MARRIAGE: EQUALITY AND THE FEMINIST INTERPRETATION OF
WISDOM CHRISTOLOGY

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CONTENTS

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

For Catholic-Christians the institution of marriage should ideally represent much more than a mere contractual arrangement wherein a man and a woman decide to live together, procreate (or not), and simply tolerate each other's habits for the sake of perpetuating some emotional attachment or superficial sexual passion. That type of arrangement is sometimes present in contemporary society and many people, including Catholic, have experienced this situation. It does not coincide with the Catholic understanding of matrimony as a sacrament that is an efficacious symbol of God's ceaseless communication of grace and love. As such, marriage is meant to provide a specific context in which men and women encounter the transcendent in such a way that they attain greater recognition of their own identities in relation to God in and through each other.

Regarding the order of recognition to which they belong, French theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet states that symbols are "situated on the side of 'saying to someone,' that is, on the side of communication with a subject recognized as a subject and situated in its place as a subject."[1] With respect to matrimonial symbolism, it is from such self-recognition that couples are able to live for each other with a deeper sense of mutuality (i.e. the gifts of self, trust, and love that are given by each other and for each other in a reciprocal relationship), as well as with an increased sense of relationship with God. This, then, is the ideal, and there are many people who actually do experience marriage in this way. Authentic sacramentality of this kind in contemporary society is, however,

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[1] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 76.

sometimes not easily identified and its frequency may even be diminishing. If, in fact, such a decline is occurring, the root of the problem could stem from an increase in narcissism, resulting in the perception of individual identity in terms of "self" rather than "the other." Certainly, such a perspective could make it difficult to overcome the sometimes overwhelming struggle that couples face in trying to establish grounds of communication based on respect and equality. Regardless of the cause, however, the constant seems to be that marriages will likely stand a greater chance of failure when the spouses lose their sense of mutuality. Based on that premise, certain theological perspectives posed by Wisdom Christology, as they relate to anthropology and given their application to marriage, provide an improved understanding of marital mutuality that lends support to those choosing to live in the married state. *In particular, it is asserted herein that the Catholic perspective on marital mutuality needs to be understood in light of a feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology.*

One reason for offering this hermeneutical approach to Wisdom Christology as a norm for considering mutuality within marriage is precisely because mutuality is one of feminism's core values, and is a central point of concern for feminist theologians seeking to deepen their understanding of the meaning of Christian faith. Since that is the case, and in light of mutuality's central role in defining covenant, feminist theology provides a suitable vision for addressing the cultural challenges that polarize men and women, thus making it difficult for efficacious sacramental marriage. Before addressing that contribution, however, it is important to consider the scope of marital sacramentality and identify some of those challenges.

<u>Sacramental Dimensions</u>

In order to understand the reason behind the assertion just articulated, it is first necessary to grasp the importance of mutual commitment inherent in matrimony's sacramental dimensions. According to Catholic thought, the seven sacraments are specific symbolic representations that celebrate the human experience of God's unbounded love, grace, and active presence within the limitations of historical time and space. Regarding marriage specifically, the Catholic Church maintains that it is an unbreakable bond, a permanent relationship through which couples "experience the meaning of their oneness and attain to it with growing perfection day by day."[2] According to theologian David Thomas, that relationship is dialogical in structure and is "never self-initiated because it is an answer to God's invitation to friendship."[3] It is the Church's hope that married persons will move toward spiritual excellence in this dialogical context, thereby enabling each spouse to contribute to the explication of the other's graced potential. According to Church teaching, that movement is an intrinsic feature of marital sacramentality that has both a theological and anthropological impact intended on their personal relationship to Christ in the Church.

In terms of its theological implications, sacramental marriage can be understood as a symbolic event and lifestyle that includes two essential dimensions. According to theologian Kenan Osborne, these two aspects are vital features of postmodern sacramentality. The first is what Osborne calls "primarily, fundamentally, and initially

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[2] Gaudium et Spes in Vatican Online Resource Library, http://www.vatican.va/archives/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed May 15, 2008).

[3] David Thomas, *Christian Marriage: A Journey Together*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1983), 168.

the action of God."[4] That action discloses God's presence as the Ground of all being, whose immanence gives meaning to both creation and to humanity. This primary dimension of sacramentality, (i.e. the initial action), is best imaged as concrete manifestations of grace, which is itself understood as God's free gift of Self that draws humanity into relationship[5] with the transcendent and in which God is experienced as loving, merciful, and wholly Other.

The second dimension of sacramentality identified by Osborne is "the concomitant human response of praise and love."[6] This suggests that every sacramental event involves an answer to God's call to be in relationship. Marriage experienced within a covenantal context is unique in that two people can respond to that invitation in a committed way. Specifically, the spouses' bond with each other, coupled with their mutual intention to love and honor each other in fidelity, creates a historical circumstance in which the theonomous character of their union can be more easily recognized. In that sense, a theonomous dimension is defined as a triadic interpersonal relationship between three subjects. Two of those subjects, identified with the spouses, are "other" from each other in a finite relationship. The third Subject is identified with the "Transcendent" and "Wholly Other," who as such expresses and makes normative the divine reality in human relationships. From this perspective, a sacramental marriage is one that fosters and explicates the intrinsic human capacity for being in conversation with the divine.

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[4] Kenan Osborne. *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World*, (Manwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999), 139.

[5] Eugene Lower and Joel Mlecko Ed., *A Christian Understanding of the Human Person*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 51.

[6] Kenan Osborne. *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World*, (Manwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999), 139-140.

The Catholic tradition holds that the human capacity for relationship with God is intrinsic in every individual, and this tenet is derived from the anthropological symbolism of the *imago Dei* concept in Genesis 1. The implication therein is that, having been made in God's image, humanity participates in the love of God. Pope Benedict XVI supports that view in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, when in referring to God's love he states that there is an "intrinsic link between that Love and the reality of human love."[7] Unlike the Protestant tradition, that out of respect for God's transcendence hesitates to acknowledge the similarity between God and humanity, the Catholic perspective calls for an analogous comparison. It is out of that type of comparison that the Church asserts the necessity of permanence, forgiveness, and mutuality in sacramental marriage. As sociologist Andrew Greeley states in that regard, "in the sacramental comparison of human love with divine love, the passionate man and woman understand God better as they grasp that God loves like they do, only more so."[8] That connection between divine love and human love is further realized in the conjugal act, because as Greeley states, "if grace is everywhere, it must be in sex, too."[9] When that sacramentality is present in marriage, both spouses become a symbol of hope for others by mirroring God's love to each other and to the larger community.

The sacramental description of marriage articulated herein is quite often unobservable in western culture. This is because, when separated from its sacramental dimension, matrimony can also be considered in purely civil terms that reduce it to a

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[7] Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 25 Dec, 2005, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html (accessed May 24, 2008).

[8] Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 2000), 10.

[9] Ibid, 75.

contract validated by mere agreement to terms and conditions. This outlook is highly individualistic, reductive, and indicative of societies that falsely dichotomize the sacred and the secular realms within their anthropological conceptualizations. In contrast, the sacramental perspective roots matrimony in covenantal terms that reflect "relationships with God, with the community, and with each other."[10] Implicit therein is the understanding that sacramentality is relational, broadening, and sensitive to the integral dynamics of both the sacred and secular dimensions of reality. Thus, the understanding of marriage according to this viewpoint is motivated by relational terms such as companionship, which "in marriage affirms the salience of caring in fidelity, mutuality, and loving concern for the covenant partner."[11] In order to see why marriage is often viewed in society in purely contractual terms, it is important to consider contemporary challenges inherent in the cultural context.

<div align="center">Contemporary Challenges to Marriage</div>

The choice to live as a devoted married person in contemporary society is in some ways a precarious option, considering the many obstacles that couples face in our fast-paced, highly-technological world and global economy. It is not uncommon for young married couples to find themselves struggling to carry out their promise to love, honor and be faithful to each other in the face of rising living costs, difficult career decisions, and seemingly endless shifts in cultural and social ideologies. Moreover, it seems very ordinary in present-day culture to hear about abusive marriages, single-parent households, steady annulment and divorce rates, and the normalcy of marriage

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[10] James Ponzetti and Barbara Horkoff Mutch, "Marriage as Covenant: Tradition as a Guide to Marriage Education in a Pastoral Context," *Pastoral Psychology*, (January 2006), 224.

[11] Ibid, 225.

alternatives (such as long-term cohabitation) that challenge the notion of permanent life commitments. In short, the frequency of failed marriages in our society indicates that many people do not perceive indissoluble commitment to another person as a sensible lifestyle for a Twenty-First Century postmodern culture.

In his book titled *The Culture of Narcissism*, sociologist Christopher Lasch identifies the egotistic characteristics of modern society as those that have resulted from the "culture of competitive individualism, which in its decadence has carried the logic of individualism to the extreme of a war of all against all, the pursuit of happiness to the dead end of a narcissistic preoccupation with the self."[12] Lash's study of those characteristics provides a cultural context for understanding how easily the awareness of both men and women can be drawn away from each other, and demonstrates why many people do not consider lifelong commitment to another person be a necessary goal in our time.

Lasch's thesis is based on observations that society is to a large part disenchanted with the values of the past, including politico-economic theories such as liberal capitalism, sociology, literature, governmental bureaucracies, and the humanities.[13] He claims that detachment from the societal ideals of what once was has led to the rise of the narcissist, whose characteristics include apprehensive, antisocial inclinations, and lenient sexual attitudes, with only superficial regard for others and little concern for the integration of society's rules and regulations into his or her inner life.[14] Lasch's

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[12] Christopher Lasch, T*he Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Warner Books, Inc, 1979), 21.

[13] Ibid, 18-21.

[14] Ibid, 22-23.

description of narcissism reveals a portrait of individuals unable to understand

themselves in relation to others. This type of personality is not uncommon in societies

suffering from cultural attitudes that diminish the importance of the past and are therefore

incapable of facing the future with any real hope. Lasch terms this type of civilization

the "narcissistic society."[15]

With regard to the impact that societal trends have on inter-gender relationships,

Lasch points out that there are many who perceive them to be a positive development.

The perspective seems to be that since they are no longer burdened by the pressures of

procreation or the concern for anything beyond death, men and women can better attend

to each other, live in the moment, and grow in deeper intimacy. According to Lasch,

such hopeful images are merely "illusions," because the overwhelming despair in

narcissistic societies actually makes people afraid to seek intimacy, while at the same

time causing personal relations between the sexes to weaken under the stress of

emotional turmoil.[16] In short, although male-female relationality *prima facie* appears to

be liberated and thus freer to foster satisfying relationships within contemporary society,

it is often the case that it is hindered, keeping deep and meaningful intimacy out of reach.

Lasch's sociological view points to a society that is ruled by fear. A fear of the

past and the future, as well as a cultural fear of making a deep commitment to others is

prevalent in today's western world. Such pervasive fear naturally results in behaviors

that negatively impact the likelihood of successful sacramental marriage. Extreme

individualism and the inevitable pressure it puts on relationships inhibits necessary

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[15] Ibid, 23.

[16] Ibid, 320-322.

marital-sustaining mutuality. That lack of reciprocity in marriage makes it incredibly

difficult for couples to recognize themselves as theonomous persons living within a

covenantal situation, thereby reducing the chance for long-term commitments and serving

as a recipe for broken marriages. Prime examples of this problem are seen in the

widespread propaganda supporting "open marriage and creative divorce."[17]

The influence of the culture on the institution of marriage does not always result

in the drastic scenario just mentioned, as there are many people who approach matrimony

in a manner consistent with its sacramental dimensions. However, the culture carries

tremendous weight in terms of the perspectives and behaviors of people, and sometimes

narcissistic traits do surface and create destructive tensions. When that results in the

breakdown of marital sacramentality, it ultimately frustrates the development of religious

faith, both for the couple and the faith community. When that happens, individuals lose

sight of their ability to respond to the grace that ultimately leads back to God. As

theologian Dermot Lane explains, "religious faith begins with God and ends in God."[18]

As a sacrament, marriage is intended to be an expression of God's love for the

community, serving to strengthen the community's trust in that reality. The narcissistic

personality works against that end.

The inhibition to mutuality fostered by the narcissistic culture calls for a response

by ecclesial leaders and ministers that are responsible for helping couples move toward

the desired outcomes of marital sacramentality and deeper religious faith. Particularly, it

brings to light a need for them to address the dimensions of reciprocity between men and

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[17] Ibid, 321.

[18] Dermot Lane, *The Experience of God: An Invitation to do Theology* (Dublin: Paulist Press, 2003), 92.

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women, their anthropological implications, as well as how they relate to the Catholic theological perspective. With that in mind, it is important to reflect on those elements in order to come to an understanding of marital mutuality that promotes equality in a manner that is appropriate for application within marriage ministry. Through this means married couples and those intending marriage will be empowered to respond to the inherent challenges of the narcissistic culture.

<div align="center">Thesis Structure and Landscape</div>

The approach used herein is grounded in a model of theological reflection proposed by James and Evelyn Whitehead, whose insights have been extremely helpful to ecclesial leaders seeking to become more efficacious in their ministries. That model consists of a triadic discussion between three specific sources of information: *tradition*, *experience*, and *culture*. The first source, t*radition*, refers to particular forms of written and oral information that have been handed on from generation to generation within ecclesial faith communities in order to preserve the Church's understanding of God's Revelation. Those modes of expression include official ecclesial and magisterial documents, Patristic writings, the canonical scriptures, as well as the *sensus fidelium* (sense of the faithful), the plurality of which provide "a diversity of belief and expression which, in fact, constitutes the larger Christian tradition."[19] It is that tradition that provides a context for understanding ways in which the Church embodies the relationship between humanity and divinity, as well as the practical implications that bond has for human interpersonal relationships. The particular modes of expression that will be examined herein are scripture and ecclesial documents.

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[19] Whitehead, James D and Evelyn E Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), 15.

The second component of the Whiteheads' model of theological reflection, *experience*, is described as "feelings and attitudes…available within the individual minister and within that specific faith community."[20] It is important to note that the concept of experience applied herein will not coincide exactly with that definition. Rather, it will correspond more to the perspective of theologian David Tracy. In this regard, Tracy refers to the "common human experience," which he says includes not only empirically-derived data, but also that which is "prior to our interpretation of our sense knowledge."[21] This second reflective component will be derived by addressing the ways that both spouses within a marriage can equally experience each other as persons who mutually image God's love, both to each other and to their community.

The third and final source of information in the theological reflection model is that which can be obtained from the culture. According to the Whiteheads, cultural information can include four different categories: historical and contemporary philosophy; political interpretations of community; contribution of social sciences to the understanding the human person/society; and information of other religious traditions.[22] This component has been previously identified in the discussion of Lasch's assertions regarding cultural narcissism, which belongs to the social science category. Thus, from this point on, all further assertions herein regarding marital mutuality will take into account for the influence and challenges that cultural narcissism imposes on the contemporary experience of marriage.

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[20] Ibid.

[21] David Tracy, Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 65.

[22] Ibid, 20.

Following this introductory chapter, the focus will be directed toward the concept of marital mutuality in light of scriptural, historical, and theological standpoints. Specifically, Chapter Two suggests ways that the scriptures inform the Catholic perspective of marriage, as well as how Wisdom literature's feminine image of the divine provides a basis for understanding mutuality in terms of male-female equality. The research done in this chapter is intended to create an anthropological basis from which to better grasp the ways in which men and women understand each other as persons who, in relation to each other, image the divine equally. Such anthropological perspectives of personhood are relevant for this thesis because they contribute to the overall understanding of marriage as a sacrament, since sacraments are symbols that involve communication between "subjects."[23]

The third chapter explores how marital mutuality has been understood in light of its developmental historical context. Particularly, it examines the common traditional understanding of marital mutuality in terms of "complementarity," in which spouses complement each other on the basis of biological difference. Chapter Three demonstrates how long-standing Western patriarchal society contributes to an anthropological perspective that regards females to be inferior to men in the way they image God. It also examines how that pattern of male dominance has influenced Church teaching in contemporary society. The primary references used for this discussion are assertions made by theologian Mary Catherine Hilkert in a speech at Santa Clara University in 2002. At that time she pointed out how traditional Christological views of the Incarnation, as well as anthropological misinterpretations of scripture have supported

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[23] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 76.

gender inequality. The conclusions drawn therein support the theological approach taken in the next chapter, which explores how feminist Christology provides a superior symbolism of marital mutuality.

Chapter Four focuses specifically on Wisdom Christology. Central to that discussion is the theological work of Elizabeth Johnson, whose Christology, attention to female experience, and fidelity to the authority of scripture provides insight into the harmony between divinity and humanity. Her insight supports an understanding marital mutuality in light of Wisdom Christology. Specifically, it will be asserted that the Christological model of *Jesus-Sophia* provides a model of harmony between "female" divinity and male humanity in Jesus that better serves as a common ground for mutuality between spouses than does the traditional idea of *complementarity*. In that regard, marital mutuality is understood to be a giving of self to the other out of a sense of utter compatibility rather than complementarity. In that light it discusses how marital mutuality understood in light of the feminist understanding of Wisdom Christology communicates the important ecclesial theme of *similarity-in-difference*. In effect, it contrasts the negative impact of complementarity (its disproportionate focus on difference) from the positive contribution of feminism (its acceptance of both similarity and difference). From that Christological standpoint, the discussion then focuses on how the understanding of mutuality attained from this model more appropriately reflects a relational ontology central to our experience of the Triune God, especially when lived in imitation of the friendship that Jesus offered to his disciples in the Gospel of John.

The concluding chapter uses the theological reflection model discussed above to correlate the important insights that precede it (scriptural, historical, and theological) and

expresses how the incorporation of those insights into ecclesial ministry programs for married couples responds to the challenges of cultural narcissism. Specifically, it does that by highlighting the point that couples can better understand themselves as mutual subjects, who equally image both God and Church in their relationship. Comprehending personhood in this way is essential to a sacramental experience of marriage and a paramount component of communion ecclesiology. It also discusses specific dimensions of marital experience that help to bridge the sacramental view on marriage with the limited values of the narcissistic culture. Finally, Chapter Five closes with a recommendation that ecclesial ministry programs geared toward Catholic marriage embrace the feminist Christological model in order to help spouses move toward the desired end of increased mutuality and deeper affection for each other by freely imitating the love of Christ.

CHAPTER 2
SCRIPTURE AND MARITAL MUTUALITY

The covenantal notion of marriage has its foundation in both the Hebrew biblical heritage and the Christian New Testament. In the Jewish tradition of Jesus' day, marriage itself was considered to be an obligation that "took precedence over every other human connection."[24] In order to be faithful to the covenant formed between Yahweh and his people in the book of Genesis, marriage was viewed as a necessary relationship that ensured the continuation of the Jewish Law and way of life. Since that Jewish scriptural background is the context in which Christianity and its sacramental life has its roots, it is appropriate for Christian thinkers to consider it in order to gain an understanding of the covenantal features of marriage. The Second Vatican Council affirmed the value of the Old Testament for Christian life when it recognized that "the books of the Old Testament, in accordance with the state of mankind before the time of salvation established by Christ, reveal to all men the knowledge of God and of man and the ways in which God, just and merciful, deals with men."[25] Even more specifically, Old Testament traditions provide the basis for an important anthropological model for inter-gender relationality that serves as a foundation for understanding how the feminist interpretation of wisdom literature contributes to deeper reciprocity in marriage. In particular, it does that by emphasizing the need for equality in the way that men and women theonomously image God, both to each other and to the community.

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[24] James Ponzetti and Barbara Horkoff Mutch, "Marriage as Covenant: Tradition as a Guide to Marriage Education in a Pastoral Context," *Pastoral Psychology*, (January 2006), 217.

[25] Dei Verbum in Vatican Online Resource Library, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html (accessed June 9, 2008).

<u>The Book of Genesis</u>

The primary Jewish text from which Catholicism derives its anthropological understanding of inter-gender relationality is the book of Genesis. In that regard, Catholics are informed by the creation account in Chapter 1, which states that "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them."[26] Coinciding with that belief, the Vatican II document, *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Gaudium et Spes) grounded its understanding of the human person in the *imago Dei* symbol in order to emphasize the Catholic Church's pledge of solidarity with the entire human family. Regarding the Second Vatican Council's fidelity to that oneness, the document states that, "this sacred synod, proclaiming the noble destiny of man and championing the Godlike seed which has been sown in him, offers to mankind the honest assistance of the Church in fostering that brotherhood of all men which corresponds to this destiny of theirs.[27] The Council's recognition of human solidarity is rooted in an acknowledgment of the commonality that all people share by virtue of being created in God's image. It is this oneness that brings with it certain privileges, dignity, and theological implications that are relevant for a covenantal view on marriage. In order to comprehend the full weight of those factors, it is important to first understand the scriptural meaning of the *imago Dei* symbol.

The priestly author who wrote the first creation story in Genesis 1 portrayed God as having created man in His *selem* (image) and *demut* (likeness). According to theologian Walter Vogels, *selem* "refers to a concrete object and representation," while

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[26] Genesis 1:27.

[27] Gaudium et Spes in Vatican Online Resource Library, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed June 10, 2008).

demut is "vaguer…and can have more shades of meaning."[28] Vogels points out that the

linking of these two qualitatively different terms is curious, and thus raises some

questions about their meaning in that context. In that regard, while some speculate that

the latter more ambiguous term qualifies the former, or that the author drew from

different sources that used both terms, Vogels contends that *selem* refers directly to

Adam, while *demut* refers to Adam's descendents. To support this claim he cites Genesis

5, which states that all within Adam's posterior lineage were created "in the likeness" of

their fathers.[29] Given that, he suggests that the linking of the terms serves to recognize

the dual-function of pro-creator and co-creator that is entrusted to humanity in Genesis 1,

verses 28-29.[30] These two activities are the first indicators in Genesis of the roles that

men and women will play in their relationship to God and to each other, and they also

provide the background against which humanity carries out its specific functions of

populating and subduing the earth.

  Although chapter 1, verse 27 refers to *Adam* in a general sense as both male and

female, the true identity of the *imago Dei* subject has been an exegetical concern. With

respect to who images God, Vogels addresses the question raised by some interpretations

regarding whether or not the text really intends to include females, or if it restricts that

privilege exclusively to males. For example, some believe Genesis 5, verse 1 supports

the idea that *Adam* is the proper name of the first man created by God and that females

are excluded from the honor of being made in God's image. Others assert that, since

males and females are mentioned together in Genesis 1, humans can only be understood

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[28] Walter Vogels, "The Human Person in the Image of God," *Theology Digest*, (Spring 1996), 4.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

to image God when grouped as male-female couples. Vogels rejects both of those claims

on the basis that each argument fails to account for the insight provided by the other. He

points out that Genesis 5 affirms that Adam is an individual made in God's likeness, but

that in light of Genesis 1 that dignity applies equally to the female. With this rationale,

Vogels claims that every human person, whether male or female, is made in the image of

God, and as such reveals something about the reality of God.[31]

The two assertions rejected by Vogels, which limit the understanding of the

imago Dei exclusively to either males or male-female couples, are rooted in

interpretations that often attempt to justify man's domination over the rest of the earth.

Such perspectives adhere strictly to male-dominated and rationalistic theological

approaches to the *imago Dei* symbol that juxtapose men with God's dominion over the

rest of creation, including women. During her lecture at Santa Cara University in 2002,

Hilkert argued that such interpretations are problematic in that they support sexist

attitudes toward women. To support her claims she cited Phyllis Trible's rhetorical

analysis of Genesis 2 and 3, which regards domination of all personal relationships to be

a result of human sin, not of creation itself.[32] In that regard, Trible explicitly states that

"the suffering and oppression we women and men know now marks our fall, not our

creation."[33]

Trible's examination of Genesis 2 and 3 highlights the scriptural basis for equality

between the sexes. Therein she points out several more examples of how the text serves

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[31] Ibid, 6-7.

[32] Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, *Imago Dei: Does the Symbol have a Future*? Santa Clara Lectures, 14, April 2002, 5.

[33] Phyllis Trible, "Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread," *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, Ed., (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 81.

to promote that equality while simultaneously discouraging any notion of female subordination to male control. Primary to that perspective, she points out that the placement of the creation of woman after man in the Yahwist account in chapter 2 does not, as some suggest, imply female inferiority to the man. Rather, that sequence positions woman as the peak of all creation, since "the Yahwist account moves to its climax, not its decline."[34] Second, she suggests that the reference to the woman as *ezer* (helper) in Genesis 2:18 "connotes equality: a helper who is a counterpart."[35] The rationale for that equality is the mutual and beneficial relationship that the woman offers to the man as *ezer*. This is quite different from the animals that, although taken from the ground (*adamah*) and therefore have something in common with the man, are inferior because they provide no mutual relationship with the man.

Continuing to pursue the question of equality, Trible addresses a third point in the text that is often misunderstood as being an implication of male superiority, namely the creation of woman from the man's rib in Genesis 2:21-22. That interpretation assumes that the formation of the female demonstrates a contingent relationship to the male. As Trible points out, however, the rib is simply the necessary material used in God's act of creating the female, and as such its use does not imply any dependency on the man. Rather, the creation of the female from the male's rib demonstrates her direct dependence on God. The reason for that, according to the story, is that God puts man to sleep and does not allow him to assist in any way. The fact that the raw material belongs to the

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[34] Ibid, 75.

[35] Ibid.

man actually serves as a parallel symbol of the woman's equality with the man, who by virtue of his formation out of the ground (*adamah*) is also reliant on God.[36]

Trible's observations demonstrate that the Hebrew scriptural tradition regards equality and similarity between man and woman to be the underlying anthropological reality of their relationship to each other. In that relationship they correspond to and embody one another, and through that embodiment come to know their own selves in meeting each other. There is no supremacy of one over the other, but rather solidarity in their creation in God's image. Their equality is expressed in the narrative when the male calls the female by the common noun, "woman," but does not actually name her as he does the animals in the story. According to Trible, when the man names the animals he establishes his superiority over them and finds them unfit to help him. However, the man (*'ish*) differentiates in that regard when he simply calls the female "woman" (*'ishshah*) and thus sees her as his counterpart.[37]

Trible's rhetorical analysis of the Genesis text rejects any anthropological notion that God's act of creating the male and female resulted in their inequality. In the account, it is not until the man and woman sinned that such a perception is even possible. Her study adds credence to Vogels' assertion that the similarity in which males and females image the Creator enables them both to reveal something about the mystery of God. This scriptural principle demonstrates that equality is an essential characteristic of inter-gender relationality, especially if the male-female relationship is going to reflect the reality of God's grace in creation. Since the sacrament of marriage ideally entails an intentional manifestation of that grace, it is not unreasonable to assert that equality is also an

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[36] Ibid, 76.

[37] Ibid, 77.

essential component of matrimony. Therefore, the sacramental view of marriage should coincide with that scriptural anthropology, and thereby insist that men and women are equal to each other not only in dignity, but also in their mutual human identity as persons made in God's image.

The scriptural principle of gender equality, which is implied by the *imago Dei* symbol, is an intrinsic dimension of the covenantal nature of the male-female union. That covenant, which recognizes Adam as God's partner and steward of the earth, promises humanity the blessings of land and progeny. This is evident in the meaning of their proper names, which represent those two indicators of prosperity. In that regard, chapter 3, verse 20 states that the woman's name is Eve (*hawwa*), which by its relation to the Hebrew word *hay* identifies her role as the mother of the living. Likewise, the man's proper name is Adam, which is a play on the two Hebrew words, *adam* (man) and *adamah* (ground). The gifts of land and progeny are enfleshed in the person of Cain, who in chapter 4, verse 2, is the offspring of their marital union and whose job it is to work the land as a tiller of the soil.

From this it can be seen that marriage is a specific sacramental medium through which God makes the blessings of the covenant real for humanity. According to Genesis, the two indicators of Adam and Eve's prosperity, namely land and progeny, were and continue to be contingent on humanity's willingness to remain in faithful, mutual, and respectful relationship with God and others. Sociologist James Ponzetti and theologian Barbara Mutch highlight the importance of that fidelity when they state that "a covenant is itself a condition that the parties of the relation enter into with mutual respect and

affection."[38] In Genesis, the significance of faithfulness is demonstrated when humans willfully violate their relationship with God and suffer an unavoidable loss of the covenantal promise as a consequence. One such example of that occurs in chapter 4 when Cain kills his brother Abel and as a consequence is banished by God to "become a restless wanderer of the earth."[39] The story demonstrates that the betrayal of others is also a betrayal of God, and that such disloyalty inevitably forfeits the blessings of the covenant. Since that is the case, it is clear that fidelity is necessary for any covenantal arrangement. In light of the scriptural disclosure in Genesis, the same can be said for the Christian experience of the covenant between Jesus and the Church (often imaged as a marriage), as well as the "covenant of love between spouses and God."[40]

The New Testament

With regard to the approach toward matrimony found in the Christian scriptures, it appears that the Gospel and epistle authors of the New Testament, much like the authors of the Hebrew Scriptures, affirmed its unbreakable covenantal features and basis in relational anthropology. Particularly, the Gospels contain passages that indicate Jesus supported that view of marriage in a rather absolute sense. For example, in Mark 10:11-12, Jesus' position against divorce indicates that to him marriage was "not only a matter of the union of wife with husband (he refers to Genesis 2:24), but also a relationship having God as its active creator."[41] It is for that reason that Jesus equated breaking the

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[38] James Ponzetti and Barbara Horkoff Mutch, "Marriage as Covenant: Tradition as a Guide to Marriage Education in a Pastoral Context," *Pastoral Psychology*, (January 2006), 224.

[39] Genesis 4:12.

[40] James Ponzetti and Barbara Horkoff Mutch, "Marriage as Covenant: Tradition as a Guide to Marriage Education in a Pastoral Context," *Pastoral Psychology*, (January 2006), 224.

[41] David Thomas, *Christian Marriage*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1983), 85.

unity of the marital bond by means of divorce to adultery. Interestingly, there were some people from his same tradition who at that time who did not share Jesus' prohibitive stance on divorce. In this particular passage, it was the Pharisees, who allowed divorce on the basis of the Deuteronomic reforms to Jewish Law made by King Josiah. In spite of that, however, according to scripture scholar Raymond Brown, Jesus clearly regarded divorce unfavorably, given that "a form of the prohibition is preserved in Matthew (twice), Luke, and 1 Corinthians 7:10-11."[42]

Besides the act of divorce, Jesus also spoke about the importance of interior attitudes in marriage. In chapter 5 of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus considered lusting after someone in one's heart to be adulterous. While his statement should not be interpreted literally to mean that every single sexual thought equates to the sin of adultery, it should be understood that deep commitment is essential to covenantal marriage. As scholar David Thomas points out, this broader definition of adultery demonstrates that "marriage for Jesus involved the total person."[43] That concern for the deep personal dynamics of matrimony was rooted in his conviction that marriage was a sacred relationship that could not be defined by human standards, and in which neither men nor women had privilege over one another.[44]

The Christian reference to the Genesis creation found in the Gospels is also found in the New Testament epistles. It is clear from certain texts that early Christians embraced some Hebrew tenets and as focal points for theological reflection on Christ,

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[42] Raymond Brown, SS, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 141.

[43] David Thomas, *Christian Marriage*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1983), 85.

[44] Ibid.

and because of that many of those Old Testament beliefs were given new significance. Paul serves as a prime case in point with his *New Creation* theme, found in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49. That passage, which contrasts Jesus as the "last Adam" to the "first Adam" from Genesis, demonstrates the Christian scriptural belief that Jesus (who is heavenly) symbolizes the life-affirming dimensions of humanity in a deeper way than Adam (who is of the earth). This is seen as an early Christian reference to Jesus as the archetype of humanity, and as such reminds human persons that they are called to actively "bear the image of the heavenly one."[45] Applying that concept to marriage, Thomas points out that Jesus came to "call the wife-husband relationship to a new level of accountability"[46] that, like Jesus himself, actively affirms and enhances the quality of human life.

In terms of their impact at the time, not only did the Christian scriptures offer a deeper anthropological significance of the Creation account in Genesis, but they also upheld and renewed the covenantal features of marriage that were so vital to Jewish life. One of the most important passages for understanding that effect is Ephesians 5: 31-32, which first quotes Genesis' explanation of why a man leaves his parents and joins his wife, and then deepens the meaning of that by comparing it to the relationship between Christ and the Church. That connection demonstrates the New Testament view that both the marital relationship and the relationship between Christ and the Church are covenantal. As Thomas points out, a comparison between them shows the similarity in

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[45] 1 Corinthians 15:49.

[46] David Thomas, *Christian Marriage*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1983), 178.

the way love is shared in both relationships, each portraying "a love that is made founded by God's love in both cases."[47]

The scriptural anthropologies of gender equality and covenantal relationship are foundational, and in that regard the scriptural passages explored above support the claim that marital mutuality needs to be understood in light of the feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology. That is because they all point toward equality and mutuality as essential components of Christian relationships. Since that is the case, and since equality and mutuality are central principles of feminist theology, it can be stated with certainty that feminist theology's correspondence with the scriptural impetus from Genesis provides an appropriate framework from which to develop a better understanding of marriage. The feminist approach aims at renewing every level of Catholic ecclesial consciousness around those two key principles. As Johnson points out, "the vision which guides feminist theology is that of a new human community based on the values of mutuality and reciprocity."[48] This approach is not only beneficial for Catholic ecclesiology, but for its sacramental theology as well. In that regard, reflection on the person of Jesus in light of Wisdom literature yields a model that places those values at the center of Christian life, including marriage. Having already looked at the scriptural basis for gender equality and mutuality in Genesis (namely, the *imago Dei* symbol), it is now appropriate to exegetically explore several passages from both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures that support the feminist theological agenda.

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[47] Ibid, 185.

[48] Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus*: *Waves of Renewal in Christology*, (New York: Crossroads, 1990), 99.

<u>Wisdom Literature</u>

Up to this point the emphasis herein has been on the scriptural basis for expecting equality and mutuality within inter-gender relationships. The intention behind that focus has been to build a foundation capable of supporting the assertion that the feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology most adequately fosters that needed fairness. In order to see why this is true, it is important to understand the scriptural basis of Wisdom Christology. It should be noted in that regard that the subject of wisdom in scripture is defined by a wide range of meaning that cannot be entirely accounted for here. Rather, this section will address only those characteristics that support the application of a feminist model of mutuality to marriage. As the following discussion will demonstrate, those qualities are found in the passages from Wisdom literature that metaphorically depict the divine in female terms.

According to Johnson, one of the earliest practices in Christianity was the identification of Jesus with familiar figures from the Jewish tradition and secular culture, which is evident in the application of names like "Lord" and "Christ."[49] One of the earliest of those identifications was made in a New Testament epistle when Paul called him "the wisdom of God."[50] That description was rooted within the Jewish tradition, where Wisdom was understood as a personification of divinity who was actively involved in the creation of the world and who thereby represented the very reality of God. Another example of this is found in the Christological Hymn of Colossians, in which Jesus is portrayed as the firstborn who existed before creation. While that image parallels the prologue to John's Gospel, Brown points out that "the closest and most commonly

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[49] Ibid, 111.

[50] 1 Corinthians 1:24.

accepted background for the description…is the OT picture of personified female Wisdom."[51] Particularly, that personification background is found in the books of Job, Proverbs, Baruch, Sirach, and Wisdom.[52]

In the Book of Job, chapter 28 depicts Wisdom as having an ambiguous relationship to God, with an existence that is "not to be had in the land of the living."[53] In this instance, Wisdom is imaged in feminine terms (*hokma)* possessing qualities that escape the human capacity for attainment. It is something so difficult for humanity to reach that only God can truly see it and know it in its fullness. In verses 25-26, Wisdom is sought after by God in the creation of the wind and rain in a manner that makes it difficult to know if Wisdom exists somewhere in creation or merely in the divine mind of God.[54] Despite the apparent obscurity in the Job text regarding the relationship between Wisdom, God, and the world, it is clear that Wisdom possesses transcendent qualities, indicating that she belongs to the divine realm. In that light, verse 28, which some scholars consider to be an unauthentic addition to the original text, affirms that the only way humanity can realize Wisdom is through piety.[55] Such piety is not understood as adherence to devotional prayer, but rather as a lifestyle that reflects the reality of Wisdom through its awe of God and avoidance of evil.

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[51] Raymond Brown, SS, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 603.

[52] David Noel Freedman, Ed, "Wisdom in the OT," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, (New York: Doubleday) 926.

[53] Job 28:13.

[54] David Noel Freedman, Ed, "Wisdom in the OT," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, (New York: Doubleday) 926.

[55] Ibid, 927.

The book of Proverbs also personifies Wisdom, although in this instance she is described in more human terms than in Job. Specifically, in chapter 1, Lady Wisdom (*Sophia*) "is portrayed in the style of an OT prophet, threatening her audience (out in the public streets) with ridicule and doom."[56] Unlike in the Job story, humanity is able to relate to Wisdom in Proverbs more easily. For example, in chapter 8 she is described as a "delight" that is meant to be experienced by human beings and which brings life (verse 30-32). At the same time, however, her divine characteristics are also emphasized. Six times in that regard, in a first person context Wisdom stresses her own "existence before creation and describes herself as *amon*…at the side of God."[57] This metaphorical language in the Old Testament, which images Wisdom as that which belongs to both the divine and human realms, served as a basis for the early Christians to imagine Jesus "being involved like Lady Wisdom in the creation and conservation of the world."[58]

The Wisdom tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures demonstrates the legitimacy of metaphorically attributing feminine qualities to God within the Judeo-Christian tradition. According to Jesuit scholar Gerald O'Collins, Sophia "takes on the functions and attributes of YHWH, and within a strongly patriarchal religion, Wisdom emerges in a feminine way."[59] When applied within a Christian framework, the feminine figure of Wisdom from the Old Testament also serves as an analogous image for Jesus' divinity. Particularly, that point is seen in the fact that the tradition regards her as having existed

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Gerald O'Collins, SJ, *The Tripersonal God*: *Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*, (Manwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999), 29-30.

[59] Ibid, 24.

"with God in the beginning and enjoying eternal existence…Sophia has followed the divine choice of Israel and has made her home in Jerusalem."[60] It is the feminist appeal to this tradition and its resulting Christological formulation that is capable of addressing contemporary narcissistic challenges to marital mutuality. This approach accomplishes that by serving as a legitimizing basis for analogously understanding the divine person of Jesus in a feminine way, through which one can infer the possibility for real equality within male-female relationships in marriage.

<div align="center">Chapter Summary</div>

Several examples of how the Hebrew and Christian scriptures contribute to a Catholic understanding of marriage have been discussed herein, and it has shown that the Creation accounts in Genesis support a relational anthropology in which human persons are created equally in God's image. That insight aligns itself to the Christian tradition as a disclosure of God's attitude toward God's people in the covenant as one of graciousness and dignity. It also points to the need for increased recognition by the Church of the importance of solidarity among all people. Following from those scriptural impetuses from the Old Testament, it can then be seen how the Christian scriptures present a perspective on marriage that both affirms its anthropological and covenantal dimensions, while simultaneously deepening those components by rooting them in God's unceasing gift of goodwill and love.

Again, the scriptural groundwork of feminist Christology is focused on the female portrayal of Wisdom in the Old Testament, as well as the later Christian application of that figure to the divine reality of Jesus. The contribution this foundation makes to the question of marital mutuality is an element of Christian anthropology that supports

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[60] Ibid, 26.

Chauvet's theological understanding of sacraments as symbols that involve communication between subjects. Moreover, as a biblical witness to that sacramentality it grounds the ecclesial mission of proclaiming marriage to be an efficacious means toward the realization of God's Reign. Those particular theological dimensions will be discussed in depth in Chapter Four, and an explanation will be provided regarding how feminist Christology aids that mission by promoting greater equality and deeper friendship between the sexes. Based on that understanding, it will be shown how the implementation of the feminist hermeneutic into marriage preparation and ministry can efficaciously dialog with our narcissistic culture. Before that can be demonstrated however, it is appropriate to illustrate potential internal resistance to that implementation by examining the Church's historical identification of marital mutuality with a perceived notion of complementarity. Those concepts of complementarity and its connection with the historical evolution of marital mutuality are the subject topics of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3
COMPLEMENTARITY AND THE HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING
OF MARITAL MUTUALITY IN THE CHURCH

In its discussion of the essential foundations required for understanding mutuality within covenantal marriage, Chapter Two points out that the anthropology of the Judeo-Christian scriptural tradition regards the dignity of humanity as something shared equally between the sexes. It appeals to the early Christian parallel correlation between Jesus and Wisdom and illustrates the legitimacy of conceptualizing God's divinity in female metaphorical and analogical language. In doing so, it establishes the basic scriptural justification for exploring the feminist understanding of Wisdom Christology and how it contributes to a deeper understanding of marital mutuality. Having set that foundation, and in order to see why that contribution is necessary, it is therefore important to consider the historical understandings of inter-gender relationality, sexuality, and marriage that over the centuries have led to the ecclesial position known as *complementarity*.

Complementarity

Some feminist theologians consider complementarianism to be a means of perpetuating the biblical symbol of humanity's relationship with God, the i*mago Dei*, in such a way that it functionally necessitates female subordination and exploitation in a male-dominated social structure. The principle of complementarity, however, is based on the assertion that men and women, by virtue of their biological differences, image God differently albeit equally. This assertion serves as a rationale for particular gender roles that enable men and women to carry out their respective vocations. From that perspective each man or woman's individual understanding of his or her personhood is contingent on "maleness" or "femaleness," which as a result compels them to find each

other. In that regard Italian philosopher and theologian Angelo Cardinal Scola states that "the experience of contingence does not impede but rather urges on the finding of self in the discovery of the other."[61] In other words, reciprocity is meant to be indicative of male and female commonality (i.e. their humanity) that is expressed differently (i.e. their sexuality), while simultaneously communicative of their self-contingency or dependency on each other for their identity. While it is agreeable that self-identity is indeed dependent on relationality, this approach has a problematic dimension. Particularly, difficulty is found in the historical experience of contingency, wherein spouses have functioned according to socially pre-determined and unequal "male" or "female" roles. This can be when men holding the position of the family "head," are charged with the primary (and maybe even sole) responsibility of providing for all of the other family members while everyone else (including the female spouse) is obligated to obey him in all family matters. For women involved in such relationships, this has resulted in a less than equal role in the family and has translated into a primary vocation where she is often imaged solely as a mother and child-raiser. In that regard to complementarity, Johnson states that it "rigidly predetermines the qualities each should cultivate and the roles each can play."[62] Thus, what results is a disparity between a desired outcome that is sincere and truly indicative of the dignity of marriage and its historical expression.

One of the inherent weaknesses of complementarity is that its basis is rooted in generalized male and female qualities. Orthodox theologian, Olivier Clement, who

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[61] Angelo Cardinal Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 25.

[62] Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1992), 154.

adheres to complementarity, discusses some of those characteristics in a reflection on

spiritual anthropology. Therein he states:

> The man, like an archer, goes straight for the mark. His will is tensed to surmount
> the obstacle. The woman responds by an act of presence in which the abstract
> will is less important than the resonance of her being…The man is the conqueror,
> ranging afar; his aim is distant, his utterance poetical. The woman attends to the
> present moment, she brings us back to material things, she is ironical. The man
> makes his escape, the woman yields…The man thinks with his head, the woman
> with her whole being.[63]

Although it is true that these statements do in many instances accurately reflect some men

and some women, it is not correct to assume that they are applicable to all people. The

picture that is painted here is one where man is linear, logical, and powerful, while

woman is harmonious, spiritual, and passive. Clement himself affirms that these

statements are ambiguous, and should be interpreted after spiritual training.[64] It is not

their ambiguity, however, that is problematic. Rather, it is that they represent standards

of measurement created exclusively by men. Feminist psychologist Carol Gilligan claims

that "it is difficult to say 'different' without saying 'better' or 'worse,' since there is a

tendency to construct a single scale of measurement, and since that scale has generally

been derived from and standardized on the basis of men's interpretations of research data

drawn predominantly or exclusively from studies of males."[65] Johnson affirms this point

when she identifies the presence of sexism in "patterns of thinking that take the humanity

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[63] Olivier Clement, *On Human Being*: *A Spiritual Anthropology*, (London: New City Press, 2000), 87-88.

[64] Ibid, 88.

[65] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*: *Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 14.

of male human beings and make it normative for all."[66] Unfortunately, this one-sidedness has led to stereotypical qualities and benchmarks that have historically been regarded as literal qualifications of masculinity and femininity, and as such have greatly supported long-standing and imbalanced understandings of how men and women should relate to each other.

Those in the Church who continue to hold the complementarity position maintain that such differences and understanding of personhood do not translate into discrimination. Rather, they posit that differences between male and female are loving gifts from God that compliment each other in marriage (especially by the sexual union) and in doing so serve to express that divine love. Insofar as the man being the "head" of the household, their viewpoint sees his position as one of unconditional love and sacrifice, not of domination. That perspective, however, is particularly questionable in light of the fact that gender difference serves as a basis for numerous inequalities within ecclesial structures. Moreover, justification for such an assertion can only be made by a failure to apply a correct interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3, which as seen in the previous discussion of Trible in Chapter Two actually reveals domination to be a result of sin. As Hilkert points out that the flawed interpretation and its historical transmission justified a mentality that sees women as either being deficient in their divine image, or else being reflective of God's image only in union with men, or possibly lacking that image altogether.[67]

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[66] Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus*: *Waves of Renewal in Christology*, (New York: Crossroads, 1990), 100.

[67] Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, Imago Dei: Does the Symbol Have a Future? Santa Clara Lectures, 14, April 2002, 4.

During her lecture given at Santa Clara University in 2002, Hilkert articulated concern not only for the misinterpretation of the *imago Dei* symbol in Genesis, but also for the ways in which Christological views of the Incarnation have been used to support gender inequality in general. She did this by citing what she considers to be a misuse of Jesus' maleness as an essential characteristic of his salvific action and its efficacy in history.[68] That rationale is rooted in the commonly accepted theological position that Jesus, in his nature as the very image of God in history, by his humanity and all of its particularities provides for us an experience of God's saving love. For example, in its correlation of his humanity to ecclesial functions with the intention of perpetuating Christ's salvation (specifically, the sacraments), the Church has reasoned that only men should be ordained to the priesthood lest the similarity between the symbol (Orders) and that which is symbolized (Jesus' humanity) be compromised. This case in point suggests that it is thought that only males can fully image Christ in his humanity, a belief that lends itself to the conclusion that only males can perpetuate the salvific power of Christ's priesthood. According to Hilkert, it is this link between Jesus' gender and soteriology that leads to an anthropological principle favoring inequality.

Although many claim that the Church's stand on ordination does not discriminate against women, Hilkert points to problematic aspects of its position that appear to be indicative of male favoritism, especially when attached to and justified by complementarity. When applied to the sacrament of Holy Orders, complementarity suggests that *only* men can be ordained priests, while *only* women can become consecrated virgins. In this example, the discrimination created by exclusive treatment of both genders is justified by symbolic references to Christ's humanity. Thus,

[68] Ibid, 6.

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complementarity in this case fosters the practice of ministerial exclusivity; i.e. an ecclesial acceptance of *onlys* that tends to contradict the inclusiveness that the Church possesses by virtue of its catholic nature. Since the same principle of complementarity (and all of its implications) is also applied to discussions on matrimony, understanding Hilkert's objection to the link between maleness and salvation is useful for illustrating unfair treatment of women in marriage.

Given its wide appeal to numerous Catholic theologians and the all-male ecclesial hierarchy, it is easy to see how the idea of complementarity can be used to justify exclusivity within the Church ministerial life. This is especially evident when the concept is grounded in a Christology that deems it necessary to emphasize gender difference over and above the graced commonality of all people. Although that is sometimes the case, it does not mean that all who embrace complementarity are intentionally chauvinistic. For example, Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov, who rejects notions of female inferiority, believes the principle to be reflective of the scriptural anthropology of Genesis. Pope John Paul II also believed in complementarity, yet explicitly upheld the dignity of women when he stated in *Mulieris Dignitatem* that "the woman is another 'I' in a common humanity."[69] Any person mindful of John Paul's loving attitude toward people would likely dispute claims that he was maliciously sexist. With that said, however, it is also likely that anyone aware of the problematic aspects of complementarity would naturally wonder how the pope reconciled it with his love for humanity. One possibility is that the pope, like many officials and theologians in the

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[69] John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 15 August 1988, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_15081988_mulieris-dignitatem_en.html (accessed September 23, 2008).

Church, was simply influenced at a very basic level by a Christian worldview historically conditioned by a long-standing patriarchy that often seems to be less than fully concerned with the female experience. It is because of that historical influence, which has often been the underlying reason for resistance to modern anthropological developments, that gender inequalities left marital mutuality as something to be desired.

The Historical Influence of Christian and Secular Patriarchy on Marital Mutuality

Unlike the Jewish tradition from which it arose, Christianity did not initially emphasize marriage as an essential dimension of God's covenant with humanity. In fact, there were some in the early Church who considered marriage to be an obstacle rather than a sacrament. Historian Stephanie Coontz claims that "many early Christians believed that marriage undermined the rigorous self-control needed to achieve spiritual salvation."[70] According to Coontz, the early Christian expectation of Jesus' imminent return and fulfillment of God's Reign led to the elevation of celibacy over married life.[71] With the expectation that Christ would return in their lifetime, she believes that early Christians such as Paul felt there was neither need nor time to settle down and raise families. Their main priority was the work of the Reign and the proclamation of Jesus as Lord, and therefore the only real benefit they ascribed to was that it legitimized sexual activity for those unable to abstain or avoid lustful preoccupation.[72]

As Christianity grew and became more common throughout the Greco-Roman world, it encountered numerous ideologies that influenced its overall outlook on

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[70] Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, (New York: Viking, 2005), 86.

[71] Ibid, 85-87.

[72] Ibid.

sexuality, marriage, and the human person. Included therein were religious movements such as Gnosticism, Manichaeism, and Marcionism, which according to Ponzetti and Mutch were dualistic in nature and considered sexual behavior to be something that elevated physicality over spirituality, thus rendering marital relationships suspect.[73] Although the Church officially rejected such movements as heresy, their influence over Christian thinkers was inevitable. For many theologians, sexual pleasure became something to be abhorred while sex itself was increasingly thought to be necessary only for the sake of perpetuating the human race. Evdokimov points out that even "certain Church Fathers assimilated this idea in their own way and justified marriage only insofar as it 'brings forth virgins,' populates the convents, and completes the number of saints."[74] It was this mentality that set the context in which, when contrasted to marriage, celibacy would inevitably be seen as a superior Christian lifestyle. This was especially true in the West, where "an ascetic lifestyle became a prominent ideal"[75] within a mainstream Christian mentality that was preoccupied with temporal power.

Following the legalization of Christianity in 313 C.E., the Church began to model itself after Roman governmental and cultural structures. With that enculturation came the inevitable loss of status for Christian women, who in the early Church were thought to be equal with men. As the earlier perspective on marriage as a legitimating context for sex began to be replaced by a primary emphasis on its procreative aspects, Christian women

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[73] James Ponzetti and Barbara Horkoff Mutch, "Marriage as Covenant: Tradition as a Guide to Marriage Education in a Pastoral Context," *Pastoral Psychology*, (January 2006), 218-219.

[74] Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 21.

[75] James Ponzetti and Barbara Horkoff Mutch, "Marriage as Covenant: Tradition as a Guide to Marriage Education in a Pastoral Context," *Pastoral Psychology*, (January 2006), 219.

became mere helpers to their husbands in the aim of producing and educating offspring.[76]

In addition to that shift, the theology absorbed a systematic incorporation of Platonic and

Aristotelian biological notions that considered women to be defective men, which in turn

influenced Christian thinkers for centuries to come. To that point, Evdokimov identifies

two key theological concepts that were built out of a finalistic philosophy and yielded an

obsession with sexuality from which the Church has never fully recovered. The first

concept was that femininity itself was something sinful and thus incapable of union with

God.[77] The second notion, held by St. Augustine, was that sex was a result of

lasciviousness and thus could only be justified with the positive intention of

procreation.[78] It was this attitude toward sexuality and women that set the foundation for

the impact of complementarity on marriage for centuries thereafter.

During the European Medieval and Middle Age periods, patriarchal values within

marriage could be seen in every level of society. During that time, aristocratic marriages

were often arranged for purposes aimed at securing territories, peace treaties, and

political and religious alliances. Usually numerous individuals besides the spouses were

involved in the arrangements. As Coontz points out, "bishops, archbishops, popes, and

church reformers also demanded a say."[79] Unfortunately, given the widespread mentality

that women were by nature inferior to men, they, themselves, often had virtually no say

in who they married. Moreover, monogamy in aristocratic marriage did not always

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[76] Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 22.

[77] Ibid, 24.

[78] Ibid, 24-25.

[79] Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, (New York: Viking, 2005), 89.

equate to sexual fidelity. Quite often kings married for the purpose of producing legitimate heirs, while at the same time fathering illegitimate sons who could be of service in military or political campaigns.[80] In that context, mutuality was limited to the degree that aristocratic spouses were able to legitimize each other's bloodline.

While the idea of marital mutuality in the upper classes of medieval society functioned on the political power level, in the lower classes it was initially something of lesser importance and little concern for high ecclesial officials. Coontz says that "until the twelfth century the Church held that a marriage was valid if entered into by mutual consent and then sealed by sexual intercourse."[81] While the first of those requirements was generally accepted, there were often differences of opinion with respect to the role of sexual consummation.[82] The debate ultimately led to the formation of a doctrine of mutual consent advocated by French Bishop Peter Lombard,[83] who lived between 1100 and 1160 C.E. At that time, mutual intention to be married became the only required action necessary for making a marriage valid. Shortly thereafter, however, at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the Church declared that clandestine marriages, although technically valid, were not licit. Out of that pronouncement came the ecclesial mandate requiring that brides have dowries, that banns (announcements) be published three weeks before the wedding, and that a public ceremony be held in a church.[84] In effect, those

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[80] Ibid, 97.

[81] Ibid, 106.

[82] James Ponzetti and Barbara Horkoff Mutch, "Marriage as Covenant: Tradition as a Guide to Marriage Education in a Pastoral Context," *Pastoral Psychology*, (January 2006), 221.

[83] Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, (New York: Viking, 2005), 106.

[84] Ibid, 107.

requirements reduced the ability of couples to ascertain mutual intentionality within the marriage and transferred significant decision-making power to their parents. Such contradictory Church teachings and their resulting social implications made it extremely difficult (although not impossible) for spouses to enter into the sacrament of their own volition.

By the thirteenth century, widespread ecclesial preoccupation with canonical legality and discipline gave rise to a rigorous Scholasticism that perpetuated female subordination to men. During that time, theologians continued to propagate an Augustinian-rooted anthropological pessimism that understood human sexuality to be a condition laden with sin. In that regard, Evdokimov states that "Scholasticism goes so far as to decompose the conjugal act into an intention that is meritorious and a physical pleasure that is virtually guilty."[85] In addition to a widespread negative view of sexuality in general, women in that time period also continued to suffer the longstanding influence of Greek philosophy in Christian thinking. Even great theologians such as Thomas believed that women were limited by inferior reasoning capabilities.[86] Such perspectives, in conjunction with a social structure that gave almost no political rights to women, perpetuated a historical context in which the overall experience of women was something virtually unimportant, and sexuality in marriage was only tolerated for the purpose of procreation.

By the time the Protestant Reformation began in 1517, social and religious structures that deemed women to be unequal to men continued to persist. In the eyes of

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[85] Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 26.

[86] Ibid, 30.

Augustinian-influenced reformers Luther and Calvin, sexual behavior was still thought to be a result of concupiscence. Although they differed in their particular conceptualization of marriage, both generally regarded it to be a social institution void of any sacramental dimension or blessing for the couple. Their perspective continues to carry weight, for as Evdokimov states, "from the Protestant point of view, the religious ceremony adds nothing to marriage, but is necessary for the integration of the couple into the congregation of the faithful."[87] One of the primary reasons for that apparent downgrade of marriage was the prevailing Protestant theological view of the Reformation, which emphasized God's transcendence and negated God's imminence. In effect, that principle led to a "great distrust toward all theories of 'sublimation,' out of fear of hidden harmonics between the mystical and the sexual."[88] As a result, a dichotomy came to exist between the understanding of God's love as *agape* and human erotic sexuality, thus contradicting the biblical anthropology of the *imago Dei* and setting the stage for later contractual notions of marriage in lieu of the covenantal dimensions found in scripture.

With the rise of powerful nation-states in sixteenth century Europe, conditions for women continued to deteriorate as debates ensued over the "relative merits of women and men."[89] Since Protestant influence emphasized its earthly dimensions, marriage came to serve as a social institution that promoted male authority. Within that context, a prime example of male domination can be seen in the way that wives were expected to be obedient to their husbands. Any failure in that regard was subject to disciplinary action,

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[87] Ibid, 27.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, (New York: Viking, 2005), 121.

up to and including punishment by beating. According to Coontz, secular laws supported

that practice, thus fostering the development of "distinctive patterns in marriage norms

and gender roles"[90] that tended to imbed themselves in society and thereby serve as

cultural foundations for inter-gender relationality during the Modern period.

<u>Modern Period</u>

The eighteenth century, commonly referred to as the Age of the Enlightenment,

saw the elevation of confidence in human reason and the rise of the scientific method,

both of which led to an increasingly skeptical outlook on long established philosophical

and theological ideas. New political and economic theories took shape that emphasized

wealth, market capitalism, individuality, and the freedom of religion. Out of those

principles came a new insight that took form in the notion of a collective historical

consciousness, in which the thinkers of the time noted the fundamental differences

between the cultural norms of the period and those of the past. Inherent in that

understanding was the acknowledgment that future generations would also be

fundamentally different. In effect, this meant that anthropological notions of the self

were no longer strictly defined according to the traditions, values, and mores of past

peoples from western civilization. In that context, marriage came to be understood with

increasingly individualistic and secular terms.[91]

In his book, *Sources of the Self*, renowned philosopher Charles Taylor states that

the impact of that individuation on married life was a "greater place for contractual

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[90] Ibid, 122.

[91] James Ponzetti and Barbara Horkoff Mutch, "Marriage as Covenant: Tradition as a Guide to Marriage Education in a Pastoral Context," *Pastoral Psychology*, (January 2006), 223.

agreement…a greater tolerance for divorce."[92] Apart from Catholicism and other theistic

circles, the primary emphasis of many marital unions became the contractual terms that

men and women agreed upon at the time of their vows. Many people in western society

began to view marriage apart from any communal or covenantal dimensions, and opted

instead to consider it in terms of individual affection and intimacy. As Coontz explains,

"individuals were encouraged to marry for love."[93] Presumably this was due to the

increased importance placed on ordinary living and the modern appeal to scientific

"naturalism," both of which are focal points in Taylor's book. Therein he attributes the

emphasis on ordinary life to a deeply rooted need to articulate sensible meaning in a

context of disillusionment. He explains that, having rejected traditional frameworks as

unsuitable for stimulating the "quest for sense,"[94] the modern mindset began to

experience "conflict, even confusion, about what it means to affirm ordinary life."[95]

Amidst that confusion, married couples witnessed a cultural rebellion against patriarchal

models of family life and an increased demand for privacy.[96] Marital mutuality was often

thought of in terms of "mutual obligations,"[97] especially in relation to notions of love,

affection, and reason. At the same time, marriage itself became increasingly cut off from

the support of wider society and made those obligations more difficult to meet.

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[92] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*: *The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 290.

[93] Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, (New York: Viking, 2005), 146.

[94] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*: *The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 18.

[95] Ibid, 24.

[96] Ibid, 291.

[97] Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, (New York: Viking, 2005), 148.

Moreover, Coontz also gives a description of this time period, which indicates it was conducive for the rise of complementarity principles. She says that perceived gender differences which imaged female fragility enabled men to justify socially isolating women by leaving them in the home, which they considered to be a "sanctuary in which women could be sheltered from the turmoil of economic and political life."[98]

Continuing through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, the modern period eventually gave rise to a postmodern mentality, where even the rational systems of meaning that defined modernity fell apart amidst an increased emphasis on disengaged subjectivity. Within that environment, skepticism of pre-modern and modern intellectual structures and texts was prevalent. Inherent in the resulting deconstructionist mentality was the longstanding modern tendency to reject the traditions and values of the past, combined with a new distrust of humanity's capacity for achieving ultimate fulfillment and progression on its own. A widespread suspicion and reconsideration of western values led to an increased emphasis on critical literary theories, which in turn gave rise to a plurality of literary, moral, philosophical, and religious ideas. In that context, feminist thought, which really only accounted for no more than two hundred years of protest against female inequity,[99] found itself in tension with a variety of other ideologies, including Christianity. That ideological plurality, combined with the modernist emphasis on individualism, was an ideal recipe for Lasch's "narcissistic society" and its inherent challenges to a sacramental explication of marital mutuality.

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[98] Ibid, 156.

[99] Ibid, 142.

The Current Tension

There is no doubt that the Catholic Church takes a negative official stance towards gender discrimination. Affirming that position the Second Vatican Council stated "every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent."[100] There is also no formally documented basis for thinking that those who adhere to a theological complementarianism do so out of explicitly discriminatory motivation. Making such an accusation would require us to know what is in the hearts of those who do, at times, appear to advance that position. Simultaneously, though, it is also reasonable to believe that the all-male ecclesial hierarchy is still greatly influenced by those cultural norms and gender roles that subordinated women to men and were prevalent for so long in the Church's history. This statement is further supported by the fact that the Catholic Church explicitly resisted the influence of Enlightenment principles, modernity, and egalitarianism into the mid-1960s. It was not until the Second Vatican Council that the church became proactive in its effort to deal with those dimensions and establish itself in a dialogue with modern culture. Given the long-standing history of tension between Catholicism and modern notions of equality, however, it is not difficult to imagine the possibility that there are many theologians who hold on to certain pre-modern concepts (such as complementarity) simply out of a sense of fidelity to doctrinal integrity.

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[100] Gaudium et Spes in Vatican Online Resource Library, http://www.vatican.va/archives/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed March 23, 2009).

The question of inter-gender relationality in western society is a source of tension between the Church and culture. In that regard, there exists a theological problem with reconciling the traditional, sacramental view of marriage with more current and egalitarian notions of male-female relationships. The challenge is to remain faithful to the Revelation of God in Christ, while at the same time articulating marital mutuality in terms that faithfully express its sacramentality. Chapter Four addresses this matter in its exploration of the feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology.

CHAPTER 4
THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF WISDOM, TRINITY, AND MARITAL MUTUALITY

The historical periods in western Christian society just discussed gave rise to cultural and religious ideologies inherently opposed to egalitarian notions of male-female relationships. Generally accepted perspectives on both the purpose of marriage and the necessary conditions for nuptial validity fostered sharp distinctions between male and female social roles, most of which were widely incorporated into the Church's sacramental theology of marriage. Female experience and opinion was generally ignored, as female spouses were seen as subordinate helpers in relation to their authoritative male counterparts. That social pattern made sense to the all-male hierarchy that adhered to a notion of inequality between men and women in terms of the extent to which they could image Christ and the Church. Because of its resistance to the advent of modernity and more assertive feminine thought, which caused its model to be rejected in large part by secular society, the Church remained withdrawn and somewhat disconnected. Even with the spirit of openness to a dialogical engagement with modernity demonstrated by the Second Vatican Council in the early to mid-1960s, the institutional Church's continued acceptance of those gender roles ultimately left it at odds with modern egalitarian notions of sexuality, gender, and marriage.

The tension surrounding these issues is currently experienced within the sociologically "narcissistic" context discussed in Chapter One. With respect to marriage, the situation presents itself as one where the Church and culture(s) are at times divergent from one another. In order to remedy this polarization, the Church must adjust the presentation of its message and find ways to connect to the common embracement of

egalitarian relationality without compromising its own fidelity to Catholic tradition. Wisdom Christology provides such a means, for as previously shown, it is indeed faithful to tradition, and from a feminist approach it takes into account the importance of male and female experience. Its perspective offers a way to present the Church's tradition in a manner that is conducive for fruitful dialogue with the culture in order to more efficaciously "reveal the mystery of God."[101]

The Feminist Interpretation of Wisdom Christology and Anthropology

There is an intimate connection between Christology and anthropology. Given the Christian belief that Jesus "fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear,"[102] it can be stated that Christology necessarily informs Catholic anthropology. Therefore, the anthropological component that Wisdom Christology offers can easily be grounded in the Catholic perspective. Moreover, it also puts forth a Scriptural model of Christian living that conforms to an important anthropological standard that Walter Cardinal Kasper articulates in his critique of Karl Rahner's transcendental Christology. In his book, *Jesus the Christ*, Kasper states that "Christology is a substantial determination of anthropology which as such must remain open."[103] With Kasper's requirement of openness in mind, theological anthropology needs to account for the historical activities of Jesus, the cross, and the Resurrection. The feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology is suitable for that task because it offers a particular image of male-female compatibility in the Incarnation, and also suggests a lifestyle capable of explicating that compatibility.

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[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1976), 51.

The contribution that the feminist approach to Wisdom Christology makes to the understanding of marital mutuality is especially evident in Johnson's theological work. Her conceptualization of "Jesus-Sophia" is an important theme that promotes equality between the genders and also gives greater insight into the ways in which humanity can live out God's image. Hilkert also affirms the value of Johnson's work in this regard, especially in that it refuses to view the *imago Dei* symbol in light of a false interpretation of the Genesis creation stories. As shown in Chapter Three, that misinterpretation yields an unnecessary connection between Jesus' maleness and soteriology and problematically calls the efficacy of Christ's salvation of all humanity into question. Citing Athanasius' objection to Arianism that only that which has been assumed has been saved,[104] Hilkert expresses the full weight of her concern by pointing out that it leaves room for speculation as to whether or not females can be saved (since Jesus was not a female). Moreover, the natural conclusion that results from its historical transmission is the aforementioned incorporation of an "*only*" mentality into Catholic teaching and ecclesial functions.

Hilkert's objection to the connection between the male gender and salvation, especially when supported by complementarianism, brings to the forefront a problematic theological tendency to isolate individual traits belonging to the historical Jesus and apply them as normative principles for all the faithful. Besides the difficulty with salvation for women, Johnson articulates a second problem that is more directly related to a theological understanding of the Trinity. She points out that such a theological practice creates the "assumption that the maleness of Jesus implies the maleness of God, so that

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[104] Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, Imago Dei: Does the Symbol Have a Future? Santa Clara Lectures, 14, April 2002, 6.

the male metaphor of Father cannot be varied with a female metaphor such as Mother."[105]

Johnson's objection to this implicit literal extension of Jesus' maleness onto God's

divinity as Father is firmly rooted in the pronouncement of Chalcedon, which asserted

that the human and divine natures of Jesus were neither mixed nor confused.[106] From

these objections, it can be seen that when Jesus' maleness is isolated and projected onto

God, it raises concern about the way that humanity images God by looking to Jesus as the

anthropological model. This question becomes whether there can be any universal

compatibility between *all* of humanity in relation to divinity when only one of the

genders is theologically emphasized. For marriage specifically, the problem translates

into a notion of *persons in communion* that calls for both men and women to image the

Church as a receptive bride, while only allowing men to image Christ as bridegroom

according to a supposed sole capacity to do so.[107] In that context, the communion

between persons is imbalanced and lends itself to a superior-subservient relationship.

With respect to the theological applications discussed above, it is clear that both

Hilkert and Johnson perceive them as reductive. Rather than working to expand the

horizons in which men and women understand themselves to be theonomous, those

practices instead provide a limited space in which only men actually image God, while

for women it is merely accidental. Of course, reductionism of this kind is not uncommon

when faced with the theological challenge of reconciling inherent dimensions that

distinguish divinity (transcendent and ultimate) from humanity (finite and historical). As

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[105] Harold G. Wells, *Trinitarian Feminism: Elizabeth Johnson's Wisdom Christology*, (Theology Today, October 1995), 4.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, Imago Dei: Does the Symbol Have a Future? Santa Clara Lectures, 14, April 2002, 7.

German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg points out, experts have often removed elements of Jesus' figure from context in search of universal anthropological significance. Differing in focus from Hilkert and Johnson, who emphasize the isolation of Jesus' particular physical characteristics, Pannenberg notices that such tendency has often resulted in too much focus on his life's ministerial work, conduct, and message.[108] Regardless of which characteristics have been (or can be) isolated, however, the point remains that in practice the result is a loss of significance of Jesus' total personhood that simultaneously alters how we understand ourselves in relation to it. Although stemming from genuine attempts to understand theology, the application of such limiting Christological principles within the formulation of Church teachings on marriage only widens the already existing dichotomy between contractual and covenantal notions of matrimony. The feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology addresses these issues by providing a framework that is more sensitive to the dignity of women and the relevance of Jesus' total personhood.

<div align="center">Jesus-Sophia: Similarity-in-Difference</div>

To address the inevitable inequality that results by adhering to complementarity, elemental isolation, and their consequences for a broader sacramental understanding of marriage, Johnson's interpretation of Wisdom Christology is helpful because it insists on maintaining egalitarian relations between men and women, in accordance with the Genesis tradition. Her logic corresponds well to Hilkert, who also suggests that "Wisdom Christology as the key for anthropology leads to a new appreciation of the wisdom required by…human creatures who have the capacity for moral choice and

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[108] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), 204.

action."[109] Johnson's theological starting point is experience (particularly female experience), from which she aims to explore ways in which the unification between divinity and humanity in the Incarnation can address feminist anthropological concerns in a manner consistent with Christian tradition.

Envisioning the divinity of Christ as Wisdom, she offers several points that support it as a basis for contemporary interpretation of Jesus' historical significance. Particularly, the doctrine of the Incarnation of God understood as feminine divine Wisdom in Jesus affirms the "feminist value of bodiliness."[110] She states that, "in the light of Jesus-Sophia we can see that the living God is *capax hominis*, i.e. capable of personal union with what is not God, the flesh and spirit of humanity."[111] One theological focus of *Jesus-Sophia* is the utter compatibility between God and flesh, i.e. the indwelling of the Spirit of Wisdom, as well as the fullest explication of that unity in the Resurrection. In that regard she states that "through his human history the Spirit who pervades the universe becomes concretely present in a small bit of it."[112] For Johnson, the glorification of Jesus' beaten and tortured humanity in the Resurrection also has hopeful implications for women who have experienced rape, torture, and discrimination throughout history.[113]

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[109] Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, Imago Dei: Does the Symbol Have a Future? Santa Clara Lectures, 14, April 2002, 17.

[110] Harold G. Wells, *Trinitarian Feminism: Elizabeth Johnson's Wisdom Christology*, (Theology Today, October 1995), 3.

[111] Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1992), 168.

[112] Ibid, 150.

[113] Harold G. Wells, *Trinitarian Feminism*: *Elizabeth Johnson's Wisdom Christology*, (Theology Today, October 1995), 4.

As pointed out earlier, the application and contribution of Wisdom Christology to marital mutuality parallels Johnson's claim concerning the compatibility between God and flesh. In that regard, it can be asserted that imaging God as female (Wisdom) in the context of the Incarnation (Jesus' maleness), which by its connection logically entails sheer compatibility between maleness and femaleness, provides a different way of understanding interrelatedness between men and women. In this context, reciprocity is no longer based on a principle that depends on each sex giving to the other what it itself is not. Rather, it is mutuality based on the capacity of harmonious self-giving and common dignity between the genders. Since Jesus is the exemplar of humanity, the Incarnation of Wisdom attests that male and female characteristics are well-suited for each other, leaving no room for essential dichotomization between the two. Not only that, but unlike complementarity this alternative model also connotes equality in the way that both sexes image Christ to each other. Now, instead of understanding both genders as representative of the Church with only the man as representative of Christ, both spouses can be perceived as representatives of both Christ and the Church. In this light, mutuality understood as reciprocal self-giving, love, and trust flows easily out of a sense of sameness and equal self-worth.

The image of mutuality that Sophia Incarnate offers to the sacrament of marriage shifts focus away from a concept based on simple biological difference. Instead, it becomes a model of solidarity between spouses that does not erase the complex differences between them, but rather celebrates their dissimilarities as "reflections of the God who treasures diversity."[114] This dimension of similarity-in-difference, by its

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[114] Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, Imago Dei: Does the Symbol Have a Future? Santa Clara Lectures, 14, April 2002, 17.

communication of a clearer and more explicit notion of equality within marriage, fosters

a superior symbolism of matrimony's sacramental nature. Within this model, there is no

pitfall into female objectification, wherein the male spouse perceives his wife to be

something possessed. Rather, it more firmly advances a context in which both spouses

find themselves in a loving bond with a "thou," a subject who also provides through that

relationship a glimpse of the "Eternal Thou," which is "wholly Other."[115]

One important reason that the similarity-in-difference concept as it is seen

through the lens of the feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology is compelling is

because it promotes equality without overlooking gender difference. Rather, it correctly

appropriates the meaning of that difference within a context of inclusiveness. While it is

true that an emphasis on commonality (i.e. graced personhood) is imperative for marital

mutuality, gender difference is still a must for sacramental marriage. As Chuvet states,

difference "is the condition for communication and its possible fruitfulness."[116] The

feminist perspective overshadows complementarity in this regard because it values

difference as a celebration of diversity, whereas the latter insists on embracing socially-

constructed gender roles. In this context, "gender difference" in marriage implies a need

for unrestricted acceptance of otherness in relationship. As Tracy points out, "in

following the track of any question, we must allow for difference and otherness."[117] For

him, similarity-in-difference is a natural result of an analogical recognition of sameness

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[115] Richard Viladesau and Mark Mass, Ed. *Relationship Poses the Ultimate Question.* Foundations of Theological Study: A Source Book, (Manwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1991), 16.

[116] Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 111.

[117] David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*: *Hermeneutics*, *Religion*, *Hope*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 20.

through an encounter with otherness that opens us up to new possibilities.[118] In terms of marriage, that possibility is seen as mutual grounding in equality and common intentionality for love and fidelity.

<u>Gender as a Transcendental and God's Incomprehensibility</u>

It could be argued that, because feminist understanding of similarity-in-difference does not universalize socially accepted gender roles, it renders notions of masculinity and femininity too ambiguous. Critics could object that certain traits must be accepted as being truly indicative of all males or females in order to fully appreciate the meaning of human identity. Ironically, however, the nebulousness that results from the feminist approach is precisely what gives it its value. In this model, gender is not defined by biologically derived capabilities. Neither is marriage identified by biologically derived vocations. Rather, such identifications are made as a result of the love between two subjects who communicate to one another the "otherness" of their masculinity and femininity. The reality of what it means to be a man or a woman cannot be totalized because their deepest dimensions are boundless, found only in love experiences of human persons who are "dynamically structured toward the infinite."[119] In that sense, the two genders are transcendental realities that not only express, but also point toward the Incomprehensible Mystery of God. Therefore, if we accept the ambiguity of those terms the real purpose of marriage as a symbol that communicates God's love for humanity is more easily identified as a mystery that moves toward Mystery.

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[118] Ibid.

[119] Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus*: *Waves of Renewal in Christology*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1990), 23.

Although the male/female gender experience cannot be defined in totality, it can function within certain concrete linguistic descriptions of human nature, as demonstrated by the "Jesus-Sophia" conceptualization put forth by Johnson. In order for that to happen, and in order to overcome gender polarization resulting from complementarity, she asserts that it is necessary to adopt a multidimensional anthropological view where sexual difference is experienced as one particular aspect of a more holistic framework.[120] In fact, she believes it is something that can only be understood relative to other dimensions, including age, race, limitations, and the like.[121] The benefit of this framework, as Johnson sees it, is that it allows relationship and otherness to become normative for how we understand the way that Christ is operative within the Christian community, without requiring gender to restrict vocations within the Church.[122] In that way, the deepest experience of gender more adequately reflects the statement made by St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians when he claimed that all are the same in Christ.[123] When this principle applied to the physical love experience of marital relationships validated by the witness of the Christian community, it allows for intercourse to be the most intimate expression of sexual difference, but does not elevate it to a position that defines the relationship over and above other characteristics of each individual spouse.

In order to better understand the rationale behind viewing masculinity and feminine as transcendental qualities, accepting the reality of Incomprehensible Mystery

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[120] Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1992), 155.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid, 156.

[123] Galatians 3:28.

of God as that which gives meaning to human existence is a must. Unfortunately,

sometimes that relationship is not properly understood. In that regard Rahner states:

> He is meaning, pure and simple and, when we make this statement, which is of course correct in itself, we think spontaneously of meaning in our sense, as that which is seen, that which is understood, controlled, that which is justified in our sight and is given in our hands, put at our disposal, so that finally the pain and emptiness of meaning of the unanswered question ceases.[124]

As Rahner points out, there is a temptation to think that just because it is believed that

God grounds human life with meaning that humanity can somehow make sense out of

everything and thus gain for itself a feeling of control over the experience of reality.

Such is true with masculinity and femininity. Although it is claimed that both men and

women express something about the reality of the Incomprehensible God, there is sill a

temptation to build a sense of social order by confining "male" and "female" to certain

functional roles. Historically, this tendency has been reflected in western perspectives on

marriage that position the man as the dominant figure within the relationship. It is also

reminiscent of a time in the Church when Christology was restricted to "the use of

manuals which explained Christ in deductive logic gave the impression that we knew

Christ thoroughly and definitively."[125] Rahner is very clear that this tendency contradicts

the real depth inherent in the perception of God as the foundation of all being. In fact,

what is truly needed instead of attempting to control the way in which God gives

meaning to human life is an adjustment of the understanding of reason itself, as well as a

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[124] Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*: Volume XVIII, (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), 93.

[125] Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus*: *Waves of Renewal in Christology*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1990), 11.

need for loving surrender to God's incomprehensibility.[126] In that same way, the

sacramental reflection of God's love in marriage calls for each spouse to lovingly

surrender to the other, who as a graced individual expresses the incomprehensibility of

God as either male or female.

When considering the connection between masculinity, femininity, and the reality

of God, it is important to remember that God is neither male nor female. Since God's

unlimited transcendence cannot be limited to any finite likeness, neither gender has the

capacity to image the reality of God in a superior fashion to the other. Therefore, any

theological system that posits strict androcentric or gynocentric notions of the *imago Dei*

translates into nothing other than idolatry. Accordingly, Johnson states that "normative

conceptualization of God in analogy with male reality alone is the equivalent of the

graven image, a finite representation being taken for and worshiped as the whole."[127]

Thus, the feminist objection points to a theological necessity to take both genders into

account, since "God, who is beyond all imaging, is well presented by analogy with both,

and not well conceived on the pattern of merely one."[128] With that relationship and its

implications for marital mutuality in mind it is appropriate to reflect on the way the

incomprehensible reality of the Triune God is imaged in the human person.

<div align="center">The Reflection of the Triune God in the Human Person</div>

What is achieved by placing the Incarnation within the feminist theological

understanding of Wisdom Christology can be seen in the "retrieval of the symbol of the

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[126]Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*: Volume XVIII, (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), 96-102.

[127] Elizabeth Johnson, "The Incomprehensibility of God and the Image of God Male and Female," *Theological Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3, 1984, 443.

[128] Ibid, 444.

imago Dei," that when applied to anthropology presents "far richer possibilities for gender relations."[129] For marriage specifically, the *imago Dei* becomes the unbounded potential for each spouse to image God equally by virtue of their utter compatibility and capacity to live for each other in equality. In turn that mutuality provides not only a context for the experience of the "Wholly Other," through the other, but also a basis for self-recognition and realization of their common graced natures. Mutuality, compatibility, and diversity are all relational characteristics of the Triune God, and the image of those traits in the human person is not separate from God's gift of grace. It is this reality that serves as the basis of Rahner's *supernatural existential*, which asserts that there is no purely human nature, but only graced nature.[130] As a sacrament, marriage calls for a reciprocal response of surrender to that grace. As an act of faith, that surrender successfully explicates the meaning of the *imago Dei* symbol for each spouse.

The theological significance of the *imago Dei* in marriage is that it calls spouses to witness to the Trinity's communication to all of creation, and that the concrete expression of God's imminence is the human person. In essence, God shares the reality of God's Self with all of humanity. Reflecting on that connection, theologian Catherine Mowry LaCugna stated in her Trinitarian work, *God For Us*, that "divine life is therefore also our life."[131] According to LaCugna, it is this essential oneness between *theologia* (the inner life of God) and *oikonomia* (the activity of God in human history) that serves

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[129] Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, Imago Dei: Does the Symbol Have a Future? Santa Clara Lectures, 14, April 2002, 15.

[130] Eugene Lower and Joel Mlecko Ed., *A Christian Understanding of the Human Person*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 52.

[131] Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us*: *The Trinity and Christian Life*, (New York: Harper and Collins Publishers, 1991), 1.

for the basis of imitating God's love in our ecclesial, sacramental, and sexual lives. For

each one of those dimensions, the Trinity provides a rule of measure for our own

understanding of both God and us. Regarding the first dimension, ecclesial living, the

Trinity calls us "to be stewards of God's economy (*oikonomoi*), to serve others

(*diakonia*), to preach the message of the Reign of God (*kerygma*), to promote communion

(*koinonia*)."[132] In reference to the sacramental life, LaCugna claims that marriage is one

of the two sacraments of vocation in which "Christians can serve the economy of

God."[133] Finally, with regard to the Christian understanding of sexuality, LaCugna

claims that the symbol of the Trinity corrects the "social construction of sexuality or

gender according to a patriarchal or monarchical view."[134] From this it can be seen that

every aspect of Christian life, including marriage, whether in an explicit ecclesial

circumstance or everyday occurrence is ideally intended to promote a relational

understanding of personhood for the desired purpose of deepening communion between

sons and daughters of God.

From the Christian perspective, relationality is normative for all ontological

expressions about God, as well as all anthropological conceptualizations of humanity.

God is (Tri) personal, and as such grounds human existence in relationship. According to

LaCugna, "personhood is the meaning of being."[135] Granted, it is not always easy for

humanity to be faithful to this ontological precept. Indeed, there are times when we tend

to perceive our existence solely in terms of individuality, and that inclination is due, in

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[132] Ibid, 401.

[133] Ibid, 404.

[134] Ibid, 407.

[135] Ibid, 248.

part, to an instinctive need to reject our own contingency. In the model of Jesus, however, we realize that we are not created simply to be individual, rational substances. As LaCugna states in that regard, "Jesus is what our own humanity was created to be: theonomous, catholic, and in communion, in right relationship, with every creature and with God."[136] For us, Jesus' identification with God, his inclusiveness and compassion for all people, and his whole-hearted commitment to helping others gain a renewed sense of self in relation to God and community represents a call for us to embrace our true humanity as relational and other-centered.

For married couples, the call to exemplify Jesus' model of personhood in their relationships with each other is a goal that is only achievable by the grace of God's Spirit. While this is true for all people, it is especially the case for married persons working together to live out their commitment as a sacramental sign, not only to themselves but to others in the faith community. The Holy Spirit, whose work is to achieve *koinonia*,[137] is the person of the Trinity who conforms humanity to Christ in freedom and love. In marriage, the action of the Spirit as the principle unifier of God and humanity in grace calls each spouse to transcend their own individuality for the sake of the other, in a relationship where both are equal in personhood, dignity, and capacity for imaging God. In the marital context, the image of God is best seen when the presence and activity of the Spirit results in "freedom-for or freedom-toward another"[138] where reciprocal love, trust, and grace abound. Thus, mutuality as a dimension of sacramental marriage is

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[136] Ibid, 296.

[137] Ibid, 298.

[138] Ibid, 299.

experienced when God's image is made to conform to the reality of Christ's self-giving

love by the gift of the Spirit. As Hilkert points out, that reality is most clearly visible

when couples strive to live in a manner of friendship with each other that is also

consistent with the type of friendship offered by Jesus to his disciples.

<u>The Image of God lived out in Mutual Friendship</u>

In the context of relevance to the dignity of sacramental marriage, feminist

theology is concerned with the anthropological significance of Sophia-Incarnate, grace,

and the image of God. In conjunction with that perspective it is also important to meet

Kasper's standard of anthropological openness mentioned earlier by considering the

human activities of Jesus (his life, message, etc) and their anthropological implications,

thereby avoiding the appearance of an elemental isolation. By analogy, those activities

enable Christians to have community with Jesus, which as Pannenberg asserts, is

important because "having community with Jesus is the basis of being Christian."[139]

How Jesus' ministry and message influenced the people he interacted with can be

seen in the Gospel narratives. They offer a sense of what it meant for Jesus to act as

Christ (God's Anointed One). They also provide an understanding of the central message

of his ministry (Reign of God), as well as insight into the saving significance of his fate.

From that rich source is gleaned an understanding of humanity's relationship to God, as

well as insight into how God is imaged by actively seeking relationship with the "other."

Given the importance of this in the context of sacramental marriage, it is necessary to

understand which aspect of Jesus' life, ministry, and message is most helpful to married

couples striving to image God in light of their utter compatibility (as modeled by Sophia-

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[139] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1968), 205.

Incarnate). For Hilkert, that aspect is the message and model of friendship found in John's Gospel.[140]

According to Hilkert, Jesus' life as it is presented in the Gospel of John supports John Paul II's anthropological emphasis on human creation as personally relational, specifically by its invitation to discipleship. She identifies this as the unity-in-difference that is experienced through friendship in community.[141] The friendship that Hilkert refers to is not defined as mere companionship, but rather as loving relationships made possible by the power of God's Spirit, in which it is sometimes necessary to sacrifice oneself for the good of the other. Such are the relationships of reciprocal love that are central to the sacramentality of marriage. In marriage, couples are called to image the Church by becoming a communion of persons-in-difference who live in loving mutuality and self-giving. For Hilkert, that model of love upholds sexual difference, but does not reduce marital vocation to "divinely prescribed gender roles or the mandate to procreate."[142] Moreover, since spousal friendship entails the most intimate love imaginable, each husband and wife are equally called to image Christ through willingness to lay down their lives for each other. Such is the example that Jesus gives to humanity by the cross. When such friendship is present in marriage, it shows itself to be a real symbol of God's love because it emulates the freedom in which God empties God's self for the good of the world.

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[140] Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, Imago Dei: Does the Symbol Have a Future? Santa Clara Lectures, 14, April 2002, 17-18.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid, 18.

<u>Chapter Summary</u>

The feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology contributes a valuable insight for healthy marital mutuality in that it calls for a consistent anthropology. Unlike complementarity, which understands gender in dualistic terms, "Jesus-Sophia" fosters a deep sense of equality between the sexes, while simultaneously celebrating their differences as important features of otherness. At its core, it calls us to recognize that both men and women, made in God's image, have the capacity to reflect God and the Church. Rather than embracing the dichotomizing action inherent in gender roles, it naturally lends itself to a notion of *communio* that exemplifies both similarity and difference, while allowing for solidarity between diverse subjects. As such, it provides a superior symbolism of the God who is both One and Three, who is active in creation as grace, and who is experienced in the teachings and exemplary lifestyle of Jesus.

The ultimate significance of the feminist understanding of Wisdom Christology for marital mutuality is its egalitarian framework. It demonstrates itself to be a suitable grounding for a sacramental understanding of marriage in that it coincides with the anthropological understanding of the *imago Dei* in Genesis and aligns itself with an ancient Christian tradition of equating Jesus with the Wisdom of God. The importance of this sacramentality is its call for married persons to manifest their gift of mutuality for the sake of God's Reign. With that, as well as with the specific theological dimensions of this approach in mind, it then becomes necessary to articulate the way that the feminist approach to Wisdom Christology enables couples to efficaciously witness to God's Reign in the midst of the narcissistic culture.

CHAPTER 5
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

Given the scriptural basis for gender equality in marriage and the historical development of cultural values contrasting that egalitarianism, it is clear that the feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology provides a theological approach for inter-gender relationships that is faithful to that egalitarian anthropology. From that anthropological foundation it demonstrates an approach that leads to a deeper understanding of marital mutuality than that provided by the principle of complementarity. In that regard, Johnson's theological critique demonstrates it is possible to imagine that males and females equally image both Christ and the Church while still adhering to Christian tradition. Even in their differences, men and women are understood as entirely compatible in light of the model for oneness between differing realities given by Sophia-Incarnate. Once that compatibility is recognized, spouses are able to open themselves up to the Gospel call for community-in-diversity as well as the mutual gift of self in equality and friendship. These are principles that lie at the heart of marital love.

It is important to understand how this primary assertion correlates to the theological reflection model discussed in Chapter One. That model involves a triadic conversation between tradition, culture, and experience, and this reflection identifies the value that such a Christological interpretation could add if normatively applied as a grounding feature to marriage ministry in the Roman Catholic Church. The traditional and cultural components have been identified throughout the previous chapters of this work and are briefly recounted below. Following those summaries is an in-depth discussion of an experiential component most adequate for correlation with the other two.

Tradition

The Judeo-Christian scriptures affirm the need for an anthropology that deems men and women as equal persons, made in God's image. Vogels points out that every man and woman expresses the reality of God by virtue of that image. Moreover, Trible's analysis of Genesis reveals that there is no scriptural basis for supremacy or subordination in male-female relationships. Rather, insofar as both men and women have their origin in God, scripture confirms their common dignity and calls them to live in solidarity with each other. That dignity is constitutive of all people and is the basis of all ministerial functions in the Church. For marriage specifically, the concretization of that dignity occurs efficaciously through the love of a man and woman, and it is expressed within a covenantal story that proclaims God to be the reality of transcendent love, who dwells in the human heart (grace), and who is revealed as a "Self" in human history. The feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology coincides with every aspect of this tradition by its inclusion of the feminine values of equality and mutuality, and is centered on what theologian Patricia Fox calls a "practical significance of the symbol of God"[143] in its theological approach. Clearly, this perspective has the most transformative potential with respect to marital mutuality and is the most appropriate for dialogue with the culture.

Culture

It is difficult to develop a universally significant definition of marital mutuality in the context of the current culture. Given their tendency to seek self-fulfillment in terms of individuality, isolation, and competition, contemporary men and women often find a

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[143] Patricia Fox, *God as Communion* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 184.

limited amount of meaning or value in their interpersonal relationships. This predisposition, when coupled with a modern definition of marriage as a mere contractual agreement that protects individual rights, has had a negative effect on society's perception of marital value.

A great many social views and constructs can be seen as radical contrasts to Catholicism's relational understanding of the self and "communio." In that respect, there is often disparity between the present norms and the sacramental ideals of the Church. It is important to realize, however, that it is not sufficient to simply label society's views as unorthodox and cite them as reasons to reject culture. Rather, it is precisely this discrepancy that calls the Church into a critical and pastoral dialogue that not only recognizes the influence of cultural narcissism, but at the same time seeks to transform it in an apologetic fashion. In this context, "apologetic" is not defined as a mere defense of orthodoxy, but rather as an approach that is consistent with commonly acceptable ways of being human. Thus, an apologetic approach to marital mutuality calls the Church to be open to an engagement that remains faithful to its tradition while it seeks out reasonable expectations for marriage that are able to show the continuity of that tradition within a plurality of ideas.

<div align="center">Experience</div>

According to Lane, experience is that which results when there is an interaction between a subject and reality.[144] Thus, all human experience is bound up with both objective and subjective dimensions. While it is true that human persons interact with the world that exists outside of themselves, those interactions are subject to internal

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[144] Dermot Lane, *The Experience of God: An Invitation to do Theology* (Dublin: Paulist Press, 2003), 20.

interpretations of the senses and even further scrutiny once they expressed in language. As Tracy states in that regard, "language is not reality."[145] Thus, what we experience is clouded with ambiguity when it is communicated through linguistic symbols. For this reason, it is not appropriate to restrict the definition of maleness or femaleness to psychological categories, behaviors, or sociological roles. If we accept those generalities as all that is needed to communicate the deepest reality of what it is to experience manhood or womanhood, then we reduce those states of being to mere interpretations. Doing this can be especially problematic if the resulting interpretations of how both genders experience themselves are categorically expressed predominantly by males. The same is true for marriage and the mutuality that is experienced within its bond. If the sacramentality of the marital relationship is contingent only on how the husband images God, it is reduced to a single interpretation of how God's love is experienced in human love.

Although it is true that language itself does not express the fullest reality of experience, it is still a necessary dimension for deepening our understanding of the ways in which we relate to God and to each other. In that regard, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida provided a significant perspective that is helpful. According to Tracy's analysis of Derrida's critique of structuralism, it is language that enables us to de-center our egos and recognize that full presence to any reality is not really possible.[146] In fact, the primary value of language is that it enables us to recognize that our personhood is found ultimately in relationship. Through language we are able to become aware of

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[145] David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*: *Hermeneutics*, *Religion*, *and Hope*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 47.

[146] Ibid, 58.

difference and put the knowledge of reality we do have to use in conversation.[147] Thus, we should not arbitrarily dismiss any categorical articulation of how maleness or femaleness is expressed or felt, because they potentially serve as linguistic symbols of relational experiences. The goal, however, should be to not limit our understanding of those experiences to what is able to be conveyed through the use of language. Such limitations are especially detrimental when they are based on notions of biological design or sexual function. In fact, that clearly appears to be the case with complementarity.

The sacrament of marriage is essentially a celebration of God's love for humanity, which is expressed as grace that grounds all human experience. Generally speaking, the extent to which that experience essentially contributes to a sacramental understanding of marital mutuality is virtually unlimited. Every individual marital relationship, however, is subject to the occurrences that arise out of its own particular set of circumstances and spousal behaviors. Thus, to develop an effective triadic theological reflection between tradition, culture, and experience, it is necessary to identify certain behaviors that, when present in the relationship serve to improve the overall experience of marriage. At the same time, the realization that the fullest realities of God, masculinity, and femininity cannot be contained within such behaviors must also be considered. Those that are most relevant in this regard include *acceptance of similarities and differences*, *forgiveness*, and *sharing in each others joys and sorrows*, all of which are discussed at length by marriage and family therapists Lanny and Maureen Law in their book, *God Knows Marriage Isn't Always Easy*. In that work they suggest that these actions are proactive steps that can be taken to improve marital relationships, and the insight they provide can facilitate

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[147] Ibid, 62-63.

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communication between the traditional and cultural components of the theological reflection model.

With respect to need for married couples to be accepting of each others similarities and differences, the Laws point out that living together over a period of time enables spouses to become more aware of each other's individual habits and shortcomings. That increased awareness often leads to "misunderstandings, disagreements, and adjustments"[148] not necessarily operative during the premarital courtship. Given the likelihood for differing backgrounds, acquired lifestyles, and emotional convictions of each individual, complete acceptance on the part of one or the other spouse is often difficult and may even seem impossible. Quite often appropriate adjustments are not made, resulting in divorces that cite "irreconcilable differences" as their cause. Despite this, the Laws point out that accepting difference is a necessary part of a meaningful marriage. Citing their own relationship as an example of how a positive balance can be achieved, they state that "in accepting each other's differences, we have also noticed our similarities."[149] In other words, differences between spouses in terms of interests, routines, and personalities can serve as contrasting indicators of the likenesses that unite them. Although this is not always an easy task to accomplish, it is possible when the marital promises and the intentionality behind them are taken seriously.

The next pertinent behavioral component that the Laws offer as a proactive step toward a positive marital experience is the willingness of spouses to readily forgive each other when hurtful actions occur. In the context of marriage, forgiving must be

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[148] Lanny and Maureen Rogers Law, *God Knows Marriage Isn't Always Easy*: *12 Steps to Add Zest*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Sorin Books, 2002), 27.

[149] Ibid.

distinguished from an attitude that simply overlooks or forgets abusive behavior,[150] for in the marital relationship forgiveness is not merely the acceptance of unjust actions of the other spouse. Rather, the Laws understand it to be a "decision we make, unconnected to the worthiness of the other person, and to whether they are repentant."[151] The Laws are clear that the benefit of forgiveness to a marriage is that the act itself enables the forgiver to prevent the buildup of resentment by dealing with feelings of anger and hurt in a manner that is not destructive to the individual or the spouse.[152] Since resentment is an obstacle to the hurt individual's hope for reconciliation, forgiveness becomes a positive experience, not only for the one who is being forgiven but also for the one who is consciously and intentionally forgiving.

Finally, the Laws suggest that couples intentionally share in each other's joys and sorrows. This behavior is important in that it promotes the feeling of compassion in the truest sense of the word. Specifically, they point out that spouses should permit each other to enter into the experiences of their day, which may include dimensions of happiness, sadness, joy, success, failure, prosperity, or suffering. When that occurs, the compassion that is felt is a dynamic of "suffering with" the other individual that fosters the development of each spouse's sense of patience. Although such behavior does not necessarily provide solutions to problems, the Laws point out that, when this element of compassion is present couples are drawn closer together. It is in that state that they are empowered to carry out their marital vow to love and sustain each other at all times.[153]

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[150] Ibid, 138.

[151] Ibid, 139.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid, 156.

These behaviors work synergistically to provide concrete expressions of marital experience that are able to serve as dialogical components, suitable for correlation with tradition and culture. Although they are not the only suggestions for marital improvement made by the Laws, these three in particular offer unique points of correspondence to the Catholic sacramental understanding of marriage. In addition, if properly applied, they can also serve as potential bridges between Catholicism and the debilitating narcissistic mentality so prevalent in contemporary culture. This is possible because the benefits of each action are not limited to one spouse or the other. Moreover, they do not demand that either spouse sacrifice his or her self-esteem in order to simply appease the other. Therefore, when connected to the two other components of tradition and culture, they are beneficial for two reasons: first they bring an overall relational stability to the marriage; and second, they provide each individual with the means for continued growth in maturity and increased happiness. Such benefits hopefully enable couples to deepen their bond by overcoming the influence of cultural fear so deeply imbedded in narcissistic societies.

<div align="center">Correlation of the Three Components</div>

The universal relevance that Christian symbolism provides for the experience of marriage in contemporary society serves as a solid basis for understanding the underlying reality of marital mutuality. From the traditional perspective, the sacramental ideal of marriage is relational in nature and is rooted in a scriptural anthropology that deems equality between men and women to be a necessity. Moreover, the ultimate goal of that sacramental celebration is realized when both spouses encounter the transcendent love of God through their own union. The feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology is

faithful to this tradition through its emphasis on gender equality and its unique understanding of how humanity images God as similarity-in-difference. Contrasting this relational concept, the widespread narcissism present within western societies promotes a concern for the self that, when applied to marriage, is typified by contractual arrangements that often fail when the demands of the relationship interfere with the individual desires of the spouses. Acting as a bridge between those two differing notions of marriage is the experiential component that asks each spouse to accept both their similarities and differences in order to help to alleviate the inherent tension. Specifically, it does that by revealing their similarities as individuals *through* the acknowledgement of their differences. It allows each individual gains a deeper sense like characteristics that bond them, which helps to sustain the overall functionality of the relationship. At the same time, the differences between spouses can be informed by feminist values of diversity and uniqueness. Even for the narcissistic mentality this concept is attractive because it regards the individual self as someone special, with particular hopes, needs and desires deserving of attention.

A second dimension concerning tradition is that it grounds its understanding of marital sacramentality within a relational ontology of God that is also normative for humanity that also understands the meaning of its being in relational terms. Narcissistic individuals deviate from the norm in that they have only superficial regard for others and a diminished sense of contextual relevance. They tend to be ruled by fear and thus retreat from commitments. Fortunately, in marriage the disparity between these two realities can be overcome by an experiential principle. Although not easy in and of itself, the intentional act of forgiveness suits both the tradition and the culture. Within the

framework of tradition, forgiveness is a step taken toward an "other," and thus necessarily occurs within a relational context. It is an essential component of the kerygma, which is understood to be the proclamation of Jesus' Gospel. From the sacramental point of view, forgiveness awakens the individual's awareness of God's mercy and love, and thus is a necessary dimension of sacramental marriage. In the context of culture, forgiveness also provides significant benefit to the individual in that it helps to shed the poison of resentment and anger suffered internally.

A third and final point of consideration in this regard is that scripture and tradition each attest to the compatibility between the divine and human. The doctrine of the Incarnation reveals that God's love is present in creation, and is affirmed in the life and teachings of Jesus. From this foundation, Christianity provides a model of friendship that enables humanity to experience that love by calling it into an awareness of solidarity and pointing to the need for charity to be active in human relationships. Out of synch with that teaching is the narcissistic culture, which can foster divisive tensions that break down marital sacramentality, thereby causing spouses to lose sight of their own responsibility, i.e. their ability to respond to God's grace. As is the case with the first two discrepancies, this polarization is bridged by a dimension of experience. Specifically, when spouses choose to share in each other's joys and sorrows they instantly position themselves for closeness in compassion. This is compatible with tradition, because it fosters a model of oneness that can also be mirrored by the faithful in the community. It is also appropriate for those who tend to be more individualistic because it requires each spouse to reflect on and express his or her particular hardships and struggles.

The integration of the data found within each dialogical component (tradition, culture, experience) reveals a common ground that is stable and capable of accommodating an apologetic theological conversation on marital mutuality. In each example just discussed, the experiential component is conditioned by a feminist interpretation of difference that also acknowledges the uniqueness of the individual. With respect to marriage, this gives each spouse legitimate opportunities to be concerned with their individual selves while still prompting them to learn how to direct their attention outward and show concern for an "other." In addition, the experience is intended to take place within a framework of egalitarianism operative on both the practical and theological levels. The benefit of this approach is that it offers married persons the ideal situation in which to de-center themselves through a process that is both flexible and reciprocal, and which can occur over a long period of time.

Granted, every couple will experience failures. All people of faith are bound to commit sin, which theologian William Hill defines to be "an inevitable yet free consequence of a liberty that, in its finitude cannot be its own norm."[154] In so far as people are finite, and because they are limited in their ability to give consistently, as well as by the strong influence of culture, the ongoing presence of self-serving deficiencies and habits is certain. Despite this truth, however, it is also possible that couples can overcome the challenges inherent in cultural norms by committing themselves to the reality that their love has the potential to transcend all limitations. When that happens, the primordial faith of each spouse is given the chance for transformation into religious

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[154] William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God*, *The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation*, (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 276.

faith in God. Consequently couples are able to put their faith in a context that surrenders to the ideals of God's Reign.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Because of the hope it offers to the sacramental understanding of marriage, Catholic ecclesial communities should consider using the feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology as a theological ground for marriage ministry. Specifically, it provides a renewed sense that marital mutuality, i.e. that which is shared reciprocally in the marital relationship is experienced equally, lovingly, and in witness to God's love for humanity. It is hope such as this, transformative in nature, which is characteristically found at the root of salvation in Christ. As Pannenberg states, "the saving character…that belongs to Jesus' figure is determined by whether Jesus is to be understood as the fulfillment of the hopes and deep longings of humanity."[155] Jesus-Sophia offers spouses a model of compatibility capable of instilling hope that the image of God they have in common can be equally shared, and thereby used as a basis for deeper communion with God through each other.

The hope for spouses that is offered by the feminist understanding of Wisdom Christology will only be efficacious if applied by ecclesial ministry that intends to liberate the sacramental experience of marriage from its apparent decline. Such liberation is understood theologically as the process of whole-making that occurs through free participation in self-transcending relationships. When both husband and wife strive to image Christ in their daily love for each other, they freely opt to respond to grace and make it an explicit manifestation in their lives. Therefore, the success of ministry

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[155] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man*, (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1968), 205.

programs grounded in this theological perspective will depend on their ability to awaken

spouses to the reality that they are free to either embrace or reject the sacramental

dimensions of marriage. As theologian Walter Burghardt points out about Cyril's ancient

anthropological definition of Christian liberty, "the human person, dynamized by the

indwelling Spirit, responds without constraint…does freely what God wants—in a word,

acts like Christ."[156] For a Christian married couple, the power to choose to imitate the

love and forgiveness of Christ in freedom is what makes their union a symbol of hope in

the fidelity of God's love for all humanity.

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[156] Burghardt, Walter J. *Free Like God: Recapturing an Ancient Anthropology*. Theology Digest (winter, 1978).

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    http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-
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        As the title indicates, the central argument of this encyclical is that God is
    love. This assertion is essential, lying at the heart of the Christian faith. Although
    God's love is gratuitous, faith in God necessitates that humanity respond to that
    gift by reciprocating it to both God and others. Since God has loved us first,
    Jesus' command to love one's neighbor becomes a response with which God
    draws near to us. In particular, Benedict's discussion on the relationship between
    Eros and *Agape* love is useful in this discussion of marriage. In that section, the
    Pope describes *Eros* as being historically thought of as covetous, worldly, and
    ascending, while *Agape* is more historically Christian. Benedict claims that,
    while it is true that love is a single reality with different dimensions, *Eros* and
    Agape cannot be cut off from each other or posited against one another. *Eros*,
    although initially covetous, becomes less and less concerned for itself as it
    matures and draws near to the other. This happens because *Agape* enters into
    Eros, and enables *Eros* to realize its own nature. Such a profound connection
    between those two dimensions of love prohibits any false dichotomization or
    polarizing opposition between the two, since that would only serve to caricature
    and diminish love. In light of biblical faith, we see that there is also no dichotomy
    between God's love and human primordial love. God's love for humanity is at
    once e*rotic* and *Agape*. For the purposes of this thesis, this concept is essential
    because it is this type of love that, when reflected in Christian marriage, not only
    fully explicates the sacramentality of marriage, but also enables both spouses to
    more fully image God equally.

Brown, SS, Raymond. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: Doubleday,
    1997.

        Brown's book is a commentary on the New Testament. Of particular
    relevance for this thesis is his notation on the Christological hymn from the book
    of Colossians. Therein he describes how the community poetically describes
    Christ's role in creation and reconciliation. Brown mentions several points.
    Specifically, he notes the widely held scholarly opinion that the hymn was well-
    known and had already been in use in Ephesus when the author included it in the
    letter. Brown also mentions a debate over the hymn's structure, and focuses on
    the way in which God's beloved Son is the most visible parallelism between the
    "one who is the image of the invisible God," and the one who "is the beginning."
    In addition, Brown describes the way in which the Old Testament portrait of
    personified Wisdom serves as background for the description of chapter 1:1-15a.
    In that context Wisdom is imaged as God's goodness, which assists God in the
    establishment of all things. Brown demonstrates that the letter's emphasis on the
    superiority of Christ over all things serves to identify Christ with Wisdom. This

is particularly helpful in supporting Johnson's and Hilkert's assertions regarding the value of the feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology in understanding Christian anthropology. Finally, Brown is referenced in order to articulate Jesus' opinion on the subject of divorce.

Burghardt, Walter J. *Free Like God: Recapturing an Ancient Anthropology*. Theology Digest (winter, 1978).

Because the link between freedom and the Image of God was articulated in the Second Vatican Council's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Gaudium et Spes), in this article Father Burghardt takes up the question of freedom as it relates to the *imago Dei* and the human person. As a historical theologian, Burghardt points out that the question of freedom had also been an issue for several early Church Fathers, including Irenaeus of Lyons, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Cyril of Alexandria. For Irenaeus, freedom consisted of the "inverse of slavery" and the dominion over one's own actions. Origen had a different perspective, identifying freedom as that which occurs when humans "adhere to the Logos in love," realized fully only in heaven. Burghardt describes Gregory's position on freedom and the divine image as that which occurs as a progressive transformation of the human person from enslavement to liberation from sexuality, corruptibility, pathos/vice (to apatheia), unintelligence, and failure to recognize through conscience that which is good. In short, freedom for Gregory is found in humanity's identification with its own nature, which occurs in the resurrectional state made possible through Christ. Regarding Cyril, Burghardt articulates that his perspective on freedom entails an ability to do what God wants without constraint by acting like Christ, once dynamized by the Holy Spirit. Each of those early Church Fathers had a particular way of conceptualizing the image of God. Those included: reason/free will (Irenaeus); potential for divinization (Origen); being made like God in all things (Gregory); the beauty of reason, freedom, dominion, holiness, incorruptibility and sonship at the origin of human history (Cyril). Burghardt concludes his brief survey of this topic by mentioning the image-freedom positions of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Humanism, Protestant, and several 20th century theologians. For this thesis, Burghhardt is referenced to support imitation of Christ as a means of liberation for married couples.

Chauvet, Louis-Marie. *The Sacraments: The Word of God and the Mercy of the Body*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001.

Chauvet's sacramental theology explores the concepts of language and symbol and how they give Christian meaning to the Church's liturgical rites. First acknowledging that both God and the Church cannot be imprisoned to those rites, he states that when obligatorily practiced in a genuinely Christian way they do not counter our worship of God in Christ and the Spirit. He notes that the Church has always celebrated the sacraments, and that they are indeed necessary for Christian identity. For that reason, he further claims that spiritually living out

the Christian faith by way of the sacraments necessitates that it be done through the mediation of the body of Christian tradition (including the institution, history, and society). Chauvet's contribution to this essay is found in his discussion of symbols. He describes them as elements that provide for us a space in which language takes on meaning and through which human persons can understand themselves as subjects in relation to other human subjects, while both are simultaneously in relationship to the world. He identifies four specific traits that are characteristic of symbols: fitting together; crystallization; recognition; and submission to the communal *Other*. Unlike signs, which belong to the order of knowledge in that they point to things other than themselves, symbols belong to the order of recognition in that they open us up to our own humanity.

Clement, Olivier. *On Human Being*: *A Spiritual Anthropology*. London: New City Press, 2000.

   Writing from an Eastern Orthodox perspective, Clement offers a spiritual anthropology that considers human nature to be damaged by sin. That sin, which entails an outright rejection of the living God, results in the condition of death. Death in this instance is not seen as a punishment due to sin, but rather, as a consequence of humanity's self-inflicted harm, made manifest by its rejection of the Creator. Thus, sin has ontological implications that can be properly addressed in terms of "life and death, communion and separation, disease and healing." Baptism functions to graft us onto the Risen Body of Christ, the Church, in which we are restored to God's image. Christian spirituality, which is understood to be life in the Spirit, gives us an awareness of being in communion with others. For us, being persons in communion reflects the Trinity, which is also a Communion of Persons, and by that parallel we become living beings that carry within us the whole of humanity. Particularly in his discussion of the destiny of Eros, Clement embraces the traditional notion of complementarity. Therein he asserts that male-female complementarity arises not out of their separate functions, but rather because their personal existence together makes up a mysterious whole. To support that claim, Clement offers a variety of ways in which the differences between masculinity and femininity, when in relationship with each other leads to a holiness in communion. For the purposes of this thesis, Clement's position offers an illustration of the traditional mentality that has shaped the Christian perspective of marital mutuality.

Coontz, Stephanie. *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage*. New York: Viking, 2005.

   In this historical analysis of the institution of marriage, Coontz asserts that it never had love or companionship as the central reason for its inception. Rather, she claims that marriage developed out of a need for large groups of people to relate to each other. Specifically, it brought strangers together and made them relatives, while simultaneously extending cooperation beyond immediate families by creating large networks of in-laws. As societies changed and those networks

became more complex, marriage began to serve different purposes, such as wealth acquisition and consolidation, the formation of political alliances, economic prosperity, and peace-treaty solidifications. Once love-based marriages began to surface in later centuries, numerous challenges to traditional social structures began to appear. Thus, Coontz holds that love-based marriage endangers the balance between marital happiness and the socially-imposed limitations on marriage that maintain its stability. One traditional function that Coontz discusses is the way that marriage historically confirmed men's authority over women. In that regard, Coontz provides an in-depth portrayal of how marital unions evolved throughout Early Christianity, Medieval Europe, and the Modern time periods. The contribution that Coontz makes to this thesis is through her perspective on how patriarchal society influenced the development of marriage according to a widespread pattern of male dominance, even within the Catholic Church. That historical depiction of male control provides examples that support feminist concerns regarding common usage of certain scriptural and anthropological symbols, particularly the *imago Dei*.

Evdokimov, Paul. *The Sacrament of Love*: *The Nuptial Mystery in the Light of the Orthodox Tradition*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2001.

Writing from the perspective of the Orthodox tradition, Evdokimov's book on the sacramental mystery of human love asserts that the love shared between spouses is an image of the Triune God that enables them to deeply realize their shared nature. This reflection on marriage has an integrative format, placing the love between man and woman within the relational context of the Trinity. According to Oliver Clement's commentary in the forward, Evdokimov brings to light the theological correspondence between human love and divine love. Therein Evdokimov demonstrates that, in its original fullness, the nature of human love is reflective of the Divine Communion of persons. Thus, the Trinity is the basis for human love, and it is God's grace that grounds that meeting point. The material from Evdokimov's book that is referenced in this essay is his historical background section. Particularly, it serves to ground Chapter Three, which outlines the historical experience of marriage and the contemporary outlooks that formed out of it. In that regard, Evdokimov admits that the contemporary view of marriage has been built on finalistic philosophy stemming out of an ancient "torch of life" mentality that upholds procreation as its ultimate purpose. That way of thinking was assimilated into the ideas of the early Church fathers, and was further intensified by a Western belief that women were socially subservient and obligated to serve their husbands. Evdokimov suggests that the systematization of those concepts by Ambrose, Augustine, and Aquinas in Christian thought caused Western theologians to lose sight of the biblical meaning of marriage.

Fox, Patricia. *God as Communion*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001.

Fox's book is a comparative analysis between the Trinitarian theological perspectives of John Zizioulas and Elizabeth Johnson. Fox's primary thesis is that the question of the doctrine of God is central to the whole of theological enterprise, and that the doctrine of the Trinity is eminently practical in that it challenges the Church and the world to make transforming changes in praxis. She makes this assertion in response to her observation of oppressive structures and omissions (personal, political, social) that either damage the liberating characteristics of Christianity or serve to merely obscure God's presence, thereby failing to reveal that presence and its soteriological implications. Her task in that regard is to contribute to the retrieval of the symbol of the Triune God for the purpose of rereading the Christian tradition for contemporary times. Fox states that such a rereading must account for the full humanity of both men and women and its proper relationship with God. Therein she acknowledges the history of exclusive male imagery, suffering in the world, and the need for focus on God's Spirit in the world. Her contribution to this thesis involves a theological assumption that the historical problem of sexism must be addressed. She believes that the symbol of the Trinity can be transformative for that inequity, and that its application emphasizes rights as communitarian. In that regard, her position supports the appropriateness of the feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology for marital mutuality insofar as it helps to retrieve the symbol of the Trinity as something functional for human interaction.

Freedman, David Noel, Ed. <u>Anchor Bible Dictionary</u>, vol. 6: Si-Z, *Wisdom in the OT*. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

This article discusses the terminology, date and setting, genres, theology, and influence of wisdom in Near East and Greek literature, with particular focus on the Hebrew bible. Of particular interest for this thesis is the article's section on the personification of Wisdom. That personification, which is unique in the Old Testament, is of someone human beings seem unable to know, yet who is known by God. Although the relationship between Wisdom and God is unclear, God knows her place because of her active involvement in the creation of the wind and rain. Wisdom is within the world but is also very unlike the created things of the world, and is therefore perceived in different ways. Some identify her to be the meaning of the created world. In Job, Wisdom is imaged to be that which is unattainable for human beings, save by piety. And in Proverbs, she is depicted as a prophet who threatens people with punishment until they heed her words. Wisdom appears in the Old Testament to be identified to some degree with God (although not identical with God), at least in the sense that she is considered to be a divine attribute. It is within Wisdom that God creates the world, and she seems to be a communication of God to the world. In any event, the Hebrew Scriptures depict the complexity of her character, as well as the concept that she is the form by which Yahweh prefers to be made present in creation. The article also provides several examples of how Jesus' divinity can be

identified in feminine terms, particularly in light of the fact that the Jewish tradition felt comfortable with that type of depiction. It lends credibility to Johnson's feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology, and thus helps to support that approach within the Christian tradition.

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice*: *Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Gilligan's book focuses on different modes of thinking about what it means to be in relationship, particularly in regard to male and female voices in psychological and literary research. She notes that the disparity between female experience and conceptual models of human development is a result of the omission of certain truths of human persons. Her claim is simply that the way people talk about their lives is of significance in revealing how they understand their reality and the reality of the world in which they live. Gilligan's contribution to this thesis is her exploration of the ways in which females have been unreasonably portrayed as developmentally inferior to men. She claims this has occurred because psychological theory has been dominated by the male point of view and imputed with male biases. As a result, male life has been seen as the norm, fostering misconceptions about female relational characteristics, such as weaker ego boundaries or stronger tendencies toward psychosis. In this regard Gilligan's statements support the points in this essay addressing the male-dominated intellectual component of the Catholic tradition. Because it also extends male modes of thought onto females, that tradition tends to view them as deficient, thereby promoting bias and inequality in the way they are thought to image Christ and the Church.

Greeley, Andrew. *The Catholic Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Father Greeley writes about the Catholic imagination not from a theological, but rather, a sociological perspective. Emphasizing the work of David Tracy, Greeley notes that Catholic art and theology tend to focus on God's immanence, or nearness to creation. Unlike the Protestant perspective, which tends to consider ways in which God is unlike humanity, the Catholic imagination is analogical and therefore seeks to understand how the divine is similar to the human. Thus, by asserting that human love is an analogy for God's love, the claim is made that there is a reality of God's love in which human love participates. Greeley's book is helpful for this thesis in two ways. First, his explanation of the reason for analogous comparison in Catholic thought helps to ground a sacramental understanding of marriage. In that regard, Greeley's focus expresses that type of analogous comparison to be the basis of Catholic sacramentality. Therefore, the passionate love between men and women is thought to participate in the very love of God, while simultaneously revealing that God's love transcends their own. Second, in the section on *Sacred Desire*, his focus on the goodness of sexual passion in marriage supports Benedict's insight

that God's love, which is pure agape, is connected to eros by entering into it. Greeley points out that, the Catholic religious sensibility upholds the goodness of sexuality, which is a perspective that is especially evident in Renaissance reflections of God's Incarnation into humanity. Therefore, erotic passion, although often ignored or rejected by many Catholic leaders and thinkers, actually hints at divine love and is thus a vital aspect of sacramental marriage.

Hilkert, OP, Mary Catherine. *Imago Dei: Does the Symbol have a Future*? Santa Clara Lectures. Santa Clara University. 14 April 2002.

       In this lecture, given shortly after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Hilkert discusses the relationship between the future of humanity and the appropriateness of the theologically anthropological symbol, the *imago Dei*. After describing the anthropology articulated in *Gaudium et Spes*, which understands the human person as a mystery inseparable from the mystery of God in Christ, she briefly explains certain ecological and feminist concerns that seem to render common usage of the *imago Dei* symbol questionable (such as subordination of women and an "instrumentalist view" of creation). She agrees that some ecclesial practices and articulations do lend credence to those perspectives, but then proceeds to explain why she believes that correct theological interpretation and anthropological application of the symbol can emphasize the inviolability of human dignity to the service of human rights. She then goes on to assert that the symbol, when viewed through the lens of the "negative contrast experience" (Schillebeeckx), is most efficaciously explicated precisely when human persons stand up for human rights, justice, equality, and the like. Finally, she supports her assertions by grounding the *imago Dei* symbol in New Testament Wisdom Christology, including that which is posed by Elizabeth Johnson, as well as the friendship model found in the Gospel of John. With all of the possible interpretations and applications of the symbol in mind, she concludes that the future of the symbol depends on human communities (including ecclesial communities) and how they choose to either image God or "blot out" God in their relationships with others. She contributes to this thesis through her argument for feminist hermeneutic that coincides with the scriptural anthropology of Genesis, as opposed to the traditional view of complementarity.

Hill, William J. *The Three-Personed God*: *The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982.

       Hill discusses the understanding of God as a self-revealing Deity that, as such, illumines both the mysteries of salvation and creation. He mentions two significant truths: first, that God's positing of creation is that which occurs freely and without any sort of necessary emanation; and second that the motivation of giving origin to the world and to creation is that which belongs in the realm of love. While these points are true, the disclosure of the Triune God is not that which occurs in creation. Rather it occurs in a faith encounter with Jesus of Nazareth, through whom God salvifically acts in history and from which

humanity linguistically appropriates God into Father, Logos, and Spirit. Specifically, Hill's discussion of the theological meaning of sin is helpful for this thesis. In that regard, he defines sin to be a symbol of the world's alienation from its true being, which in itself does not alter God's original purposes for humanity. Sin is foreseen as an inevitable and free consequence of a liberty that in its own finitude cannot be its own norm. This definition of sin is used herein to describe the danger inherent in the traditional preference for using the biological differences between men and women to determine differences in how they image God and/or Christ. In fact, that traditional perspective leads to a mentality that limits women to their biological function (motherhood) and within the context of marriage limits them in the way they relate to their spouses, causing detriment to any possibility for loving reciprocity. Thus, it can be said that the perspectives that lead to such obstacles are sinful, because they severely limit married couples from recognizing themselves as mutual persons, equally loved by God.

John Paul II. *Mulieris Dignitatem*. 15 August 1988. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_15081988_mulieris-dignitatem_en.html (accessed September 23, 2008).

This apostolic letter is a reflection on the topic of the dignity and vocation of women. Specifically, John Paul deals with the anthropological and theological points that are connected to the questions of meaning regarding the dignity of both men and women. He notes that the truth about every human being is fixed in human experience and is revealed in its fullest by Christ. This is the case not only for men, but for women as well. The pontiff begins by linking the salvific event of the Incarnation to a woman, namely, Mary the Theotokos. Representative of the whole human race, Mary symbolizes the union of all persons to God in Jesus Christ. However, Mary also simultaneously exemplifies the dignity that she possesses solely as a woman, which the pope identifies to be the union between mother and son. This event is dialogical in its character, and perfects that which is distinctive about the human feminine. Thus, the female person (as well as all persons) realizes the measure of her dignity within a relationship with God. Referring to Genesis 1, John Paul then discusses how the *imago Dei* symbol is applicable to women. He asserts that the woman is a subject, in relation to other subjects in a common humanity. As a dignified person, made in the image of God, the woman cannot become an object of domination and/or male possession. Within that image, the pope mentions that the personal resources of femininity are no less (in dignity) than those of the male, yet they are different. Thus, women can understand their dignity as persons, as well as their vocation to love others, only in light of their femininity. The contribution that this encyclical makes to this thesis is that it provides an example of the traditional Catholic position called complementarity. It is this document, which Hilkert references when discussing the problems with that perspective, which serves as a basis for regarding the feminist approach to Wisdom Christology as a more appropriate perspective for understanding the relationship between men and women.

Johnson, Elizabeth. *Consider Jesus*: *Waves of Renewal in Christology*. New York: Crossroads, 1990.

          Chapter five of Johnson's book focuses on the topic of the feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology. She asserts that, in a similar fashion to Liberation theology, Feminist Christology has discovered Jesus as the Liberator, although specifically in regard to women rather than the poor, restoring their full personal dignity in the Reign of God, and inspiring their liberation from structures of domination and subordination. Johnson points out that feminist theology can be divided into two main categories. The first is "revolutionary," which finds the Christian tradition to be so male-dominated that change is essentially hopeless. Women who hold to this type of feminism typically leave the Church, and generally have no interest in Christology. The second is called "reformist" in that, while also recognizing the male-dominated character of the Church, a hope that the tradition can be transformed is retained. The basis for this optimism is the numerous liberating elements inherent in the Christian tradition itself. The vision that guides this particular endeavor is the notion of human faith communities based on the feminist values of mutuality and reciprocity. The primary analysis of the feminist critique is that, like racism, sexism classifies a particular group of human beings as essentially less in their humanity than other groups. In this case, the essence of women is contingent on their physicality, which fosters an attitude of prejudice on the part of those who do not share the same physical features (men). It further shows itself to be a sexism that designates male characteristics to be normative for all. This androcentrism is widely pervasive throughout the Church and society. Herein Johnson is referenced to demonstrate how feminist Christology addresses widespread androcentric positions within the Christian tradition.

                . *She Who Is*. New York: Crossroads, 1992.

          Johnson's title is a gender twist on the Thomistic phrase "He Who Is," which posits that God's essence is His existence. In this book, Johnson addresses the question, "What is the right way to speak about God?" The import of this question lies at the heart of what it means to be a community of faith, since the symbol of God is primary for entire religious systems and the ultimate reference point for understanding human experience. In that context it can be said that the way God is imaged through speech shapes the imaginative perspectives of the community, as well as its individual members. Moreover, since the mystery of God can never be fathomed in any one historical setting, talk about God is necessarily open-ended and contingent on historical shifts in discourse. Thus, it is not only acceptable but also imperative that we be open to new ways of talking about God in light of cultural change. For Johnson, the historical practice of solely using male terminology in Christian worship and catechesis conveys the message that it is more fitting to think of God in male terms, even though it is not officially accepted that God has either sex. From her vantage point, the exclusivity of this common speech serves to structurally subordinate women and

undermine their dignity as human persons, made in God's image. This is especially true given the rise of feminist concerns in our society. The purpose of Johnson's book, then, is to make connections between current feminist language and the classical wisdom of Christian tradition, in order to emancipate the praxis of contemporary Christian men and women. For this thesis, her chapter on Jesus-Sophia provides a model of compatibility between maleness and femaleness that serves to position the understanding of marital mutuality within a framework of equality.

_____. "The Incomprehensibility of God and the Image of God, Male and Female," *Theological Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3, 1984, pp. 441-465.

In this article Johnson discusses the theological implications of solely using male analogical language when talking about God. In that regard she claims that God's utter transcendence prevents us from using any one system of language or mode of thinking about God in order to conquer the Incomprehensible Mystery that cannot be overcome. In light of this challenge to our comfort with reducing God to our finite language, Johnson focuses on another issue that is deeply connected to God's incomprehensibility. That is, the contemporary need to promote the dignity of women. For Johnson, normative conceptualization of God with the male human experience results in nothing other than idolatry, since it equates to the worship of a finite representation of God. She points out that although many traditionalists deny the literal use of masculine language in reference to God, who is not male but Spirit, they still object to using feminine imagery. Johnson believes that the only reason why this is the case is because using feminine imagery threatens the exclusive centrality of the male association with God. To support this, Johnson discusses scriptural, early Christian, and Medieval approaches to acknowledging God's incomprehensibility, as well as their degree of openness to using female theological imagery. Her article includes substantial support for the claim that there is no room in theological thought for considering men to image God (or by logical extension in the sacrament of marriage, Christ) in a superior fashion to women. Thus, her treatment of those issues contributes to this thesis by emphasizing the need to account for both genders when theologically reflecting on the reality of God.

Kasper, Walter Cardinal. *Jesus the Christ*. Manwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1976.

In this book Cardinal Kasper addresses a fundamental Christological question, i.e. "how do we experience Jesus Christ today?" His approach to Christology begins with the ecclesial confession of faith that "Jesus is the Christ" and is framed within a bipartite structure, which looks first at the history and activity of Jesus and then at the mystery of Jesus Christ. Kasper claims that the center of Christology is the cross and Resurrection of Christ, in which the translation between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith takes place. That midpoint is clearly at tension with a Christology that orients itself primarily to the Incarnation as the constitutive determinant of Jesus' divine-human personhood

(thereby deeming his historical activity meaningless). Kasper claims that neither notion can be posited over the other, but rather they remain both in relation to each other and demonstrative of the question of relation of being and time. The section of this book that is relevant to this essay is that which treats Karl Rahner's Christology and its anthropological emphasis. That Christology is a transcendental anthropology that can be simultaneously identified as a lacking Christology. For Rahner, Christology represents the fulfillment of anthropology, which subsequently articulates that anyone who accepts life also implicitly accepts Christ. Kasper recognizes and acknowledges this similarity between Christology and anthropology, but also points out the greater dissimilarity between them as well, in that anthropology cannot conquer the mystery of God. Speaking analogously, he points out that humanity is the grammar of God's self-expression, but the totality of God's mystery has not yet been expressed. Thus, Kasper articulates Christology as a substantial determination of anthropology that as such must remain open to new understandings of the ways in which the human activities of Jesus (as opposed to mere surrender to the Christ-event) qualify and contribute to our understanding of the rest of humanity. The format, structure, and argumentation of this essay reflect that definition.

LaCugna, Catherine Mowry. *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991.

        LaCugna claims that the doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine that has implications and consequences for Christian life. The tradition's teaching that God is both one and three reveals not only the life of God *in se*, but also discloses in the Person of Christ and the activity of the Spirit God's intimate presence in humanity. It also teaches us how to live with each other in relationship, love, personhood and communion. The part of the book that specifically contributes to this essay is the chapter titled, *Living Trinitarian Faith*, in which LaCugna explains that the essential unity between *theologia* and *oikonomia* translates into a shared life between God and created humanity, thereby providing a framework of wisdom for understanding God and ourselves. Of particular relevance were three sections within that chapter that discuss ecclesial, sacramental, and sexual life. In the first section, LaCugna points out that living in the Church requires anticipation of God's reign by animating the life of God, embodying the presence of Christ, and working through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the second section, the vocational sacrament of marriage is said to be a way to ritualize Christian service in the economy. Finally, in the third section LaCugna describes the sexual life as the most conspicuous way that humans express themselves as persons. Sexuality, at the heart of all human relationships, has in baptism the capacity for erotic self-expression that serves the communion of persons. Thus, LaCugna's theology serves to ground marital mutuality in a relational anthropology that reflects Trinitarian reality. Also pertinent to this thesis is her evaluation of relationality, Jesus' personhood as a model, and freedom in the Spirit.

Lane, Dermot. *The Experience of God: An Invitation to do Theology*. Dublin: Paulist
   Press, 2003.

       Lane asserts that dynamic, historical human experience of transcendence
is central to our understanding of God's gracious Presence in our world. He
further states that the Mystery becomes available to us through personal acts of
faith that open up aspects of the world which are otherwise not available. He
distinguishes between immediate sense experience and mediated depth experience
of meaning (including religious experience), and points out that God's presence,
while always immediately present in the order of being, is always mediated to us
in the order of human knowing. It is this "mediated immediacy" that not only
provides a historical and relational context (between God and humanity) for
Revelation, but also enables the human person to become aware of God's grace in
interpersonal relationships and then respond to that grace in faith. The
contribution that Lane makes to this thesis is in his introductory chapter. His
point that religious faith begins in God and ends in God is utilized to demonstrate
that faith is a response to God's grace that enables human persons to move toward
conversion and into relationship with God. The point is made therein that, when
influenced by a culture of narcissism, spouses who focus on their own needs
instead of their spouses run the risk of frustrating the development of religious
faith, relationships with others, and marital mutuality. This statement points to
the need for attention by ecclesial ministers. In addition, his description of
experience as that which involves interplay between the subject and reality is
referenced to ground the discussion of the experience component used in the
concluding chapter's theological reflection.

Lasch, Christoper. *Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing
   Expectations*. New York: Warner Books, 1979.

      Lasch's central thesis is that American culture is suffering a crisis of
common egotistical anxiety that fosters in people a devaluation of past
philosophical and political theories, as well as a lack of concern and hope for the
future, while simultaneously promoting constant need for immediate gratification.
The section specifically pertinent to this thesis is titled *The Flight from Feeling*.
In that section Lasch discusses the common illusion that modern people perceive
to be liberation of male-female intimacy within the narcissistic culture. That
illusion is rooted in the trivialization of personal relations. In that regard
childbearing is no longer important, the family is reduced to the marital unit itself,
and the binding character of marriage is thus removed. Lasch points out that
these detachments have resulted in a growing despair in the search for personal
intimacy, as well as in the deterioration of care for children, with the commonality
of "creative divorce" and "open marriages" being offered as types of solutions.
The influence of contemporary culture on marriage is tremendous, and is
therefore important for understanding the everyday stumbling blocks in order to
open channels of communication. In addition, such challenges bring to light the
need to address the ways that marital mutuality is theologically understood and

give couples the perspectives they need to overcome the influences of the narcissistic society. Lasch's discussion in this section provides a cultural context for that reflection.

Lauer, Eugene and Joel Mlecko, ed. *A Christian Understanding of the Human Person*. New York: Paulist Press, 1982.

       In this book Meckler and Lauer present an excerpt from Karl Rahner's *Nature and Grace*, where they briefly explain Rahner's definition of grace as the relationship between a human person and God. In other words, grace is not conceived of as a thing, rather as the very gift of God's self which is freely given and implicit in all human persons. Rahner's main emphasis in that regard is that all humans possess an innate desire to be in relationship with God, which is indicative of our supernatural destiny. For Rahner, there is no purely human state of nature. Rather, there is only graced nature (also called the "supernatural existential"). The contribution of this material to this essay is that it articulates how God calls humanity into relationship through the gift of grace. That insight is used to support the notion that marital sacramentality is visible when there a faithful relationship with a reality that is wholly Other. From that it can be seen that the sacramental dimension of marriage is realized due to an intentional human response to its own graced nature. In essence, marital sacramentality is an interaction between two persons and God; an interpersonal relationship (in this case between men and women in marriage) that serves to explicate grace and make it a concrete experience that strengthens the marital bond.

Law, Lanny and Maureen Rogers Law. *God Knows Marriage Isn't Always Easy: Twelve Ways to Add Zest*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Sorin Books, 2002.

       Written by a married couple who specialize in marriage therapy, this book recognizes various obstacles that obstruct the realization of lasting and happy marriages. It outlines twelve steps that lead toward improved marital relationships, and refers to real-life stories from their own marriage to example how that can be done. The authors posit that marriages can be improved by meeting, accepting, understanding, feeling, loving, prioritizing, touching, balancing, helping, resolving, forgiving, and sharing. The significance of this source for this thesis is its focus on behaviors that help to foster marital mutuality. Those include accepting each other's similarities and differences, forgiving each other, and readily sharing in each other's joys and sorrows. The first component is fundamental in building healthy relationships. It does this by helping couples notice their similarities and build trust, while also promoting the uniqueness of both individuals. Regarding the second behavior, the authors suggest that couples learn how to get into the practice of forgiving each other. The benefit of forgiveness is found in that it enables the forgiver to prevent the buildup of resentment and bitterness. Finally, the third component helps each spouse to be compassionate toward the needs of the other while working toward a common purpose. The authors suggest that spouses can do that by sharing in each other's

joys and sorrows. Through these actions, couples can efficaciously deepen their bonds and create solidarity within their relationships.

O'Collins, SJ, Gerald. *The Tripersonal God*: *Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity*. Manwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999.

Considering the question of how Christians know and experience in faith the Tri-personal God, O'Collins approaches the doctrine of the Trinity by focusing on the experience of salvation, the testimony of public worship, and the contemporary experience of discipleship. He claims that Trinitarian faith, and theories express themselves as knowledge, worship, and action, all three of which he aims to integrate in this book. In addition, he also depicts the ways in which the faith of the Old Testament were very useful for the early followers of Jesus who were attempting to grasp the message of the Trinity. Of course, while there is no explicit Trinitarian theology anywhere in the Old Testament, there are definitely Trinitarian themes that present themselves as metaphors, similes and corollaries. One example of how that is so is found in O'Collins contribution to this essay on marriage. Although his book is a work in Trinitarian theology, it acts as a source for this essay in regard to the scriptural association of feminine qualities to God in the Old Testament, as well as the later application of those qualities to Christ in the New Testament. That discussion provides a scriptural basis for asserting that the feminist interpretation of Wisdom Christology is appropriate for understanding reciprocity in marriage. Given its basis in the scriptures, the Wisdom tradition is a legitimate and orthodox basis for Catholic Christology.

Osborne, Kenan. *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999.

In chapter five Osborne discusses postmodern sacramentality from a standpoint of contemporary hermeneutics. A central theme of that discussion is that sacramental events are those that involve both a primary and self-revealing action of God, along with a secondary human response to that divine action. In light of that premise, contemporary theology recognizes that God's divine act and humanity's reaction to that action involve interpersonal presence and relationship between God and humanity. Since that is the case, there is both a fundamental connection to and fundamental difference between God's presence in creation and God's presence in sacramental events. This "identity-in-difference" highlights both the identicalness and distinctness between the creating God and the sacramental, revealing God. It is precisely that relationship between creation and sacramentality that grounds sacramental events in reality, preventing them from becoming epiphenomenal or magical. Moreover, it is their relationship to each other that enables humanity to reflect on its capacity to share in sacramental language, the world in which God reveals God's self. It is for this reason that intention of expression is integral to human language. Additionally, it is demonstrative of the primacy of human perception, in which we see things only

through the horizons and intentionality of our own selves. As it relates to this thesis, Osborne's insight is crucial for understanding marriage as a sacrament. It shows that, marriage is as a temporal existential context in which men and women can intentionally understand themselves and their relationship with each other as that which discloses not only God's loving presence, but also their own identity as persons. In that light, marriage as a sacramental event is understood as that which involves both ritual celebration of God's action, as well as the symbolic concretization of that action by life-activating human response.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Jesus: God and Man*. Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1968.

Pannenberg's work is an ascending Christological study in which he claims that the Jesus of history and the Jesus present with us today are not mutually exclusive from each other, however distinguishable in terms of our task of understanding. Should our starting point for Christology be the Jesus of the past, or rather, our proclamation of Jesus based on the kerygma of the Church? Pannenberg concludes that it really must be from history, but that that history also entails an assertion that the significance of Jesus includes the notion that in him God is revealed. Moreover, that history also articulates the Christian belief that Jesus acts as humanity's representative before God. Within his study, Pannenberg points out that any anthropological tenet derived from Christology needs to be rooted in the totality of Jesus' personhood, and not just in isolated aspects of his life. On the other hand, the basis of Christianity resting in the notion of being in community with Jesus must also take into account the ways that we can analogously live out Jesus' earthly activity. Thus, there is no one anthropological particularity (be it of his person or activity) that can be isolated and linked to salvation, but rather it is revealed by the way that he fulfills the hopes of all of humanity. The value that such a statement makes to this study is that it coincides in principle with the feminist criticism of falsely linking Jesus' maleness with salvation, since male exclusivity fundamentally cannot account for the hopes and longings of women. It is important to note that this connection is not articulated by Pannenberg himself, rather the concept is borrowed here as a support for resisting the false connection between maleness and God.

Ponzetti, James J and Barbara Horkoff Mutch. "Marriage as Covenant: Tradition as a Guide to Marriage Education in the Pastoral Context," *Pastoral Psychology* (January 2006): 215-230.

Ponzetti and Mutch discuss the institution of marriage as a complex multidimensional experience. It is at once both a social institution, as well as an up-close and intimate relationship between persons. Given the fact that it belongs to both the secular and sacred realms, the theological explanation of marriage is something that requires more than just an understanding of its social and relational aspects. The authors begin by discussing the assimilation of marriage into the Christian religion over time, which was heavily influenced by the Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions. For the Jews, marriage was considered a pious

duty, while for the Greeks marriage was appropriate only for the purpose of procreation. For Romans, marriage served as a civil, contractual agreement that enabled men to oversee all the activities of their households (including those of their wives). The Church's thinking on the subject was influenced by those outside cultural ideologies. With regard to marriage understood as covenant, the authors reference the Christian reverence for three such relationships found in scripture. They are: the covenant between Yahweh and the Hebrew people, the covenant between Jesus and his followers, and the covenant between spouses and God. For spouses, the marital bond is the deepest expression of covenant through their companionship, intentional commitment and sexual intimacy for one another. Marriage provides a context for mutual nurturing and sexual self-expression. Moreover, matrimony presupposes sexual differentiation but not hierarchy. The authors assert that it is the responsibility of the faith communities to ensure that married couples have the necessary skills and understanding of the Christian perspective for successful marriages. This article's primary contribution to this thesis is its historical overview of marriage, which grounds the historical assertions of Chapter Three. In addition, its in-depth discussion of marriage as a covenant contrasts sacramental marriage from contractual marriage.

Rahner, Karl. "God and Revelation," *Theological Investigations*, Vol. XVIII.
  New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983.

        In chapter five of Volume Eighteen, Rahner discusses the question of God's incomprehensibility as it relates to the question of meaning. He asserts that, unlike traditional textbook theology (which only considers God's incomprehensibility to be one of his many attributes), the negative theology of God's incomprehensibility is the dominating characteristic that sustains the totality of the teaching about God, as well as God's relationship to us. Rahner states that it is the incomprehensible God that answers humanity's question about meaning. That means it is God's incomprehensibility that gives meaning to our existence. In that regard, we tend to think of meaning as that which can be controlled, understood, and justified in our sight, and which also eases the pain brought about by emptiness. Rahner does not reject that conceptualization, for people do experience glimpses of meaning that, in their unifying and utopian dimensions justify connecting them to the meaning that is God. But more than that, God as meaning remains incomprehensible, and any fulfillment of meaning that we experience in our finite reality still does not enable us to escape a perceived degree of hopelessness. Thus, the question of meaning is at once both clear and obscure. Rahner asserts that we can only deal with the inherent tension in question if we first define reason as the capacity for coming face to face with incomprehensibility, and then only if we act in self-surrendering love and trust completely in that incomprehensibility. This contributes to this essay on marriage because it articulates a substantive purpose that the sacrament of marriage is meant to serve. As a sacrament, marriage provides spouses a specific context in which to encounter the incomprehensible God, and surrender in love and trust to God specifically by surrendering in love and trust to each other. When that

happens, God is experienced not as that which can be fit into the everyday occurrences of our lives, but rather as the incomprehensibility that brings wholeness and true meaning to human existence.

Scola, Angelo Cardinal. *The Nuptial Mystery*. Grand Rapids: The Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2005.

In this work Cardinal Scola relies primarily on the doctrinal teaching of the Church (as well as reflections by John Paul II and Hans Urs Van Balthasar) as his starting point for investigating the questions of love and nuptial mystery as they function in relation to our experience. His argument can be expressed in terms of the following idea: that the category *nuptial mystery*, as expressed by sexual difference and fruitfulness, is a way in which humanity can adequately describe the phenomenon of love. At the heart of this central thesis is the concept that male-female relationships are, in and of themselves a way to grasp what it means to bear the *imago Dei*. The contribution that Scola makes to this essay is found in his brief section titled *Man and Woman: Identity and Difference*, in which he describes how men and women are identical in their common humanity, yet different in their sexuality, which gives rise to the meaning of their reciprocity. That meaning can be expressed as the assertion of their creaturely contingence in which each come to understand themselves as an "I" (subject) in need of an "other." Thus, Scola is referenced herein to show that marital reciprocity is rooted in the experience of contingency, which draws individuals to seek their self-identity.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Taylor's philosophical investigation into the evolution of modern conceptualizations of the self demonstrates, in particular, how those ideas affect our epistemology and language in ways that often escape our awareness. He focuses on three major features of the modern identity, namely, "modern inwardness;" "the affirmation of the ordinary life;" and "the expressive notion of nature as an inner moral source." Taylor demonstrates that these three dimensions, which characteristically describe a modern tendency to turn inward from externally imposed mores in favor of subjective rights and autonomy, are the result of legitimate efforts to express genuine notions of "the good." The historical efforts to define and articulate those concepts are rooted in the modern preoccupation to make sense out of our lives. Unlike the pre-modern framework in which individuals feared condemnation, the modern fear is that life is meaninglessness. Insofar as individuals face the possibility of emptiness as "disengaged subjects" suspicious of uncritically accepted frameworks, Taylor notes the potential dangers of fragmentation, loss of purpose, and lack of self-esteem. Particular to his overall thesis is his rejection of a widespread modern mentality, which he calls "naturalism," that seeks to totally disregard all frameworks and reduce ethics to that which can be affirmed by the natural

sciences. Taylor's contribution to this thesis is his historical treatment of how the modern period idealized affection-based, contractual marriages as being characteristic of individualized and internalized ordinary-life historical contexts, thus resulting in the need for a reevaluation of how traditional covenantal notions of marriage are presented to contemporary persons.

Thomas, David. *Christian Marriage*: *A Journey Together*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1983.

       In his chapter on the celebration of marriage in ritual, Thomas discusses the Gospel foundation of its sacramentality. He explains that Jesus' understanding of marriage, formed by the anthropological tenet of the Torah, was that it involved a relationship between two people that was also subject to God. For Jesus, it was not sufficient to simply adhere to legalistic categories or popular notions of marriage. Rather, he understood marriage to be a relationship indicative of the totality of human personhood, made in God's image. That relationship carried certain responsibilities for both spouses and the need for equality, justice, and personal rights for each individual. For this thesis, Thomas is cited because his discussion of Jesus' perspective provides a scriptural ground for contemporary Catholic anthropology, as well as an important point regarding the dialogical structure of marriage. Specifically, he notes how the relational aspect of marriage (in which he says Jesus believed) is a response to God's invitation to friendship and conversation. This insight holds that couples respond to God's call specifically through their loving exchange with one another. Therefore, these references help to qualify the meaning of marital sacramentality, thus explaining why the Church strongly believes that marriage has certain implications and symbolic features.

Tracy, David. *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.

       Tracy assesses the current situation of theology as one that entails a pluralist condition. He affirms that pluralism does benefit theology, due to its diverse viewpoints and imaginative perspectives of the world that provide a context for enriching theological depth. Tracy also recognizes that pluralism has serious limitations in that it fosters an attitude of indifference and intellectual laziness which is typical of commercial societies. With that in mind he asserts that pluralism enables theologians to learn more about reality by providing different ways of looking at both humanity and Christianity. He cautions, however, that theologians should always systematically articulate their scholarship through particular critical methods and criteria that preserve Christian integrity. His proposition defends what he calls a "revisionist" model of theology as that which is most appropriate for addressing certain cognitive, ethical and existential problems (as analyzed throughout the book) that tend to diminish the meaning of Christianity and humanity within contemporary society. He claims that model provides a means of critical reinterpretation of traditional Christianity

and modernity in the context of "post-Christian" and "post-modern" contexts. In addition, he says it offers a vision of hopeful response to the modern dissatisfaction with religious and secular mystification, as well as to the postmodern rejection of purely rational self-fulfillment that is indicative of modernity. Through this analysis of contemporary pluralism, Tracy expresses the potential and need for critical collaboration regarding theological Christian praxis that in the past has fallen victim to revolutionary-oriented social, political and ethical theories. His primary contribution to this thesis on marriage is his perspective on experience as being a source of theological information, which herein is incorporated into a triadic conversation with tradition and culture.

_____. *Plurality and Ambiguity*: *Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

In this book, Tracy points out that there is no intellectual, cultural, political, or religious system that does not live by the quality of its conversation. He further states that there can be no tradition that does not at some point have to accept its own plurality and ambiguity. Throughout the book, Tracy considers the way that interpretation functions within conversation, addressing how the evolution of classical arguments into modern theories is capable of disrupting long-held conversations. In his final chapter, Tracy asserts that the question of religion needs to be reformulated into a question of hope. He claims that religion, in light of its plurality and ambiguity, as well as its importance for humanity, is the best test of any hermeneutical theory in the context of the post-modern critique. He notes that the starting point for hermeneutics is critical interpretation, which always involves risk but always discloses possibilities and demands praxis in relationship to tradition and interpretation. Particularly useful for this thesis is Tracy's treatment of a central theological concept, "similarity-in-difference." Tracy uses this term to mean that the similarities between religions are, at best, analogies. It is essential that religions acknowledge the very real differences in plurality as being more than just variations of similar themes. Likewise, the differences between men and women are very real and cannot be discarded. But those differences cannot justify reductionism that totalizes (any one religion for Tracy; either gender for this thesis). In that regard, it is helpful to use Tracy's principle to demonstrate that the post-modern critique compels us not only to acknowledge our differences, but also that those differences call us to solidarity. For marriage, it is a sacramental solidarity that celebrates the differences between men and women in such a way that both can image God, instead of only one gender totalizing that image. In addition, his analysis on the role of language and how it expresses reality is helpful in articulating the difficulty that exists in adequately communicating the experience of God in marital relationships.

Trible, Phyllis. "Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread," *Womanspirit Rising, A Feminist Reader in Religion*. (Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, ed). San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979.

Trible's rhetorical analysis of these two chapters in the book of Genesis consists of a re-visitation to the text in light of the Women's Movement. She asserts that some claims that the text is exegetically supportive of male superiority are not accurate. As she moves through the text, she points out that the order of events in creation, the rib, and the transitional use from adham (generic "man") to ish/ishshah (man/woman) all suggest concurrence, interdependence, and solidarity. Moreover, in her reread she illustrates that Adam does not actually name Eve like he does with the other animals (thereby establishing supremacy over them), but rather only articulates that she will be called woman (which is not a proper noun) and finds in her a companion. It is only after both the man and the woman sin that the reader sees signs of male dominance, since it is at that point that the man specifically names the woman and thus establishes his supremacy over her. Upon the conclusion of her analysis she argues that there is no need to claim female subordination from the text itself, as it only serves to legitimize the patriarchal culture that gives rise to male biases. Trible's contribution to this thesis is the support she lends to the claims made by Hilkert, who maintains that only faulty interpretations of scripture can support unequal anthropological perspectives of the *imago Dei* symbol. Thus, in terms of marriage, it is flawed to say that only the man can image Christ while both spouses can image the Church, because such assertions compromise the relational potential for mutuality, as well as the sacrament's symbolic efficacy.

Vatican Online Resource Library. *Dei Verbum.* 18 November 1965. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html (accessed June 9, 2008).

The Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation focuses on the way in which God's Revelation of Self is transmitted to the world and the Church. Therein the Council fathers stated that the fullness of God's Revelation is found in Christ, who as its mediator discloses God's invitation to humanity to become sharers in the divine nature. Divine Revelation is God's communication of Self that enables humanity to respond in faith, thus committing itself to God. The Church professes in faith that Revelation in Christ is handed on by the Church in its life, worship and teaching. Particularly it is transmitted by the two modes of scripture and tradition, which are bound closely together and relate to one another. Those two media communicate and entrust the speech and Word of God to the Church. Scripture is said to be inspired by God, yet written by human authors who had their own intentions and historical circumstances. The council stated that both scripture and tradition should be accounted for in any exegetical interpretation. Since the Church regards scripture and tradition to be the supreme rule of faith, the Council affirmed that all of the Christian faithful should have access to them in their own languages. Moreover,

scripture and tradition together serve as the foundation for Christian theology, pastoral preaching and catechetics. For the purpose of this thesis, *Dei Verbum* affirms the Old Testament's appropriateness as a source for understanding Christian anthropology in relation to God.

_____. *Gaudium et Spes*. 7 December 1965. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed May 15, June 10, 2008; March 23, 2009).

Promulgated in 1965, this document is the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. It focuses especially on social issues, and in Part I it expresses the Church's understanding of both its own vocation and that of humanity throughout the world. Therein it discusses such topics as the dignity of the human person, the community of mankind, man's activity in the universe, as well as the role of Church in the modern world. The main theme in Part II is the Council's consideration of urgent problems in the modern world. Particularly it focuses on marriage and family life, proper development of culture, economic and social life, the political community, and the need to foster peace and establish a community of nations. One of the main highlights that the document articulates for Christian life is the responsibility to scrutinize the signs of the times in light of the Gospel. The contribution that the constitution makes to this thesis on marriage is its emphasis on the dignity of all persons, especially as that dignity is grounded in the theological and scriptural symbol of the *imago Dei*. In that regard the Council articulated an anthropology that considered humanity to share in a relational nature that was revealed explicitly in Jesus of Nazareth. Since that is true, the dynamics of that relationality belong to the discipline of Christology, which supports the application of Wisdom Christology in this essay. Moreover, the document highlights the Church's belief that marriage calls couples to grow in their love, while moving toward ever-increasing perfection and oneness. Finally, it is also highlights the Church's negative stance toward gender-discrimination.

Viladesau, Richard and Mark Mass, Ed. *Relationship Poses the Ultimate Question.* Foundations of Theological Study: A Source Book. Manwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1991.

In this section of *Foundations of Theological Study*, Viladesau and Mass present an excerpt from Martin Buber's *I and Thou*. In that piece Buber describes humanity's twofold attitude toward the world, as well as the twofold combinations of primary words that humanity uses to intimate relations. He identifies those as "I-thou" and "I-it" and claims that they function to bring about existence. Human beings, he says, can only speak of themselves as subjects ("I") in relation with someone or something else (i.e. "I-thou" or "I-it"). Buber distinguishes between each set of primary words by elaborating on the object of each. With respect to the "I-it," people can identify themselves as subjects in

relation to particular objects or things. Regarding the "I-thou," people identify themselves as subjects in relation to objects that are not things, but rather which can have a reciprocal living relationship (i.e. personal). It is through those relationships with the "thou" that the "I's" extend to meet what Buber calls the "eternal Thou." Within the "I-thou" context, people experience a relationship with an object that is not bound by that relationship, but rather that which has no bounds and therefore able to relate also to that which is "wholly Other" and "wholly Present." Buber's contribution to this essay is that it points toward relational anthropology which is intensified within the sacrament of marriage. From that perspective, marital mutuality itself can be described as an "I-thou" relationship in which both man and woman find themselves, and by extension meet each other in the "eternal Thou." In that regard, married couples have a specific context from which they can symbolically reflect (by relation to the Thou) the "wholly Other" yet "wholly Present" in this world.

Vogels, Walter. "The Human Person in the Image of God," *Theology Digest*. 43: 1, Spring, 1996.

In this article, Vogels explores the exegetical meaning of the scriptural phrase "in the image of God." In order to address the debates surrounding the meaning of the phrase, Vogels first defines the terms "selem" (image) and "demut" (likeness). The former, while in some instances referring to something phantom-like, in most cases connotes a concrete object or representation, such as a painting or statue. It is for that reason that the word is commonly translated as "image." The latter term is more ambiguous than the former, but is always used in comparison with something else. In Genesis 1:26, the priestly writer used the two words together, a fact which has been cause for much speculation as to their meaning in relationship to each other. According to Vogels, the connection of those two words in Genesis suggests a dual role for humanity, both pro-creator and co-creator. This insight has three significant theological implications. First, because humanity is made in God's image, and because it is humanity that God could recognize God's self and build a relationship, each human person has the ability to know the personal God. Second, it also implies that human beings are responsible for maintaining the goodness of the earth and for upholding the dignity of other persons. Finally, it affirms that God's image is found in the human person, regardless of their gender. God is not a man, nor is God a woman. Moreover, the image of God is not man and woman together, but rather is constitutive of what it is to be a human that is either male or female. The contribution that Vogels makes to this thesis is his focus on the way in which the human person manifests God's image (regardless of gender), as well as his emphasis on the human as co-partner with God, which for marriage is reflected in the relationship between male and female spouses (both of whom are persons made in God's image).

Wells, Harold G. *Trinitarian Feminism: Elizabeth Johnson's Wisdom Christology*.
   Theology Today, Oct 1995.

   This article is an overview of Johnson's attempt to integrate feminist
   insights with Church teaching. In it, Wells points out that her effort mirrors the
   redaction work of many Old Testament Wisdom authors, including those of
   Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job, in which the Torah and prophetic materials were
   interpreted in terms of Wisdom. Johnson focuses on the current female context
   (i.e. experience/insights) as that which must be addressed by contemporary
   theology, and although agreeing with that premise, Wells is quick to point out that
   for Johnson female experience is not the ultimate norm (since that would be a
   reductive approach), but rather it is something that should be in critical dialogue
   with the authoritative scriptural tradition. In that regard Johnson posits her
   Christology by discussing the female-imaged Sophia as that which is not only
   Incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, but is also identified as God's own presence in the
   world by the Old Testament and apocryphal Wisdom literature. Having identified
   numerous parallels between the New Testament references to Christ and Old
   Testament references to Wisdom, Johnson argues that we need not rely solely on
   Logos Christology, but rather can also utilize Wisdom Christology (alongside
   Logos) since it is scriptural and can contribute to a more explicit perspective on
   the dignity of women. With respect to this essay, which reflects on specific
   anthropological aspects of marriage, Johnson's Wisdom Christology provides a
   way of imagining the Incarnation as that in which "female" divinity is utterly and
   completely compatible with Jesus' male humanity. In light of the Council of
   Chalcedon, which proclaimed that there was no confusion or mixing of those two
   natures in the one person of Christ, Johnson's "Jesus-Sophia" brings to light a
   highly important feminist anthropological value/symbol: bodiliness. That symbol
   is helpful for a proper understanding of the Incarnation as a model of
   compatibility between God and the flesh, which also parallels the compatibility
   between the genders.

Whitehead, James D and Evelyn E Whitehead. *Method in Ministry: Theological
   Reflection and Christian Ministry*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1980.

   The authors identify a contemporary need for sound theological method
   within the context of ecclesial ministry, and propose a model for such a method
   that draws upon three specific sources of information: Christian tradition,
   personal experience, and cultural context. The model itself allows for a triadic
   conversation between the aforementioned sources, thereby providing for dynamic
   reflection, broadened theological understanding, and effective pastoral decisions
   within the context of ecclesial ministry. The Whiteheads describe the method as a
   dynamic that involves three specific stages: attending, assertion, and decision.
   This process of theological reflection is situated midway in the theology-ministry
   field, since it is intended not for professional theologians (as is the theological
   reflection method of Lonergan) but rather for the critically aware ecclesial

minister. Their outline specifically addresses each of the source components. The first, pluriform t*radition*, is that which draws upon scriptural Revelation (Old and New Testament), historical ecclesial teaching, and the *sensus fidelium* (the overlap of t*radition* and e*xperience*), all of which have been handed on in order to express Christian beliefs. The second, *experience*, refers to the community's awareness of an identified pastoral concern. It is through this particular source component that ecclesial ministers are able recognize their feelings on particular pastoral issues and deal with them in ways that promote a contemporary communal faith experience. It also enables active engagement with the *sensus fidelium*, recognizing it as a diverse expression of many faith communities and a necessary element of theological reflection. The third, *culture*, consists of historical and contemporary information that is both partially opposing and partially approving to tradition. The Whiteheads' model was particularly helpful for this essay because it provided a sound format for reflecting on the sacrament of marriage.