SEMINAR PAPER

THE TRINITY AS COMMUNITY IN A MALE-FEMALE WORLD

Two years ago the Seminar on "Trinity and World Process" discussed and critiqued Moltmann's *The Crucified God*, and then each of the panelists presented personal positions. With the same format this year, we are using Moltmann's *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* as our springboard for subsequent personal positions. Thus, I begin my presentation by highlighting four methodological contributions Moltmann makes in this later book (esp. pp. 50-65), and showing their important implications. My critique will bring out what he seems to neglect, and finally my personal position will draw implications for Trinity as Community in a Male-Female world.

I. REFLECTIONS ON MOLTMANN'S *THE CHURCH IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT*

Methodological Contributions

1. *Trinitarian history as horizon for understanding Church.* The Church is a mystery which can be interpreted in various ways: through psychology, sociology, Christology, Pneumatology. Trinity, on the other hand, strikes one as highly speculative and removed from real life. Moltmann counters this view, I think rightly, by holding that Church is most concretely understood only "in the framework of the universal history of God's dealings with the world" (p. 51), which is ultimately grounded in God's personal self-communication. Here Moltmann is in line with the tendency today to understand Church in light of the Kingdom whose boundaries extend beyond the Church. He adds, on the other hand, a way of concretizing the often vague concept of Kingdom by linking it to the history of God's own self-revelation. To make Church an embodiment of God's self-revelation implies that it can be critiqued on the basis of how well it reveals God.[1]

If fully accepted, this methodological principle would have far-reaching effects for our understanding of what is permanent in the Church (Tradition with a capital T), and what is relative to any particular age and hence reformable (*t*raditions).[2] If God is seen as ultimate ground, what would be permanent is what is grounded in God's Trinitarian self-revelation, such as Christ as divine mediator, and the Church as instrument of the divine Spirit in relation to the transformation of the

[1] My article "Trinitarian Love as Ground of the Church," *Theological Studies* 37 (1976), 652-79, argues similarly but with a different view of trinitarian love.

[2] For this distinction I am indebted to Vladimir Lossky, "Tradition and Traditions," in his *In the Image and Likeness of God* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974) pp. 141-68, though the particular interpretation of Trinity and its application is my own.

world. All else could then be seen as relative to changing circumstances in which revelation occurs.[3]

2. *The "Sendings" of Christ and the Spirit as the way to understand God as triune*. Just as in *The Crucified God* Moltmann argued that God is to be understood in light of Jesus' life/death/resurrection, so now he adds that God is also to be understood in light of the Church's experience of the Spirit. "If this were not so," he writes, "experience of the Spirit could not be termed experience of God; and fellowship with Jesus, the Son, and his Father could not be understood as fellowship with God."[4] Just as Moltmann had earlier joined Rahner, Barth, Mühlen and others in understanding the inner being of God through the economy, so now he develops its implications beyond Christ to the Spirit in the Church. He does this through the biblical notion of "sending," which seeks understanding in light of one's source, and ultimately pushes back this source to God. The notion of "sending" allows Paul (see Gal 4:4-6) and John (as Jn 1:11ff; 14:26; 15:26) to interpret Jesus and the Spirit in light of God's intent. In John, even God's being is seen in light of Jesus ("He who sees me sees the Father" Jn 14:9).

The sending of Jesus and the Spirit leads Moltmann to see revelation as an ever opening process, and God's very being as a Trinitarian process of freely open self-communication. I will later indicate hesitations about how "open" God's being is, but I find this methodological principle very important if theologians are to keep Trinity in touch with empirical grounding.[5] But further, if church life in the Spirit grounds our understanding of God, then an inadequate church life will distort our view of God. Thus, conversion into the likeness of Christ's self-giving

[3] Heribert Mühlen has made a similar point in discussing what Vatican II, *Decree on Ecumenism*#11 means by a "hierarchy of truths" which "vary in their relationship to the foundation of Christian faith" (Abbott ed., p. 354). Mühlen distinguished foundational truths which mediate actual union with the Trinity (such as Christology and Church) from peripheral truths which protect these central truths (like papal infallibility, and the last two Marian definitions). One may affirm the former without explicitly affirming (though also not denying) the latter. See his "Die Bedeutung der Differenz zwischen Zentraldogmen und Randdogmen für den Ökumenischen Dialogue," in *Freiheit in her Begegnung*, ed. by Jean-Louis Leube and H. Stirnimann (Frankfurt im Breisgau: Herder, 1970), pp. 148-92.

[4] See *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p. 55.

[5] As important as this principle might seem to us today, it has not been consistently accepted either in Orthodox theology or the West. The Orthodox wanted to preserve God's "incomprehensible mystery" beyond all finite expression. They distinguished the divine energies from the divine essence, thus preserving God's action in history as well as God's unspeakable nature, but in so doing they cut off knowledge of God's essence from grounding in the historical sending of the Spirit by Christ (See Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* [Penguin, 1963], pp. 216-23.) The West from Augustine did appeal to the "sendings" to show that the Son proceeded eternally from the Father and that the Spirit proceeded from both Father and Son (*The Trinity*, Bk 4, Ch 20, #29), but both Augustine and Thomas so emphasized the eternal equality of persons in God as common principle of exterior action, that for Augustine the Son sends himself! (*Trinity*, Bk 2, #9) While Aquinas affirms that in addressing "Our Father" we really address the whole Trinity! (*ST* II, 23, 2 ad 2) and any of the divine persons could have become incarnate (*ST* III, 5). If the principle which Moltmann enunciates were accepted by all, then Trinitarian views could be checked by their implications for Jesus and Church. Mystery would remain, but tripersonal mystery.

love is needed to open us to fuller understanding of God's being as self-giving love.[6] And since male-female relationships are essential to human self-giving love, any transformation of them could be expected to have implications for our view of God.

3. *Future glorification as guide for the Church today*. Seeing the Church in light of the "history" of God's self-revelation not only points to the "sendings" as its source, but looks forward to *doxa* or glorification as its end. Thus, the Church is not just determined by God's "past" revelation in Christ and the Spirit, but by the open future it anticipates. The fullness of God's glorification is connected in John's writing with Jesus' death/resurrection (Jn 17:1f), that is, the being and power of God as self-giving love is revealed in him. More importantly for Moltmann, this glory is eschatological, that is, always coming toward us from the open future, so that the norm for the Church can never simply be what has been. It can only be the "new creation" when every tear will be wiped away and the "liberation" of God's children will be complete (p.60).

Moltmann, as I see it, is here asking theologians to take future goodness and possibility as important criteria for theology. The medieval theologians argued from what was "fitting," to ground what God did.[7] Could not the same argument be applied to future forms of Christian life, making what brings joy and liberation a criterion for what God intends? If the "glory of God" is joined to the "glorification of humanity," then the dreams we have for a liberated humanity have theological import, as anticipation of the "glory to come." Freeing joy would thus be one norm for proper forms of Christian life today.

4. *The "union" of the triune God is on-going "unification."* Finally, to view God from the dynamics of historical revelation implies for Moltmann seeing God's own unity as on-going and open. In Christ God is revealed as reaching out to the "other"—the oppressed, the non-Jew, women. God is revealed not so much as self-contained unity, but as overflowing unification, with all that this implies for ecclesial embodying of God's being. For example, when Moltmann later considers the Lord's Supper he writes: "The Lord's Supper is not the place to practice church discipline; it is first of all the place where the liberating presence of the crucified Lord is celebrated" (p. 245). This view of God's unity leads him to see Eucharist as "open invitation," as Christ lived such an open invitation in his own ministry. If inclusivity, not exclusivity, were the basic principle derived from God's open sharing, this also would affect Christian forms of male-female relationships.

A Constructive Critique

Each of the above insights into methodology stems from Moltmann's orientation to the future. God has freely decided that the salvation and glorification of the world be integral to God's own glorifi-

[6] I argued this point in my presentation for this seminar two years ago. See *CTSA Proceedings* 33 (1978), 214-17.

[7] As, for instance, Duns Scotus' argument for Mary's Immaculate Conception.

cation and unification, which is thus not yet fully determined or complete. Father William Hill criticized this position from the point of view of God as "perfect act" in the 1978 *CTSA Proceedings* (pp. 217-23). From my point of view, such a futuristic position so stresses the "not yet" that the "already" is deemphasized. Eschatology is not just "open future," but the presence of the future. The unity of the Church is not just "unification," but a present unity open to on-going development. Moltmann's position is a "Protestant protest" framed in a futuristic context, relentlessly criticizing the present to open it to the future. It needs the complement of what Tillich has called "Catholic substance." Such a complementary view would stress: (1) not just freedom but fidelity; (2) not just open-endedness, but cumulative Tradition which also opens to the new; (3) not just expansion to the other, but deepening interiorization of union; (4) not just congregational groupings, but a progressive deepening of both free fidelity and ever fuller catholicity of union. Freedom in its deepest meaning is self-determination and hence fidelity.[8] Moltmann's methodological principles would remain true, in this view, but would be complemented by a view of the permanence of God's choice and unity. Not only can we be open to a "new future," but we can also rest in the finality of God's committed love, and express this in graced committed relationships.

II. TRINITY AS COMMUNITY IN A MALE-FEMALE WORLD

Having presented Moltmann's principles and my complementary view, I turn now to an application I see as of central importance for today. Our principles lead us to see Christian life in light of Trinitarian love, but also, our view of Trinitarian love will be affected by our ideal of Christian life. Our views of Trinity and Christian life are reciprocal and will change from age to age as the ideal of "salvation" changes. Thus, the Greek world desired "salvation" from passing finite existence through "eternal life" in God (divinization), a monastic as well as liturgical ideal. The West, from Augustine, also sought eternal life, but with a more communal focus as "right-ordered love" in the Holy Spirit. In our day, we look for "eternal life" as "liberated life" beginning here. For us praxis involves world transformation, "salvation" from oppression, from lack of freedom, from impotence in commitment and creativity. Trinity is viewed as empowering historical transformation (as in Segundo's *Our Idea of God*). In this age that seeks freeing, creative relationships, it is my view that the area in most fundamental need of transformation is male-female relationships. Because of the all-embracing, fundamental and unconscious roots of these relationships, I see inequality here affecting all oppressions, giving rise inevitably to oppression in every other aspect of human existence. Is not our inability to see God as communal inextricably linked to this basic distrust and alienation of the sexes? And vice versa, how would a communal view of

[8] See K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (Seabury, 1968), p. 96. Mühlen also develops this point in his *Die Veränderlichkeit Gottes als Horizont einer zukünftigen Christologie* (Aschendorff, 1969), pp. 28-30.

God cast new light on this issue? I begin by briefly reviewing my understanding of God as self-giving community, then present two principles for male-female relations, and finally sketch my position of the interrelation of God and male-female relations in five theses.

The view of Trinity I presuppose was presented two years ago at this conference.[9] Working from Jesus' death/resurrection/sending of the Spirit, I argued that we can find five stages of social religious development that lead cumulatively to an ever fuller assimilation to that revelation event, and thereby also to Trinitarian love. The first two stages—Abrahamic trust and Mosaic law—represent collective stages. The third, emerging around the time of the Exile, is the breakthrough of individual and immediate encounter with God, theologically reflected on in the Book of Job. Jesus experienced individuation, and went even further into mutuality (the divine I-Thou as ground of emergent human individuated relationships), and these individuated relationships overflowed, fifthly, with the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost into a missionary creative community. In this view, God as triune (using Mühlen's I-Thou-We analogy) is progressively revealed in our history through individuated (I), mutually facilitating (I-Thou), and mission oriented community (We). It is this move through individuated relationships to community and mission as image of God that puts the question of male-female relationships in a new light, as I see it, and calls us to move beyond subordination to creative equality.

But what does it mean to be male or female? This question, I have found, is fraught with complexity. Are we to distinguish male from female as focused consciousness and diffuse consciousness (as Irene de Castillejo, *Knowing Woman*), or link female with nature, male with intentional reflex consciousness (as Amaury de Riencourt, *Sex and Power in History* [Delta, 1974]), or link male with the conquest of "outer space" female with "inner productive space" (as Erikson[10])? Whatever criterion one uses (besides the biological one of bearing children) one finds exceptions—industrious women and nurturing men, etc. As Jung found there are masculine and feminine elements in both men and women. There is no clear way (certainly no theological way) to determine what is due to the socialization process, what to essential differences. Because of this complexity I find only two secure principles, yet these two are adequate for my argument: (1) that male and female are different not just biologically but in every aspect of their being; and (2) that they can discover their differences (and unity) only through ongoing interrelationship.[11]

My first principle affirms sexual difference. This difference is not simply the result of a fall from androgeny, so that at base each individual

[9] See *CTSA Proceedings* 33 (1978), 211-17.

[10] See P. M. Doyle, "Women and Religion: Psychological and Cultural Implications" in *Religion and Sexism*, ed. by R. R. Ruther (New York, 1974), pp. 24-29, for Erikson's view.

[11] In developing these principles and my later theses I rely heavily on Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (W. B. Eerdmans, 1975). He builds on Karl Barth's work while denying Barth's subordinationist conclusions.

is both masculine and feminine (as Plato and some theologians like Berdyaev thought[12]). It is not simply biological and limited to marriage (as most theologians have interpreted Gen 1 and 2). It is a transcendent difference that will remain even in heaven and affects every aspect of human existence. Scripture affirms the difference as God-created (Gen 1:27), and by putting the command to reproduce later (Gen 1:28) the writer frees God from the implications of sexual reproduction,[13] and he also frees male-female differences from the limits of mere biology. Two NT passages that might be thought to indicate a passing away of sexual differences in heaven—Mk 12:25 ("no marriage in heaven") and 1 Cor 7:25-35 ("marriage will pass away")—do not say "no women" but "no marriage."[14] The saints and Mary/Christ retain their sexual distinctiveness in heaven.

Secondly, however, sexual differences are not simply "given." They unfold through on-going interaction. Male and female are correlative realities, each developed and understood in light of the other. Here modern psychology, especially that of Jung, has uncovered the male-female aspects of every human person, but these aspects are discoverable only through actual relationships between men and women.[15] There seems to be no reason to limit this interaction to this life (where we can ground it empirically) since heavenly existence is also communal, involving union with Christ, Mary, and the saints, and love itself "never ends" (1 Cor 13:13). In short, to be fully human implies the interaction of male and female, indeed (on analogy of the Trinity) in an ever deeper and mutually indwelling way.

These two principles and my communal understanding of Trinity lead me to the following five theses concerning their interrelationship.

Thesis 1: Humanity as "male and female" is said to be "image of God" (Gen. 1:27) not biologically but interpersonally, which implies complementary equality in every aspect of human existence.

Because of the relative newness of this position I put it forth tentatively as an interpretation of Scripture, but with more assurance as theologically well-grounded. Karl Barth was first to develop it in detail.[16] Human being is "being-in-fellowship." Since Christian revelation reveals God as no solitary being but triune, we now see most deeply why humans also are not meant "to be alone" but in partnership. Barth takes Gen 1:26 "Let us" as anticipating the Trinity in some mysterious way. And though it likely relates to "divine beings" (the *elohim*)[17] the writer

[12] See Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (Harper & Row, 1960) pp. 61-67.

[13] See G. von Rad, *Genesis*, rev. ed. (Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 60-61.

[14] Jewett discusses this on pp. 33-34.

[15] Esther Harding quotes Jung as saying in this connection, "And just as it is impossible to individuate without relatedness, so it is impossible to have real relationships without individuation. For otherwise illusion comes in continually, and you don't know where you are from," *C. G. Jung Speaking*, ed. by W. McGuire and R. F. C. Hull (Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 31.

[16] Jewett gives a succinct presentation of Barth on pp. 35-40.

[17] See G. von Rad, *Genesis*, pp. 57-61.

includes Yahweh in that company (not alone). Further, human male and female are not interpreted from below (the sexuality of the animals) but from above (as revelation of God's being). If Gen 2:4b-25, the Yahwist creation account, is seen as complementing Gen 1, then the fact that it is not good for man to be alone, and that God made a partner "like him" gives further support for a relational understanding of male-female as involved in God's image.[18]

Thesis 2: The subordination of the sexes (man dominating woman, woman clinging to man—Gen 3:16) is the result of the Fall, not God's original intention, and hence is to be overcome in Christ's "new creation."

Relationship raises the question of "what sort?" Does Scripture imply a hierarchy of the sexes as God's image, as both Paul and Barth thought? This thesis affirms that God's original intent was equality of the sexes, and that the *de facto* subordination of women that pervaded Jewish culture on into the NT is ultimately the effect of sin.[19]

In the first place, we note that subordination does not occur either in Gen 1 or in Gen 2, though Paul interprets Gen 2 in a subordinationist way (see 1 Cor 11:8-9; 14:34d; 1 Tim 2:11-15). The point of Genesis 2 is woman's likeness to man (as distinct from the animals) and their original open relationship (naked without shame). It is Genesis 3 that brings in subordination, due to the loss of their loving and trusting relationship to God through disobedience. Not trusting God, they blame others (woman and snake) and distort their own open relationship to one another. The dominating/clinging relationship is the natural result of this distrust and yields alienation and jealousy in children down through the generations.[20] The text is not presenting an ideal but interpreting a *de facto* state that the author finds in his own day.

When Paul appeals to this text on principle in 1 Cor 11 to ground a hierarchy of the sexes, he seems to find himself on shaky ground. Now woman is made from man (v.8), now man is through woman (v.11), and ultimately he simply appeals to custom (v.16), which is tradition with a small t, not permanent Tradition.[21] Woman's subordination is a social fact, which Paul thinks nature teaches (v.14). His pastoral response may

[18] Barth hesitates to affirm actual interpersonality in God, and the OT text does not support such a conclusion, but in view of the NT evidence and my communal view of Trinity, we could conclude to a closer analogy than Barth (or Rahner!) would countenance.

[19] Some feminists have found in the Genesis text a deliberate putting down of women due to the advances of patriarchalism over an underlying mother goddess culture. See, for example, Merlin Stone, *When God was a Woman* (Harvest Book, 1976), pp. 198-223. This is indeed a later rabbinic interpretation of Genesis, but I am arguing that it is not the intent of the original author.

[20] A family therapist who has given empirical data for this dynamic is Murray Bowen. Immature relationships reveal withdrawal, fighting or domination/clinging, whereas maturity is revealed when relationship is maintained with distinctive freedom. See his *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978), esp. ch. 16, pp. 337-87.

[21] See Jewett's discussion, pp. 111-19.

have been appropriate in his day in view of his culture (he shows a similar attitude toward slavery), but his weak theological grounding argues against making subordination a universal principle.

Thesis 3: In his ministry Jesus treated women freely and equally in a way that was unprecedented in his culture.

Having taken Jesus' life/death/resurrection as ultimate norm for my view of God's love, I cannot simply affirm (as does Krister Stendahl[22]) that all of Jesus' statements about man/woman relationship fall within common Judaism of the first century. As Jewett points out, Jesus never explicitly abrogated the way women were considered in Jewish custom and law, yet the way he related to women was nothing less than revolutionary.[23] For instance, the Deuteronomist allowed a man to take for himself a beautiful captive of war (Dt 21:10f) whereas Jesus says whoever looks on a woman with lust has committed adultery with her (Mt 5:28). His own freedom from fear of woman's "seductions" enabled his openness with women. When Jewish leaders bring the adulterous woman (not the man!) to Jesus for judgment, he says "whoever is without sin cast the first stone" (Jn 7:53-8:11). A man as well as a woman who divorced and remarried committed adultery (Mt 19:3ff). Women noticed Jesus' openness, and a band of both married and single women followed him throughout Galilee, something Jeremias thought was "unprecedented . . . in the history of that time."[24] Quite contrary to custom, Jesus freely entered the house of two unmarried women, Mary and Martha (Lk 10:38-42), and he taught Mary despite the fact that all serious instruction in the Law was denied women. Further, this freedom with regard to the sinful woman was a scandal to Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7:36-50), and his openness with the Samaritan woman a surprise to his disciples (Jn 4:27). His openness and freedom with women was certainly extraordinary for his time.[25]

Thesis 4: Jesus' new way of relating to women did not die with him, but affected the Church's early ministry which included women.

If the Spirit in the Church is also part of the ultimate norm of God's love, it is not enough simply to show Jesus' openness to women. If permanent Tradition involves openness and equality in male-female relations, then there must be some sign of this openness in the foundational event of the early Church, even though the limits of the culture of that time and the possible sinfulness of its members could prevent this

[22] See his *The Bible and the Role of Women (Fortress Press, 1966), p. 26.*

[23] For a discussion, see Jewett, pp. 94-103.

[24] See Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 376, cited in Jewett, p. 97.

[25] It has been argued that Jesus' freedom with women is something of an empirical justification for affirming his mother's freedom from sin. See Jack Dominian, "The Relationship between Christ and Mary," *The Way*, Supp 25 (1975), 58-68. A man's relationship with women is rooted in his relation to his mother, and Mary's trust in God (her special grace, Lk 1:28) could be seen as a new beginning such as was intended with Adam and Eve. If so, her fidelity despite corrections and trials would indicate the type of new relationship made possible through Jesus' inaugurating the age of the Spirit.

initial breakthrough from being fully developed. In fact, we do find in Paul, and more clearly in John, an initial openness to women in ministry reflecting Jesus' own. Thus Paul's insight that "in Christ there is no male and female" (Gal 3:28) began to have its effect even on that trained rabbi himself.[26] He greets women by name (unlike the rabbinic custom of referring to "the wife of . . .") (Rom 16:12, 15, 6, 3). He addresses a group of women without men at Philippi (Acts 16:13) and stays at Lydia's house (16:15). He calls two other women at Philippi, Euodia and Syntyche, "fellow workers . . . in the spreading of the gospel" (Phil 4:2); and in Thessalonica and Beraea "chief women" are among his converts (Acts 17:4, 12).

Even the strong position on "headship" of men over women put forth in Eph 5:21-33 (see Col 3:18-25-4:1), which is clearly subordinationist, shows a move toward "mutual subordination" that would ultimately imply equality.[27] In the first place, the writer, whether Paul or someone from his school, relates husband to wife as Christ to the Church. That would make man savior of woman, which would be idolatory were it not grounded beyond man in Christ's universal headship. But if God's love, which alone saves, comes to woman through man, the reverse is also true, God's love through woman saves man from his unconscious alienation, especially in the case of children who first learn love from their mothers. What is common in both cases is kenotic, self-emptying, love. Thus, if women are to submit to their husbands, husbands are also to "sacrifice themselves" for their wives in imitation of Christ (Eph 5:25). So ultimately there is equality as "mutual subordination."[28]

The Fourth Gospel is particularly relevant to the issue of women's equality. Further, it relates Christian love to revelation of God's love. Thus, the disciples' love for one another is to be the sign of Jesus' love (Jn 13:35) just as his love sprang from the Father (Jn 15:9). They are "sent" even as Jesus is (Jn 20:21-23) and so their meaning (as we saw from the notion of "sending") rests in God's love. And further, "through their word" they are to lead others to faith and love (Jn 17:20-21). Now this ministry to reveal God's love is given to all disciples in John, including women.[29] The Samaritan woman brings others to Jesus "through her word" (Jn 4:42). Martha, not Peter as in the Synoptics, testifies that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of God" (11:27). Mary is first witness of the resurrection and is to tell the disciplies, who presumably are to listen to her (Jn 20:17). And his mother is "woman" who gives birth to the new people under the cross (Jn 19:25-7). The love that Jesus gives is to be revealed in his disciples love for and listening to one another—a continuing revelation of God's love.

[26] See Jewett, pp. 142-47 for a discussion of this point.

[27] *Ibid.*, 137-41.

[28] J. H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (W. B. Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 163-92, argues this point at some length.

[29] See Raymond Brown, "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel," *Theological Studies* 36 (1975), 688-99.

Thesis 5: The de facto subordination of women found in the early Church was conditioned by the culture of the time and the historical results of sin (tradition with a small t), and must be changed given our new historical circumstances

This thesis simply draws out the implications of what has been said. If subordination is not grounded in God's self-revelation (*T*radition as permanent) then how is it to be explained theologically? That the whole Judaeo-Graeco-Roman world of that day was overridingly patriarchal is by now abundantly clear.[30] That there was a larger role for women in ministry in the initial stages of the Church than in later first century is also indicated.[31] Revelation always interrelates with culture, and the central message is affected by the readiness of the recipients to respond. In a predominantly patriarchal culture, equal leadership of women would not have been prepared for, and would be unacceptable in the long run. In affirming subordination of women (as of slaves to their masters!) Paul was affirming a kenotic love as he learned from Christ, but within the limitations of his cultural vision. He seems concerned to avoid anarchy or the misinterpretation of the gospel of freedom in an individualistic sense.[32]

But if revelation is always for some particular age, then just as we no longer see slavery as a proper social order, so we are seeing our one-sided patriarchal culture—religious and secular—as no expression of the mutually respectful love revealed in Christ. What may have been allowable in Paul's time, because of their limited awareness of personal responsibility for cultural forms, is no longer allowable because of our deepened insight. If true *T*radition is to be maintained, traditions must be purified of limits and sin.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that one's view of God as triune self-giving love is reciprocal to one's view of Christian life and Church. But Christian life and Church progress through stages to arrive at the fullness of God's love. It may well be that the early Church found it necessary to solidify institutionalization (with its accompanying subordination) to avoid anarchy. However, I see our modern emphasis on individual conscience and freedom as a growing awareness of individuation, with its accompanying responsibility to move even further toward mutual love and joint mission. Male-female relationships are deeply involved in this process of growth and need to be freed of the last vestiges of domination

[30] See Elizabeth M. Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist, 1980), for a recent survey with further bibliography.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 92-131. The author indicates a change of emphasis even between Mark and Luke/Matthew in the direction of less active roles for women.

[32] Gnostic spirituality had just this tendency toward individualism, and it was an ever increasing threat from 1 Corinthians to the later Pauline writings. See Constance F. Parvey, "The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament," in *Religion and Sexism*, pp. 117-49.

and subordination if they are to reveal fully the freedom and equality of God's self-giving love. I suspect that the Church's creative mission depends on this.

I have not spoken about what church structures should look like to support this equality. The question of women's ordination or other ministries needs more space than could be given here. Even the theses I have presented are barely sketched in. But if they are found to be solid, they would provide some principle that could ground new forms, for in each age we need to discover anew the ways that best express and extend God's self-giving love.

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