

**XI**  
**DIFFERENTLY BUT EQUALLY THE IMAGE OF GOD**  
**THE MEANING OF WOMANHOOD**  
**ACCORDING TO FOUR CONTEMPORARY PROTESTANT THEOLOGIANS**  
Fritz Guy

God created human being in His own image; in God's image He created it. He created them male and female (Gen 1:27; tr supplied).

“That is the immense double statement, of a lapidary simplicity, so simple indeed that we hardly realize that with it a vast world of myth and Gnostic speculation, of cynicism and asceticism, of the deification of sexuality and fear of sex completely disappears. It seems so incredibly naive to couple the statement that ‘man was made in the image of God’ with the statement that God ‘created them, one man and one woman.’ And yet in the whole long history of man’s understanding of himself this statement has only been made *once* and at this point. Otherwise, in a hundred different ways, man has always said something else which contradicts this statement; sometimes he says too little and sometimes too much; sometimes one aspect or another of the problem has been overemphasized; at other times men have cursed the fact that it exists at all. On account of this one statement alone the Bible shines out among all other books in the world as the Word of God.”<sup>1</sup>

This study does not intend to review the broad scope of contemporary theology relative to the role of women in the church; rather, the scope of this study is limited, and this focusing of the topic deserves a preliminary word of explanation.

Historical theology—which includes as its final installment the study of contemporary theology—has a twofold objective: it aims to be both descriptively accurate and constructively valuable. That is, first it endeavors to understand, as completely and correctly as possible, the persons or periods being considered.

Second it endeavors to make this particular part of the past available as a kind of conversation partner in the ongoing theological dialogue through which the church seeks to clarify its understanding of the eternal truth by which it lives and which it proclaims.

These two objectives are seldom exactly balanced, neither do they need to be; but both must be kept in mind. For if the descriptive task is emphasized to the neglect of the constructive, historical theology becomes little more than a museum of holy relics in which ideas are logically classified and appropriately arranged for observation by antiquarians.

On the other hand, if the constructive objective receives exclusive attention while the descriptive task is ignored, historical theology tends to degenerate into an echo chamber that merely bounces back our own ideas—although with a more distant and muffled (and therefore more impressive?) sound.

Since this study is part of a collective-constructive task—thinking through and working out an Adventist answer to the question of the role of women in the church—my chief concern is to identify those elements of contemporary theological thought that may assist in accomplishing this objective.

I have chosen, therefore, not to survey the entire spectrum of contemporary theology, but rather to draw on the work of four Protestant theologians whose work is, in my judgment, of particular interest and potential value for our present task. Each has explicitly considered the meaning of womanhood, and tried to be faithful to the biblical revelation and sensitive to human

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<sup>1</sup>Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt* (Philadelphia, 1947), p. 346.

experience. In chronological order they are Emil Brunner, Karl Brunner,<sup>2</sup> Karl Barth,<sup>3</sup> Helmut Thielicke,<sup>4</sup> and Paul K. Jewett.<sup>5</sup>

My main objective remains constructive and synthetic; rather than descriptive and analytical; so this study gives scant attention to either the intellectual ancestry of the ideas under consideration or to their particular place in the overall thought of each theologian. Yet I intend to give a fair representation of their collective theology of womanhood as I offer a preliminary identification of its principal components.

### Theological Context

Serious theological reflection is by its very nature deliberately comprehensive, and thus concerned with relationships between various aspects of religious belief and experience. So it is hardly surprising that contemporary thought about the meaning of womanhood is part of a series of somewhat larger concerns: the meaning of sexual differentiation as such, the nature of human being, the doctrine of creation as a whole. A theology of womanhood is thus developed as part of a theology of sexuality,<sup>6</sup> which is in turn part of a theological anthropology, which is itself part of a theology of creation. This is true whether the formal context of a particular discussion of womanhood is a theological ethic (Brunner and Thielicke), systematic theology (Brunner and Barth), or topical monograph (Jewett). In any case, “the ‘woman question’ is a ‘man/woman’ question which has its roots, theologically speaking, in the doctrine of the *imago Dei*.”<sup>7</sup>

### Sexuality as a Defining Characteristic of Human Being

To be human being is to be sexual being. “We cannot say man without having to say male or female. . . . Man exists in this differentiation, in this duality.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore “without sexuality there can be no full humanity.”<sup>9</sup> This does not mean that physical sexual relationships and marriage

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<sup>2</sup>The main sources are the section “The Emancipation of Woman, and Relations Between the Sexes Apart From Marriage,” in *The Divine Imperative* (Philadelphia, 1947), pp. 373-83; Brunner, chap. “Man and Woman,” *Man in Revolt*, pp. 345-61; “The Polarity of Sex,” *Dogmatics*, vol. 2; *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, (Philadelphia, 1952), pp. 63-65.

<sup>3</sup>The sources are all in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3: *The Doctrine of Creation*, 4 pts. (Edinburgh, 1958-61), and include large parts of the sections “Creation as the External Basis of the Covenant,” vol. 3, pt. 1, pp. 184-97, and “The Covenant as the Internal Basis of Creation,” vol. 3, pt. 1, pp. 184-97, and “The Covenant as the Internal Basis of Creation,” vol. 3, pt. 1, pp. 285-328; and the whole of the sections “Humanity as Likeness and Hope,” vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 285-324, and “Man and Woman,” vol. 3, pt. 4, pp. 116-240. Together, these discussions constitute the most extensive and creative treatment of human sexuality by a major theologian in the twentieth century.

<sup>4</sup>There are three relevant sections in *The Ethics of Sex* (New York, 1964), which, although published separately, are, in part of a comprehensive system of theological ethics. The sections are, “The duality of Man: Biblical Anthropology of the Sexes,” pp. 3-13; “The Biblical Interpretation of Marriage,” pp. 101-24; and “The Changed Position of Woman in the Family and in Society (The Problem of the Equality of the Sexes),” pp. 145-62.

<sup>5</sup>Although its author is less widely known, perhaps the most useful source of all is *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, 1975). Jewett is professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA.

<sup>6</sup>In this section the word “sexuality” is used as a convenient synonym for “sexual differentiation” and therefore does not refer primarily—much less exclusively—to physical sexual activity, relationships, or attitudes. It refers, rather, to the total human experience of what it means to be male or female.

<sup>7</sup>Jewett, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 286.

<sup>9</sup>Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 365.

are necessary to the fulfillment of human existence; but it does mean that in one way or another a fully human being is necessarily and distinctively either male or female. Sexuality is thus the basic structural differentiation of human being. Humanity is not neatly divided according to temperament (for example, extroverts and introverts), or according to race (Negroes, Orientals, Caucasians, etc.), or according to intelligence (geniuses and nongeniuses); but humanity is certainly and obviously divided into male and female. This is a basic fact of creation, and it is the Creator's intention that a person "should be genuinely and fully the one or the other."<sup>10</sup>

Sexuality, however, is not merely a differentiation; it is also a polarity. It is not merely a matter of the distinction of male *or* female; it is also a matter of the relationship or male *and* female.<sup>11</sup> In the biblical narrative of creation, "the solitary Adam is not yet 'man'; he is still not the fulfillment of the creation of man."<sup>12</sup> So it is not quite right, to say that God created two *kinds* of human being, as if each had independent existence originally and then subsequently found the other. Rather, they "come to each other from each other."<sup>13</sup> That is, each becomes what it is truly only because of, and in relation to, the other. There is no such thing as a "self-contained, self-sufficient male or female life."<sup>14</sup> It is his relationship to woman that makes the man a man; and it is her relationship to man that makes the woman a woman.<sup>15</sup>

And the polarity of sexuality has also another significance: it is the paradigmatic instance of the fact that God has created us as "dependent upon each other, unable to exist by ourselves, not as autonomous, self-sufficient beings."<sup>16</sup> True humanity is necessarily fellow-humanity, and the creation narrative "speaks of the co-existence of man and woman as the original and proper form of this fellow-humanity."<sup>17</sup> (It is even possible—if one is as theologically imaginative as Barth—to see in the coexistence of man and woman, humanity as fellow-humanity, a symbol of the fact that "Jesus is the man for His fellows."<sup>18</sup> So "the arrogant idea of the self-sufficient individual person is here most effectively eliminated."<sup>19</sup>

So human sexuality, as a fact of creation and not a result of the fall, is to be neither deified nor feared;<sup>20</sup> sexual identity is to be regarded as a gift— "a divinely bestowed treasure" that brings with it "quite specific possibilities of existence and service."<sup>21</sup> Any tendency or aspiration of man and woman "to overcome their sexual and separated mode of existence and transcend it by a humanity which is neither male nor female, but both at once, or neither,"<sup>22</sup> is misguided, however nobly motivated or sublimely expressed. Any effort to escape, or neutralize, human sexuality, even in the name of humanization, is ultimately a movement toward dehumanization, for "there is no being of man above the being of male and female."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 149.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>12</sup>Thielicke, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>14</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 163.

<sup>15</sup>On this basis, Barth concludes that "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."—Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>16</sup>Brunner, *Main in Revolt*, p. 350.

<sup>17</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 292.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>19</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 350.

<sup>20</sup>See the quotation which, together with Gen 1:27, serves as a preface to this study.

<sup>21</sup>Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 375.

<sup>22</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 157.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 289.

## Sexuality and the Image of God

Surely one of the most interesting ideas in contemporary theological anthropology is the Barthian notion that the image of God in human being is to be defined in terms of sexuality. That is, the duality of human sexuality is an “anology of relation” to the plurality of the divine essence (which is implied in the plural pronouns in Gen 1:26: “Let *us* make man in *our* image”). Barth’s argument in support of this thesis is twofold. First, he notes that in both Gen 1:27 and 5:1 the declaration that God created human being in his own image and likeness is followed immediately by the declaration that God created human being as male and female.

“It is not astounding that again and again expositors have ignored the definitive explanation given by the text itself, and instead of reflecting on it pursued all kinds of arbitrarily invented interpretations of the *imago Dei*? . . . 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, and then go on to ask against this background in what the original and prototype of the divine existence of the Creator consists?”<sup>24</sup>

Second, Barth points to the idea that the relationship of male and female is the fundamental form of the being-in-fellowship that constitutes human being. In all this Barth is of course keenly aware on the one hand that sexual differentiation is not peculiar to human being, and on the other hand that sexuality is not to be attributed to God. But human sexuality is to be understood primarily not in terms of the purely instinctive sex drives of animal being, but rather in terms of fellowship, community, and communion; and it is precisely fellowship and communion that characterizes the being of God. So, Barth insists, there is “a clear and simple correspondence, *analogia relationis*, between this mark of the divine being, namely, it includes an I and a Thou, and the being of man, male and female.”<sup>25</sup>

Because this understanding of the image of God is so problematic, it has not been widely adopted; but neither has it been simply rejected. The negative reaction is typically qualified by appreciation:

“It is going too far to assert that the male and female existence of humanity is identified with the *Imago Dei*. . . . But there is truth to this conception, to this extent, that this sex polarity belongs not only to the nature which has been created by God, but also to the *Imago Dei*. This is not understood so long as the *Imago Dei* is sought in man’s reason and is not understood as relation.”<sup>26</sup>

“It is true that ‘God created man in his own image’ is followed immediately by ‘male and female he created them.’ But this does not necessarily mean that the second clause gives a definition of the first. . . . He is right in pointing to the unique importance of the man-woman relation in creation; but he is wrong in further concluding that this relation is the specific content of the image of God.”<sup>27</sup>

“The theological ontology of human existence must not go so far as to imagine that it can express the idea of *Imago Dei* only by means of this sex differentiation. It is true that this

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 195.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>26</sup>Brunner, *Dogmatics* 2:63-64.

<sup>27</sup>G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, 1962), p. 73.

differentiation is very important as a medium of our relationship to God and our fellow man. . .  
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“No one with a sense for theology can read Barth on the question of Man as male and female without admiration for his originality and his provocative insight into a subject too long in need of the grand treatment reserved to dogmatics. Barth has made it difficult for theology henceforth to treat the question of human sexuality as a footnote to the doctrine of Man.”<sup>29</sup>

“. . . So far as Man is concerned, being in the divine image and being male and female, though not synonymous, are yet so closely related that one cannot speak biblically about the one without speaking also about the other, even though, surprisingly, for centuries theologians have sought to do so. Whether one blames this procedure on Greek philosophy or male self-centeredness, or both, a corrective in theological anthropology is long overdue at this point. To the centuries of understatement, then, Barth’s statement, even if it be an overstatement, is a wholesome antidote.”<sup>30</sup>

Thus the consensus of contemporary theology in regard to the relationship of human sexuality to the image of God, while not following Barth in affirming their essential identity, is obviously influenced by him in a direction that may bring it nearer a genuinely biblical understanding of both.

### **Sexuality as a Spiritual Differentiation**

Differentiation of human sexuality is totally pervasive “vertically” as well as “horizontally.” That is, just as all of humanity is divided into male and female, so “this distinction goes down to the very roots of our personal existence, and penetrates into the deepest ‘metaphysical’ grounds of our personality and our destiny.”<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly, “woman’s sphere of activity is intended to be definitely different from that of man,”<sup>32</sup> and so “the command of God will always point man to his position and woman to hers. In every situation, in face of every task and in every conversation, their functions and possibilities . . . will be distinctive and diverse.”<sup>33</sup>

When it comes to defining this psycho-spiritual differentiation more specifically and concretely, Brunner goes beyond his contemporaries (perhaps farther than he should) in arguing that “the physical difference—speaking generally—symbolizes the difference in soul and spirit.”<sup>34</sup> This means, for Brunner, that a man is male “in all his thought and feeling,” because “the differentiation of the biological sexual function in the man and the woman has its exact counterpart in the mental and spiritual [i.e., the psychological] nature of both sexes.”<sup>35</sup> From this premise, Brunner proceeds to discuss “the masculine and the feminine nature” and to identify the differences he sees between the two:<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Thielicke, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup>Jewett, p. 43.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>31</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 345.

<sup>32</sup>Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 375.

<sup>33</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 154.

<sup>34</sup>Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 374

<sup>35</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 352.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 352-55, 38-59; id. *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 374-75.

<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<b>productive</b>	<b>receptive</b>
<b>generative</b>	<b>nurturing</b>
<b>initiating</b>	<b>tending</b>
<b>creative</b>	<b>adaptive</b>
<b>conquering</b>	<b>unifying</b>
<b>building</b>	<b>adorning</b>
<b>inquiring</b>	<b>retentive</b>
<b>outward directed</b>	<b>inward directed</b>
<b>seeking the new</b>	<b>preserving the old</b>
<b>roaming</b>	<b>homemaking</b>
<b>objective</b>	<b>subjective</b>
<b>generalizing</b>	<b>individualizing</b>
<b>abstract</b>	<b>concrete</b>
<b>intellectual</b>	<b>unintellectual</b>
<b>impersonal</b>	<b>personal</b>

This is not to suggest that one sex is more virtuous or less sinful than the other; on the contrary, “man and woman are both sinners, just as both have been created in the image of God.” But even here in their common sinfulness there is a difference. For each sex exaggerates or distorts its typical characteristics: whereas man “sins above all on the side of freedom” and is arbitrary, dominating, and arrogant, woman tends to forget her freedom and so to fail “to rebel against evil.”<sup>37</sup>

Brunner acknowledges that these differences are not absolute and that “such a theory of sex types, of course, like all such theories, is to be accepted with all due reserve.”<sup>38</sup> For one thing, the traditional assignment of roles to one sex or the other has had a profound influence on the way each understands both itself and the other.<sup>39</sup> For another thing, man, “from selfish and short-sighted motives, has artificially riveted woman to her natural destiny [of motherhood], and hindered the free development of her mind and spirit”—with the result that “even at the present day, and to a far greater degree than we usually realize, woman is still the slave of man . . . Hence her real nature cannot yet be clearly discerned.”<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, Brunner insists that the fundamental psycho-spiritual differentiation of sexuality cannot be explained entirely by cultural conditioning and male domination: “The same difference of structure which is evident in the physical sphere is also found in the psycho-spiritual nature of woman.”<sup>41</sup>

In a specific reference to this delineation of Brunner’s, Barth objects that it is much better to avoid such generalized pronouncements. Barth does concede that “both physiologically and biblically a certain strength and corresponding precedence are a very general characteristic of man, and a weakness and corresponding subsequence of woman.” But what this actually means

<sup>37</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, pp. 353-54.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>39</sup>Brunner, *The Divine Impeprative*, p. 375.

<sup>40</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 355.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

in concrete fact “is something which is better left unresolved in a general statement.”<sup>42</sup> In another comment on Brunner’s list of psycho-spiritual characteristics, Barth asks, “On what authority are we told that these traits are masculine and these feminine?” Ignoring the fact that Brunner attempts to derive his picture of “the feminine nature” in the biological and physiological particularity of woman, Barth argues that the divine command that requires fidelity to one’s sexuality “permits man and woman continually and particularly to discover their specific sexual nature, and to be faithful to it in this form which is true before God, without being enslaved to any preconceived opinions.”<sup>43</sup> Therefore it is “not to be expected that the conduct which He requires, the obedience consistent with His command, will always and everywhere and for all individuals have the same form and expression.”<sup>44</sup>

Titus in regard to the possibility of determining the psycho-spiritual characteristics of a “masculine” or a “feminine” nature, there is no consensus. Whereas Brunner tries to derive such traits from the biological and physiological differentiation of sexuality, while recognizing that the results are only tentative at best, Barth takes a decidedly dim view of the whole enterprise. Without casting a vote on either side, much less venturing to propose yet another alternative, one can recognize that the question raised here is related to the nature of any potential theological (as distinguished from socia-cultural) comment regarding the role of women in the church. For the extent to which this role can be defined depends logically upon the extent to which it is possible to define “the feminine nature.”

### **Problem of “Order”**

In any theology of sexuality that takes seriously the implications of biblical revelation as well as the lessons of human experience, it is necessary to try to hold together two ideas that do not always fit easily or comfortably with each other: the fundamental equality of man and woman, and the apparent “superordination” or “precedence” or “supremacy” of man. On one hand, the “primal truth” of the matter is that when God created human being in His own image, He created it in the polarity of male and female; and “this truth cuts away the ground from all belief in the inferior value of woman.” The differentiation of sexuality means a “difference in kind” in which “each complements the other.” They are both “called to be persons, to live in love, in the same degree.”<sup>45</sup> They were created to be “partners,”<sup>46</sup> and the idea or partnership can take root only where equals are involved.<sup>47</sup>

However, the differentiation of sexuality is accompanied by “a certain super- and subordination.” Although it is to be understood that this is “a purely functional difference, not a difference in value,”<sup>48</sup> not a matter of “dignity or of honour” and “does not denote a higher humanity of man”<sup>49</sup> so “does not mean any inner inequality,”<sup>50</sup> it remains enough of a difference

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<sup>42</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 287.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 153.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>45</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 358.

<sup>46</sup>Cf. Barth, vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 290: “Partner is perhaps the best modern rendering for the term ‘helpmeet.’”

<sup>47</sup>Thielicke, p. 145.

<sup>48</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 359.

<sup>49</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 301.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 170.

to make it possible (perhaps necessary) to speak of “the unequal duality of male and female,”<sup>51</sup> and “the relative supremacy of man,”<sup>52</sup> which makes the husband “the superior, the first, the leader, the bearer of primary responsibility.”<sup>53</sup> The conclusion is that “the relationship is not one of reciprocity and equality, that man was not taken out of woman but woman out of man, that primarily he does not belong to her but she to him.”<sup>54</sup>

The nature of this “order” in the relationship of man and woman, an “ordering” that does not imply any fundamental inequality, is described as a “most delicate” question, in relation to which “every word is dangerous and liable to be misunderstood.”<sup>55</sup> Brunner explains the “superordination” of man as a special role of “leadership in marriage and in the Church,” but notes that this is to be understood in the NT sense—not *dominium* but *ministerium*.<sup>56</sup> Barth, as usual, says a good deal more, and with his customary penchant for paradox, analogy, and symbolism. Although woman was created from man and for man, not vice versa, he was incomplete until her creation. Although she belongs to him, he is the one who turns to her, becoming her follower and adherent, “so that to this extent he is the weaker half.”<sup>57</sup> Although the wife is subject to her husband, it is she and not he who symbolizes the reality of the church’s relationship to its Lord. And although the husband as head of the wife symbolizes Christ as head of the church, he has the particular responsibility of reflecting also Christ’s lowliness and service.<sup>58</sup> Finally Barth offers an alphabetical analogy: “Man and woman are an A and a B.” They are equal in inner dignity and right; they are in a necessary relationship to each other; and they are in an irreversible sequence. “Thus man does not enjoy any privilege or advantage over woman nor is he entitled to any kind of self-glorification” just because he is A and comes first. He can occupy this position only in humility, taking the lead as inspirer and initiator in their common life and action. He “frees himself from sexual self-sufficiency and takes seriously his orientation on woman.” If his precedence is anything other than a primacy of service, it is “not the divine order but a particular form of disorder.”<sup>59</sup>

But the powerful rhetoric of Barth does not pass without dissent; Paul Jewett regards Barth’s position as a restatement of the traditional view of a hierarchial relationship between man and woman. But whereas the classical statement of this view affirmed the subordination of woman on the basis of her inferiority, the contemporary restatement by Barth (and others) affirms the subordination when repudiating the inferiority. The result is that the argument becomes “a *non sequitur* which may be summarized as follows: (a) the woman is in no way inferior to the man. (b) yet she is different from him, (c) therefore she is subordinate to him.”<sup>60</sup> Jewett also believes the argument for super- and sub-ordination is “incompatible with (a) the biblical narratives of man’s creation, (b) the revelation which is given us in the life of Jesus, and (c) Paul’s fundamental statement of Christian liberty in the Epistle to the Galatians.”<sup>61</sup> Recognizing that “Paul, who was an inspired apostle, appears to teach . . . female subordination in certain

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 314.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 301.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 4, pp. 168-69.

<sup>55</sup>Brunner, *Main in Revolt*, p. 359.

<sup>56</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 305

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 314-15.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 4, pp. 169-70.

<sup>60</sup>Jewett, p. 14.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 134.



passages,” Jewett undertakes a re-examination of Eph 5 in the light of Gal 3:28, and concludes that “Paul the former rabbi” did not fully implement the revolutionary perception of “Paul the apostle” concerning the redemption of human sexuality.

In rejecting every form of a hierarchial view of sexual differentiation, Jewett argues for one of full partnership:

“Since God created Man male and female, both must acknowledge the call of God to live creatively in a relationship of mutual trust and confidence. . . . This calls for integrity on the part of the man to renounce the prerogatives, privileges, and powers which tradition has given him in the name of male headship. And it calls for courage on the part of the woman to share the burdens and responsibilities of life with the man, that in love and humility they may together fulfill their common destiny as Man.”<sup>62</sup>

In the light of this argument, it is hardly surprising that Jewett should conclude, in regard to the specific question of the ordination of women, that they “have full title to the order of Christian ministry as God shall call them.” And there is a positive reason for this: the complementarity of sexuality. “Because God made Man male and female, in the natural realm men are fathers and brothers, while women are mothers and sisters. So it must be in the spiritual realm. And when it is, then, and only then, will the church be truly the *family* of God.”<sup>63</sup>

### **Sexuality and the Ultimate Future**

Citing Jesus’ words, “They shall be as the angels in heaven” (Matt 22:30) and the apostle’s declaration that in Christ “there is neither male nor female” (Gal 3:28), Brunner maintains that sexuality, including its differentiation of existence and function, and consequent super- and subordination of man and woman, “belongs to the sphere of earth, not to that of heaven, to the temporal, not to the eternal.” The reason for this lies in the fact that “the whole of sexuality is related to the process of becoming, but not to that of fulfillment.”<sup>64</sup> For “sexual love indeed is not the love at which the Creator aims, but it foreshadows true love.” It is the means by which true love is discovered and learned. “The love between the sexes, the love of man and woman, is the earthenware vessel in which true love, *agape*, is to be contained; it can therefore be thrown away when the course in the preparatory school has achieved its end.”<sup>65</sup>

Barth has of course read the same biblical materials, but comes to an opposite conclusion. In regard to the words of the apostle, he observes that “the fact that male and female are one in Christ does not mean that they are no longer male and female.”<sup>66</sup> For “the relationship of man and woman established in creation, and the distinctions which it entails, cannot be regarded as transitory and accidental and abolished in Christ, as though Christ were not their meaning and origin.”<sup>67</sup> In regard to the words of Jesus, Barth is sure that “there is no reference here, and cannot be, to an abolition of the sexes or cessation of the being of man as male and female.” According to Barth’s interpretation, “Jesus certainly tells us that there will be not continuation of marriage but not that woman will not be woman in the resurrection.” This exegesis is supported

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>64</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, pp. 361, 360.

<sup>65</sup>Brunner, *Dogmatics* 2:65.

<sup>66</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 295.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 312.

by a theological argument: “Man would not be man if he were no longer male or female. . . . He has lived in no other way in time, and he can live in no other way in eternity.”<sup>68</sup>

Jewett comes in here on the side of Barth, although more cautiously, noting that that saying of Jesus’ includes not only the negative idea that there will not be marriage in heaven, but also the positive idea that human being will then be like angelic being. He adds an argument from silence: “Our slight knowledge of angelic beings would hardly warrant the conclusion that they are in no way involved in a fellowship like that of male and female.”<sup>69</sup> The case is by no means settled, although one can sympathize with Jewett’s concluding observation that “it is surely difficult to see how that reality [of the age to come] can be wholly different from our present male/female reality.”<sup>70</sup>

### Conclusions

The constructive results of this brief descriptive endeavor include some positive insights and some remaining questions. The principal insights are, (1) the importance of a clearly developed theology of sexuality as a context for responding to the question of the role of women in the church; (2) the fundamental character of sexuality of human being as disclosed in the biblical account of creation; (3) the positive view of the distinctiveness of womanhood that derives from the complementarity of sexuality; and (4) the difficulty of maintaining an irreversible functional “subordination” based on sexual differentiation without implying inferiority.

The most important remaining questions are, (1) whether the Pauline statements regarding the subordinate role of woman can be correctly understood to be compatible with a view of true sexual equality and partnership, and what to do if the answer to this question is negative; and (2) to what extent the fundamental structural differentiation of sexuality can be defined in terms of psycho-spiritual characteristics, for there is surely something odd about a theology that cannot give concrete form to an idea it proclaims to be crucial.

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>69</sup>Jewett, pp. 41-42.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 43.