanity through their sexual identity, not by attempting to rise above sexual identity in search of true humanity.³⁸⁸

We concur with Anderson³⁸⁹ and Willie Jennings who both contend that Barth's position is more than adequate.

An adequate account of the creaturely order of the male/female relation renders useless (and dangerous) any attempt to establish the permanent aspects of maleness and femaleness. Their continuity and difference is a lived continuity/difference which is rooted in the life of fellowship with God.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷Ibid.

³⁸⁸Anderson, On Being Human, 113.

³⁸⁹Ibid., 114.

³⁹⁰Jennings, "Reclaiming the Creature: Anthropological Vision in the Thought of Athanasius of Alexandria and Karl Barth," 344.

PART II

Positive Contributions and Relevance for Today

Cynthia Campbell states that "perhaps the greatest contribution which Barth has made to the imago doctrine is his location of the similarity between God and the human in the interpersonal sphere." She says that while other theologians like Bonhoeffer and Brunner, have read Genesis 1:26f, and remarked upon the male-female or I-Thou character of the imago, neither has understood, as Barth has, the relatedness itself as the term of comparison between God and humanity. This view of the imago is unique. Barth asserts that, as it is characteristic for God to be in relationship, so humanity is determined by being co-humanity.³⁹¹

Robert Umidi is in agreement, concerning the significance of this concept. He states

a positive result of Barth's approach is the way it helps us analogically to appreciate something of the nature of God's being-in-relationship, especially after centuries of Classical metaphysical influences conceiving a static, divine aseity and simplicity, and only really intersecting with human experience in some form of Gnostic transcendence of the human situation.³⁹²

Jung Young Lee states that this analogical relationship of Christology is "one of the most important aspects of Barth's

³⁹¹Campbell, "Imago Trinitatis: An Appraisal of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Imago Dei in Light of His Doctrine of the Trinity," 214.

³⁹²Umidi, "Imaging God Together: The Image of God as "Sociality" in the Thought and Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," 336.

theological method."³⁹³ According to Stuart McLean, Barth "sets forth the most careful development of the basic form of humanity, the I-Thou relationship, available in theology, philosophy, or the social sciences."³⁹⁴

With regard to the male-female relationship itself, W.A. Whitehouse says that it is "honoured for its own sake, and not merely with reference to parenthood and posterity."³⁹⁵ According to Emma Justes, "Barth makes some significant strides in placing marriage and sexuality in proper perspective."³⁹⁶ Robert Willis states that "in addition to demythologizing sex, Barth also undertakes to rid it of its demonic overtones of priority and control."³⁹⁷

For Barth, the male-female relationship encompasses more than sex and also more than marriage. While he sees marriage as the "center or telos," unmarried men and women are not excluded from this relation. As well, he warns of the dangers of focusing our attention on sex within the male-female relationship. Barth states that the functional distinction of male and female has to do with the entire person in particular, and not just "the use he makes or

³⁹³Lee, "Karl Barth's Use of Analogy in His Church Dogmatics," 145.

³⁹⁴McLean, "The Humanity of Man in Karl Barth's Thought," 135.

³⁹⁵W. A. Whitehouse, "Karl Barth on 'The Work of Creation'. A Reading of Church Dogmatics, III/1" in Reckoning With Barth, ed. Nigel Biggar (London: A. R. Mowray & Co. Ltd., 1988), 52.

³⁹⁶Justes, "Theological Reflections on the Role of Women in Church and Society," 48.

³⁹⁷Willis, The Ethics of Karl Barth, 341.

does not make of his physical sexual organs."³⁹⁸ The human act of intercourse is "not that which alone and in itself can make the male male, the female female and therefore man fellow-man."³⁹⁹ He states that "coitus without co-existence is demonic."⁴⁰⁰ Sexuality must be put into proper perspective. Barth states that "all this takes place only in the totality and context of the life of each of the partners including the whole sphere of this encounter and co-existence: man and his fellow, Thou and I as man and woman."⁴⁰¹ This is of particular relevance for today.

Thomas C. Oden points out that today, perhaps more than ever before, there is a struggle to understand ourselves as sexual partners. Barth is saying that we exist as sexual beings and that we cannot truly understand ourselves if we see ourselves in terms of some abstract individualism. Women are only fulfilled in relation to men and men are only fulfilled in relation to women. He says that,

for as surely as man and woman run to meet each other and fulfill each other in their mutual differences and in their being together, so it is that human beings as a whole need each other in their daily interactions to fulfill their covenant humanity. Your humanity is not completed just in itself, but in relation to others whose needs you fulfill and who fulfill your needs.⁴⁰²

Oden expresses what is so promising about this orientation:

³⁹⁸CD III/4, 130.

³⁹⁹CD III/4, 131.

⁴⁰⁰CD III/4, 148.

⁴⁰¹Ibid.

⁴⁰²Oden, The Promise of Barth, 98.

I experience as profoundly the healing realization that what I am called to do is merely to actualize my deepest being, and that my deepest being does not finally depend upon my choosing of it, but upon God's own choosing of me.⁴⁰³

Barth's ethic summons men and women to listen attentively to the Holy Spirit in each situation in which they find themselves and to respond in freedom to the command of God. Barth argues that the Spirit guides the obedient man "in every time and in every place and in every situation."⁴⁰⁴ However, in God's many commands, it is always the same command that he gives to man. This is to become the man that he is. "In face of being confronted by many possibilities, the Spirit gives man a single option: his new creaturehood in Jesus Christ."⁴⁰⁵ Herbert Hartwell states that Barth's stress on

God's continual active initiative in the affairs of men, working out His purpose for man in the very midst of mankind by the power of the Holy Spirit, is one of the most vital aspects of his theology.⁴⁰⁶

Oden contends that Barth's concept of freedom is very relevant for today. Man as sinner tries to become a judge and orderer of the many commands and prohibitions, claims and counterclaims with which he is confronted on all sides. He attempts desperately to classify and prioritize often conflicting values and obligations. Barth caricatures such a man: "His eyes are now open but only like those of a victim of insomnia. He now has to choose and decide and judge

⁴⁰³Ibid. 97.

⁴⁰⁴CD IV/2. 373.

⁴⁰⁵Oden, The Promise of Barth, 86.

⁴⁰⁶Herbert Hartwell, The Theology of Karl Barth, An Introduction (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 182.

on all sides. He has to try to hew a track for himself through the unending primeval forest of claims."⁴⁰⁷

Oden says that man as Creator and Lord is a role which he does not play very well. "Indeed, man's deepest ethical misery lies in the fact that he cannot satisfy all the claims which surround him, and in fact cannot really satisfy a single one of them, because each one aims at being supreme."⁴⁰⁸

It is the teleological power of the command of God which always brings man back to his proper starting point.

The new point of departure is the new man created by God's decision, not the old man who has been 'put off.' The new man is free continually to begin again at the point of God's reconciliation. He is not given many possibilities, but only one actuality: his new creaturehood in Christ.⁴⁰⁹

Barth's Christological anthropology rejects modern theology's attempt to construct a doctrine of man by starting with man's self-knowledge instead of revelation. "Consequently," David Mueller states, "it represents the most consistent theological position in twentieth-century theology, interpreting human nature by beginning with the man Jesus, rather than with a phenomenological analysis of human existence in general."⁴¹⁰

Herbert Hartwell agrees, stating that it is the most timely prophetic message of his theology. He goes on to say that

⁴⁰⁷CD II/2, 586, taken from Oden, The Promise of Barth, 73.

⁴⁰⁸Oden, The Promise of Barth, 73.

⁴⁰⁹Ibid.

⁴¹⁰Mueller, Makers of the Modern Theological Mind / Karl Barth, 119-120.

the thorough demythologization of the human ego in Barth's theological anthropology, though reducing man to his proper size, is nevertheless balanced by his teaching on man's God-given freedom, allowing man full scope for free and responsible decisions and actions within the limitation of that freedom.⁴¹¹

He points out that in making freedom the foundation of his theological ethics, Barth has thereby opened up a whole new area in this field of dogmatics. He maintains that Barth's concept of freedom should be viewed alongside his teaching on humanity as co-humanity, so the full implications of these two basic principles of his theology may be understood.⁴¹²

Eberhard Jungel states that when we consider the subject of what he calls "the royal man" in Barth's theology, "we should not expect to find a compromise between a theology whose overriding interest is in the deity of God and an anthropology whose overriding interest is the humanity of humankind."⁴¹³ He goes on to say that,

Barth's doctrine is free of any unfortunate dichotomy between the deity of God and the humanity of humankind; it is freed by the event of the revelation of God, and henceforth it can think of deity and humanity together and still give each its due.⁴¹⁴

Clifford Green states that "in so many areas, including relations between the sexes, Barth showed a remarkable freedom from conventional thinking and stereotypical attitudes." Paul Tillich,

⁴¹¹Hartwell, The Theology of Karl Barth, An Introduction, 183.

⁴¹²Ibid.

⁴¹³Jungel, Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy, 127.

⁴¹⁴Ibid.

who is not even one of his disciples, was so impressed that he regarded his freedom as one of Barth's greatest virtues.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁵Green, "Liberation Theology? Karl Barth on Women and Men," 230.

Part III

Conclusion

To clearly convey the thoughts and the true essence of a profound and influential theologian like Karl Barth, within the confines of a short thesis, is a daunting task. In approaching this study, my aim was to offer a balanced, objective and comprehensive treatment of his view of the male-female relationship. Towards that end, I integrated over fifty sources; the most relevant and insightful of those consulted.

After working closely with extensive primary and secondary sources for over a year, I believe that I have come away with a true sense of the man behind the great theological works attributed to his name. What struck me the most about Barth, was his ardent desire to seek the truth. He was a man who allowed himself to be challenged. Unwilling to compromise the truth, he became his own severest critic, as is evidenced in his rewriting of The Epistle to the Romans and Christian Dogmatics.

Of course, in challenging himself, he also challenged others. I believe his strong convictions and what would appear as almost a paranoid rejection of any form of natural theology lies in part with his perceptive understanding of human nature. Barth was convinced that the liberalism of his day, with its humanistic element, must be rejected outright. If not, the door left ajar may soon be swung wide open. That was Barth's fear. If Christians did not learn to rely totally on Christ, they would learn to rely too

heavily on themselves. Barth's response was to bar the door shut. This position seemed extreme, but for Barth, it was necessary in this crucial period in history. This of course is evident in his polemic against the "analogia entis" and his vehement rejection of Emil Brunner's postulate of a natural "point of contact" for the Christian proclamation.

Later in his life, when the threat of naziism was gone and he was confident that his message had been heard loud and clear, he came to accept that Aquinas never meant what he had accused him of in the concept of the "analogia entis." He conceded that "in addition to the one great light of Jesus Christ, there were 'little lights' in nature and history that reflect the light that is in Christ."⁴¹⁶

It is this same thinking which pervades his view of the male-female relationship. Barth rejects all typologies of the sexes but also any anthropology that is not Christological anthropology. For Barth, modern disciplines like psychology and sociology must not be drawn upon for theological interpretation. It is his intention to direct men and women to Christ, in search of answers concerning the working out of their relationship. It is his belief that Christians must learn to become sensitive to the moving and guiding of the Spirit. In this way, not only will the relationship between men and women be properly understood and deepened but ultimately their relationship with the Lord as well.

⁴¹⁶Bloesch, Jesus Is Victor! Karl Barth's Doctrine of Salvation, 153.

In this thesis, we have shown that the criticisms raised concerning Barth's presentation of the male-female relationship are unjustified. As well, we have argued that Barth's position is more than adequate. Whether his position is a clear and practical enough guide to daily living will ultimately depend on individual assessments. For those who like a fixed set of rules by which they can abide, this ethic of the sexes may prove elusive. For those, who look not only to Scripture but also to the sciences for answers, Barth's view may appear misguided or inconclusive. However, for those seeking revelation from Christ for direction in life and relationships on a continual basis, this ethic will certainly prove illuminating and most helpful. Total dependence and trust in God will never lead us astray, but rather bring us closer to God and the truth of how he would have us live.

We live in an age where seeking God's direction in prayer is not as common for Christians as it once was. We have a tendency to take our eyes off Christ and put them on the things of this world. In many ways, we have come to depend solely on our own intellect and human judgement rather than Scripture and revelation from God. It is perhaps at this point that Barth's insights may prove universally applicable.

We have highlighted the positive contributions and relevance of Barth's ethic of the sexes for today. Perhaps more than ever, it is time to put things in proper perspective and implement some of his important insights into our lives.

Moreover, Barth would undoubtedly welcome any fresh insights

and improvements of his existing formulations, for it is clear that he did not want to make disciples, he merely wanted to provide a source of reflection upon which others could do their own thinking.⁴¹⁷ His theology of the male-female relationship has certainly given us a lot of food for thought.

⁴¹⁷Karl Barth, Letters 1961-1968 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 354.

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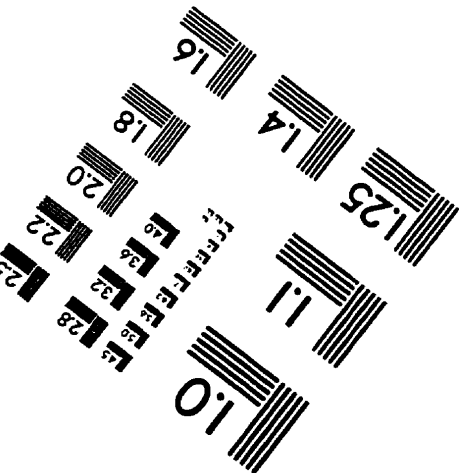
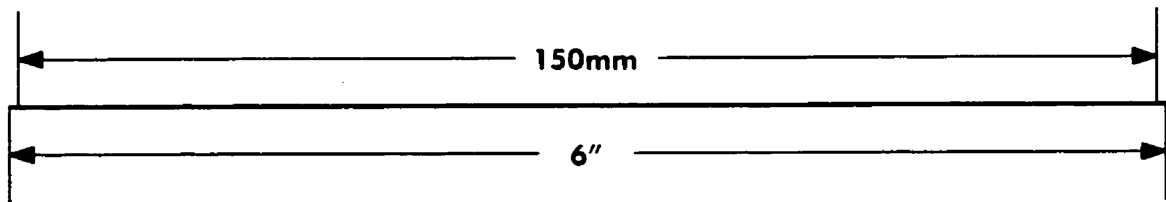
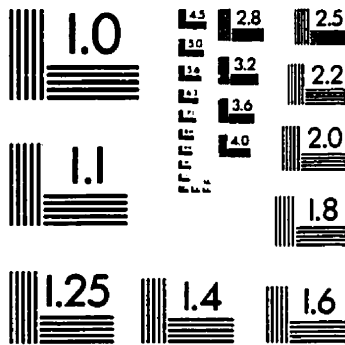
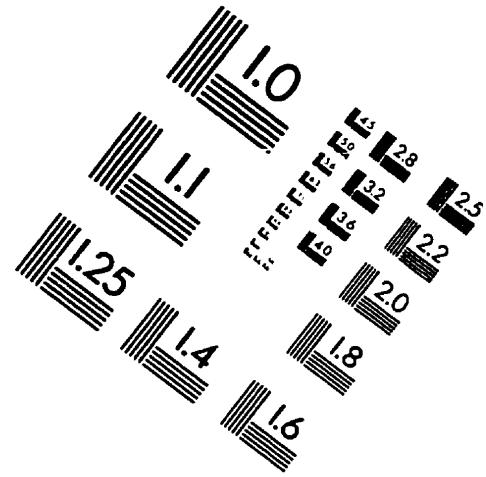
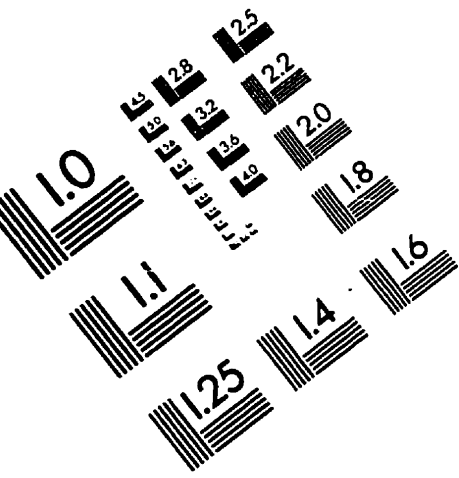
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