

## REFORMING OUR CULTURE

Renewing the Image – Breaking the Snare

David V Hall – Brisbane Christian Fellowship BCF

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c/- Toowoomba Christian Fellowship

10 Old Goombungee Road

Toowoomba QLD 4350

Phone: +61 1300 885 048

Email: [info@visionone.org.au](mailto:info@visionone.org.au)

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# 1. Renewing ‘the image’ – Breaking the ‘snare’

We usually associate ‘culture’ with an ethnic group or with being ‘cultured’ or refined in our tastes toward dress, art or music. In our use of the word culture, we mean the *entire way of life* that we cultivate as the family of God. God’s people have, or should have, a specific culture that distinguishes them from the world. This culture is the same from one family to the next, and from one nation to the next. When we compare Christian families in Australia with those in Papua New Guinea, for example, we naturally accept that life-styles and practices, with regard to work, dress, food, transport and social routines, will be very diverse. But the basic *culture* of godliness, relationship, values, family order and holiness will be the same. In this volume, *Reforming Our Culture*, we will turn our attention to the very roots of culture. To understand the common culture of godliness in which we are to live,

we must refresh our understanding of the ‘image’ in which God intended male and female to live. As we are ‘renewed in knowledge’ according to this ‘image’, we will know how to reform our culture to that intended for every marriage and family.<sup>1</sup> At the same time we must understand the snare that Satan laid upon the first family – Adam and Eve.

In the first chapter of the Bible, we read that God said, ‘Let us make man in our *image* and after our likeness’.<sup>2</sup> Then we are told that God made mankind as male and female. We know then that the first family on earth were ‘in the image’, as God purposed. When we read on further about the serpent’s deception, we understand that the devil took mankind captive and laid what the New Testament calls a ‘snare’ upon that very first married couple.<sup>3</sup> Each and every married couple in the family of man has a calling to renew ‘the image’ that God intended, by breaking the ‘snare’ that Satan laid upon us – hence our sub-title: *Renewing the Image – Breaking the Snare*.

## The image

What do we mean by the image? What is the snare that needs to be broken? The subject of the image should remind us of God’s original purpose for mankind. Note the Scriptures once again. ‘Let us make man in our *image*. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; *male and female* He created them. Then God blessed them.’<sup>4</sup> So, the first thing we recall is that God intended a particular ‘image’ or model for male and for female, and for marriage and family life.

1 Col 3:10

2 Gen 1:26

3 2 Tim 2:26

4 Gen 1:26-28

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In contrast to this image, we know that Satan appeared in the garden as a serpent,<sup>5</sup> and that he tempted and snared that first marriage and family into captivity. Thankfully, the gospel has come to us so that we 'may recover [our] senses and *escape the snare of the devil*, having been taken captive by him to do his will'.<sup>6</sup>

### Choosing the image – rejecting the snare

There are all kinds of images, models, or patterns that we can choose for our marriages and families. God had a particular image in mind, and obviously Satan was determined to destroy that image. His plan was to captivate the man and woman to a different image. To do this, he laid a 'snare' in order to take them captive to another image. This snare involved the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus he engineered a deception that worked firstly toward the woman, and then the man. Satan targeted the specific design of relationship that God had for man and woman in 'the image'. The result of their fall into the snare of the devil and away from the image produced a curse upon their relationship, their childbearing and family life, and upon all the works of their hands.

It is essential to understand the 'Fall of man' in the context of the marriage relationship, and not just as a fall that produced a variety of individual evils. Adam and Eve were in a married relationship when they sinned. This is why we say that the origins of sin occurred in their married relationship, and are repeated in every other marriage since theirs. The Fall produced a subtle corruption of the entire way in which a marriage relationship works. So too now, Satan's aim is to distract us to the wrong 'tree' within our gardens of relationship, just as he did in the beginning.

5 If you are unfamiliar with the story of man's creation in the image and of Satan's snare, read Genesis 2:7 - 3:24.

6 2 Tim 2:26

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As we read on in Genesis, the Lord said to the woman that as a result of the curse, ‘Your *desire* shall be for your husband, and *he shall rule* over you’. Then He said to Adam, ‘Because you have *heeded the voice* of your wife, and have eaten from the tree ... *cursed* is the ground for your sake.’<sup>7</sup> Take note of the terms ‘desire’ and ‘ruling’ for our next section. Desire was the negative result for the woman (desire is a very broad term, as we shall see) and ruling was the negative result for the man (not the same as headship).

It is helpful for us to pause and think on our response to a word like this. At first we might be offended at the thought that we have been unaware of the snare that is upon us. We might even be offended at the thought that someone else might be saying that we have fallen short of God’s purpose for our marriage. We need to remember that while the word of God is a sharp, two-edged sword intent on exposing our innermost thoughts and intentions, it is also intent on our *inclusion* with the new creation. At once, it declares our death to sin, but also our life with God. It pierces our hearts, so that we can be reconciled to God in the new creation. The subject of the cross and the sword of the gospel is covered elsewhere, but for now we need to heed the exhortation to ‘receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your soul’.<sup>8</sup> If we are able to ‘meet’ the word as it comes to us, embrace it, and work with it throughout our wayside, thorny, and stony responses,<sup>9</sup> we will begin to show forth the righteousness of God in our marriages in ways that we never thought possible before. May God give us wisdom!

7 Gen 3:16-17

8 Jas 1:21

9 cf Matt 13

## 'Desire' and 'ruling' replaced 'helping' and 'headship'

According to the creation story, the wife was to be the helper within the image, and the man was to be the 'head' in the relationship. We don't read this word 'head' in the Old Testament, but Paul uses it in the New Testament.<sup>10</sup> When we read of the creation of Adam with the word 'head' in mind, it becomes obvious what God intended 'headship' to be. Now it's obvious that if the man and woman fell from God's will, then the aspects of head and helper would have been affected and corrupted. We need to take note of what transpired in Adam and Eve's relationship, since the effects are the same in our relationships. Why? Because our relationships are snared in just the same way as theirs was.

In the above section we read what God said to them after the introduction of sin. The Scripture says that the woman would now have a *desire* (demand, expectation, or pressure) toward her husband. And in turn, he would rule over his wife. 'Demand' was the result for the woman (demand is a clearer word than desire). And the man would dominate and 'lord it over' his wife. Because the wife was not able to be a secure and accountable helper in the relationship, her focus would be one of demand and pressure toward the man. Because the man was not able to be a secure and accountable head, he would merely rule over the family. Instead of helper and head, we now find desire and ruling. And this has become the problem for every family in the history of mankind. Each marriage has lost the true image (helper and head) and is captive, instead, to the snare of the devil (desire and ruling).

10 Eph 5:23

## Choosing the right image

So we are all in the position where we have to choose an image for our lives. But we already *have* an image of sorts. We have a covenant, an arrangement, a pattern, and a culture. But clearly we need to find our way back to the image that God intended. Now we might ask, ‘Do we still have *some* elements of this lost image, or has it been completely corrupted? How do we recover the true image?’

The first book of Corinthians says, ‘As we have borne the *image* of the man of dust, we shall also bear the *image* of the heavenly Man.’<sup>11</sup> The ‘man of dust’ mentioned here is Adam. The ‘heavenly man’ is Christ. We certainly know that we have inherited the image of Adam. We can see all kinds of evidence of this. We are also told that we shall bear the image of Christ, so we know that Christ is the image that we are seeking. We cannot recover the original image of Adam and Eve. But whatever they lost, we know that we can recover it in Christ. He is the complete image. He is both the example and the context for this new image.

### The ‘new’ image – Jesus’ and Paul’s teachings

One of the first things we should do is to study the New Testament to see what it says about recovering the image through Christ. First of all, we note Jesus’ own words on the subject of marriage: ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?” So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.’<sup>12</sup> Jesus quoted this from Genesis 2:24. What we learn from this is that God still intended for

11 1 Cor 15:49

12 Matt 19:4-6

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every couple to be joined in the same way that Adam and Eve were originally joined. This was God's will for every couple – to be *one* in the image of God. We shall say more about this passage later on.

Now Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 11 that the *original* relationship is *still* the model – although now the relationship is found 'in the Lord', not by revisiting the garden. He explains that this is still our image or mode, in the Lord (see next paragraph). This is the image of the 'heavenly man', to use the expression we quoted above. Note carefully what he says.

'But I want you to know that the head of every man is *Christ*, the *head* of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God [and as for the man] he is the *image and glory* of God; but woman is the *glory* of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man ... neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, *in the Lord*. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.'<sup>13</sup>

### The same 'snare' still exists

Now we ask, 'Are there any references to the snare in the New Testament?' Here again, the apostle Paul's teaching is very specific, for he directly cautions us to avoid falling into the same snare as did Adam and Eve. The following verses are very important.

'But I fear, lest somehow, as the *serpent deceived Eve* by his craftiness, so *your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity* that is in Christ.'<sup>14</sup>

'Let a *woman* learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have *authority over* a man, but to be in

13 1 Cor 11:3-12

14 2 Cor 11:3

*silence*. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being *deceived*, fell into transgression.<sup>15</sup>

The first of these references, from Corinthians, is a general warning to both men and women that the crafty serpent, Satan, is still working in the same way as he did in the beginning. This is evidence that every married couple will encounter the same devices as Satan employed, and that in fact we are vulnerable to them.

In the second passage, from 1 Timothy, Paul addresses the woman. His key words are ‘authority over’, ‘silence’, and ‘deceived’. In his instructions to us as Christian couples, he comments on the very first married couple. Why does he do this? It is very obvious that Paul is warning us about falling into the same deception and snare that Satan laid in the beginning. He is not forbidding a woman to speak. He is reminding us of the most basic of all events that led to mankind’s downfall. And what was that? The fact that Adam listened to the voice of his wife! Why was this a problem? She took authority over him. She was not silent. She was not obedient (on the matter of eating the ‘tree’). Although her words aren’t recorded, we are told shortly after that Adam was reprimanded for listening to her. She was only deceived because she moved out of her orbit as the wife in the relationship. Adam was not deceived, according to Paul. We could ask, ‘Then what *was his* problem, since he certainly fell into the snare along with his wife?’ His problem was that he listened to his wife and allowed her to exercise *authority over him*, in the *very* area where *he* should have been taking up the headship mandate. In the specific area where he should *not* have been listening to her (but rather listening to God as his head), he listened to his wife. Take note of the Scripture once again. ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have

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eaten from the tree ... cursed is the ground for your sake.<sup>16</sup> Adam should have been obedient to his Head. To use Paul's language: he should have had his head uncovered<sup>17</sup> so that he would hear God's voice.

Turning to Eve now; in the very area where the wife should have been submitted to her husband, she took authority *over* her husband. She should have had her head *covered*.<sup>18</sup> In the area where she should have been silent, she spoke up and corrupted her husband also. This is absolutely clear, and leaves us with no doubt about Paul's point. We are all confronted with exactly the same snare as were Adam and Eve, the first married couple. The Fall took place within the *relationship* of a married couple and this is where it continues to occur. This is what Paul is trying to teach us. And he gives us an answer to the situation as well. The man must take his place in headship. And the woman must be in submission to him. A 'fallen' relationship is one that has adopted the same mode as the one into which Eve and Adam fell. A relationship in the image is one that has rejected this entire mode, and regained the original mode – the man as head to his wife, and the wife as helper to her husband. A Christian man married to a Christian woman does not in itself return the relationship to the image. Two Christians believing in God's will doesn't either. The snare is an *entire mode* that must be broken. The image is an *entire mode* that must be recovered in Christ.

16 Gen 3:16-17

17 In 1 Cor 11, 'covering' has a different application for the male and female. In the case of the man, his *uncovered* head depicts the absence of any veil or obstruction to communicating with his head, Christ. An 'uncovered head' means that he is able to show forth the 'image and glory of God'. For the woman, her *covered* head 'because of the angels' depicts a protection that being in submission affords her. The whole aim of Paul's comments about hair and covering is to amplify the 'glory' which each is to show forth. For the man a covered head is inglorious, and an uncovered head with short hair best illustrates his relationship with Christ. For the woman, long hair is her glory, and being submitted, covered and gloriously adorned best describes an entire way of life for her.

18 See footnote above

## Christ and the church – the image for every marriage

The conclusive passage on recovering the image for marriage is in Ephesians chapter five, where Christ's relationship to the church is declared to be the model for every marriage. (Note the *italicised* emphases as you read.)

'Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to *the Lord*. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her ... so husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.'<sup>19</sup>

It all becomes beautifully clear. Adam was able to say of Eve, 'This is now bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh'.<sup>20</sup> In the same way, Christ regards His church as His own body: 'of His flesh and of His bones'.<sup>21</sup> And each marriage, Paul says, is a repeat of the first: 'the two shall become one flesh'. Because of the cross, all who are in Christ have the opportunity to restore the true image of marriage. And more than this, every marriage will be an image of the relationship between Christ and His church. The man will now regard the person of his wife as his own. He will love, give himself, cherish, nourish, sanctify and behave

19 Eph 5:22-33

20 Gen 2:23

21 Eph 5:30

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in all points toward her as Christ did toward His church. He will love 'his own wife as himself'. For her part, his wife will submit, be subject in everything, and respect her husband.<sup>22</sup>

### Re-creating the image

So the New Testament answers all our questions about whether we are trying to return to Adam and Eve's perfect image, or whether we are finding some completely new image in Christ.<sup>23</sup> Both Christ and Paul take up the original statements from Genesis, and tell us that these are still the reality in the Lord. The new creation in Christ answers the whole matter. He regenerates what has died, recovers what was lost, renews what is fallen, recreates what was intended – the full expression of that predestination which was settled before the foundation of the world.<sup>24</sup>

Ephesians says, 'Be renewed in the spirit of your mind and ... put on the new man which *was created* according to God [Gr. of God] in true righteousness and holiness'.<sup>25</sup>

Colossians says something similar. 'Put on the new man who is *renewed* in knowledge according to the *image* of Him who created him'.<sup>26</sup>

22 Eph 5:22, 24, 33

23 Simple propositions as they seem, both these ideas have been common, and both are faulty. Regarding the first, it is not uncommon to hear of religious factions who propose that the pristine Eden utopia will be recovered. On the other extreme, it has been proposed that the definition of male and female in Christ is adjusted to some new 'unisex' equality, quoting such verses as, 'There is neither male nor female ... in Christ Jesus'. Gal 3:28. A further error between these two has proposed that 'headship' and 'submission' are entirely linked to the fallen condition that is implied in the verse, 'your desire shall be for your husband and he will *rule over* you'. In other words, headship has been equated with ruling and been dismissed as belonging to the Fall, not to man's original creation. Of course, Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 11 dismisses this fallacy.

24 Eph 1:4-5

25 Eph 4:23-24

26 Col 3:10

These verses appear complex at first, but the direction of them is quite clear. The Colossians verse is saying that there is a ‘new man’ image that is actually the ‘*original image*’. Whatever God created and intended is *now possible, by renewal*, if we put on the new man. Ephesians says the same. Renewing of the mind is the way by which we put on the new image. This new man image was created to be of God. Yes, we are to be of God. This is what the image really means – to be of God. This image was created in righteousness and holiness. Where was this new image created? At the cross! The cross declared to us the entire image which God intends for us: not in the sense of the conflict, but in the sense of the givenness that overcomes the conflict. We shall take up a study of the cross later on.

### The original inscription

From whatever direction we approach the matter, we surely know that we have fallen from the intended image, and we need to recover, and share in, the sonship of Christ. The image is only recovered in Christ, and we must be planted in Him. We must be planted in the likeness of His death by burial in baptism, and be planted in the likeness of His resurrection. We will look at this some more later.

The aim of salvation is that every individual and marriage should recover the image that was intended – shall we call it the original ‘inscription’. The idea of inscription links beautifully with our ‘writing’ or naming within the Lamb’s book, for we are called ‘living epistles’ (and an epistle is *written*). It’s useful to think of Jesus’ reply when He was asked about allegiance to Caesar. He called for a coin and asked, ‘Whose image and inscription is on it?’<sup>27</sup> Then He told them to render allegiance according to the inscription – to Caesar or to God. The question applies to our lives in the same way. Whose image and

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inscription is being written upon our lives? To whom then, and to whose image, do we give our total allegiance?

### The need for gentle correction

Our main point is that if we are to recover the image, we must also be released from the snare. Every marriage must be released from the snare in which the devil has captured each individual and each marriage. The key to this release from the snare is the word and correction of the gentle overseer who calls us to repentance, as we shall find in the Scriptures from 2 Timothy. We must be prepared to be corrected if we are to regain the image. Furthermore, we must be prepared to find repentance as a way of life.

Consider this keynote passage that sets the context for our study: 2 Timothy 2:24-26. 'And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be *gentle* to all, able to teach, patient, in *humility correcting* those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them *repentance*, so that they may *know the truth*, and that they may come to their *senses* and *escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.'

Note the emphases, in the order they are mentioned:

- The gentle teaching elder
- uses humility to correct those who oppose relational truth
- if perchance God will *grant* them repentance (showing that repentance is an entire condition granted by God, not a minimal, religious response on our part);
- repentance leads to knowledge of the relational truth,
- knowledge (understanding) leads to coming to our senses (this thought links with sight and hearing),
- which in turn produces an escape from the entire 'snare' – an entire system devised by Satan by which he opposes the image of God. And finally,

- the snare is the result of being captivated by Satan, at the tree, to *function according to the beguiling system* that he has devised.

If we read the summary above in reverse, with the Fall of man in mind, the story is like so – at the Fall, Satan captivated the original marriage. Salvation will bring *escape*, and the recovery of our *senses*, provided we come to the *truth*, by *repentance*, if in humility, we are *corrected* by the *gentle overseer*. Carefully consider this list of points. What a clear and marvellous hope for us to lay hold upon – hence the choice of title for this volume: *Renewing the Image – Breaking the Snare!*

In a sense, breaking the snare comes first. If we are to return to the original image for marriage, as expressed by Adam and Eve, we must first remove the snare. Of course, we are not turning back to imitate the garden situation, for we are recovering this image, and gaining even more, by moving forward into the new creation in Christ.

As we have said, the devil corrupted the marriage of Adam and Eve by first tempting the woman, who in turn ‘gave the man to eat’ of the same tree.<sup>28</sup> The whole mechanism of deception employed by Satan involved the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And it still does! Hopefully, we have understood to some degree how to effect the breaking of this snare, which also involves an understanding of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In this volume, we will focus first of all on the ‘renewing of the image’. In this way, we will start on a *positive* note and discuss the image of what God intended. As our study proceeds, we will return to the focus on ‘breaking the snare’. Then we will conclude with a practical discussion on ‘recovering the marriage’.

## The overall aim of our study

From the outset, we should paint a picture of what every couple may aim for, in the immediate future. What result should we be

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seeking? Not perfection, but simply this. Every couple should be encouraged to live in the *light of process*. What process? Every couple should live in the process of recovering the image, and breaking the snare. Hopefully, at the very least, we will understand this proposition. And this is a part of what perfection means for us – complete maturity in all relationships. As well, we can begin to accept the *gentle correction* that we spoke of previously.<sup>29</sup> And further, in faith, we can 'turn to the Lord' so that Satan's veil (of law, coming from the tree<sup>30</sup>) can be removed.<sup>31</sup> Then, with our blindness pierced, and with the glorious light of the gospel shining, we can earnestly seek to regain the image, while constantly escaping the snare.

Baptism, communion and reckoning will be three of the foundation stones of our study. *Baptism* into the death of Christ breaks every counter-claim (or covenant) upon us, and reclaims us to the image that God intended. *Communion* is our regular restatement and recommitment to this baptismal reality. Reckoning, or imputing, is our daily and continual response whereby we break the snare and recover the image. How is this? We 'reckon ourselves to be *dead to sin*' and *alive to God*'.<sup>32</sup> Reckoning ourselves dead to sin is the way that we break the snare. Reckoning ourselves alive to God is the way we 'stand up in identity',<sup>33</sup> in the image. So when we quote the key verse from Romans: 'Likewise ... reckon yourselves to be *dead to sin*, but *alive to God in Christ*

29 2 Tim 2:24

30 On the subject of the 'veil', from 2 Corinthians 3&4, we can make a link between the veil which is said to have been Moses' face (3:13 ie the law), with the veil upon our hearts which can be removed from our faces when we turn to the Lord (3:14), with the veil (by implication) that Satan has used to blind our minds to the glorious gospel (4:4).

31 2 Cor 3:16

32 Rom 6:11

33 When we say we 'stand up in identity' we mean that we interact with God and others as an individual of worth, who has an impact on others, and has a destiny declared (named) by the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Spirit. For more on this see *The Great Commission*; 'Word of the Father, word of the Son, word of the Holy Spirit'.

*Jesus* our Lord [and our image]’, we should make an immediate connection with breaking the snare and renewing the image. Dying to sin is what it means to break the snare. Being alive to God in Christ is what it means to live in the image.

The heart and aim of this study is that we should own the marriage choices that we have made, and the marriage cultures we have ‘named’ to this point. (By named, we mean that we have said, and in effect covenanted, that ‘this is bone of my bone ...’. In other words: ‘this is what we have admitted and permitted in our relationship, much of which is not God’s will’.) As we own what we have named, then we can seek true transformation and proper redefinition one toward the other within the correct image. We can only do this by the baptism-communion-reckoning process that we will explain further.

### Willingness to engage in process

Our first commitment is to be willing to engage in a process of change, the process of transformation in our personal structure and culture as people. So let’s ask ourselves, ‘Are we prepared to renegotiate the basis and image of our marriages?’ ‘Are we willing to reform our culture?’ We all know it’s not easy to accept correction. Many of us feel that we are beyond changing. However, if we will humble ourselves, God can grant us repentance. We can begin once again to enter a process. This is all we need to aim for – simply to be committed and active within the process toward maturity. Certainly, the goal is still in the distance, as Paul says: ‘Now we see [the image] in a mirror dimly, but then face to face’.<sup>34</sup> Our goal is to *know* (the other) and *be known*. We all have a deep desire for identity and relationship – to know and be known. There is no deeper desire within us. And if we

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walk in the light of process, we will progressively inherit these realities.

Let's continue a bit further on this matter of our 'image' as couples who are still in a process. We don't need to 'hone up our act' or keep up an 'image', as if we have 'arrived'. If we are in process, then we won't always appear polished. What is the attitude of Christians who are submitted to the Lord, in the family and in the body? If we have genuinely met the Lord, then we have also been baptised into His death, and we have 'stood up'<sup>35</sup> in the body (of Christ) in newness of life.<sup>36</sup> The 'dying' aspect means that to some degree we are always in a processive mess, and we should not be ashamed of this reality. The life aspect means that we stand up in the body of Christ with a joy resulting from grace-redemption, and a freedom to be real, being honest about our incapacity, weakness, immaturity and sin. Our testimony to others doesn't have to be a 'put on' or an unreality. We can be real about where we are 'not at', while still professing our faith in the Lord's work within us.

We should be able to stand in dignity and accountability, but with no pretence or performance, in both the family and the church – the two venues of process.<sup>37</sup> We should not be striving to produce a good performance, by law or right principles. We should live entirely by *faith* in the living word that addresses us. Then our achievement is entirely by *grace*, and our glory will be in the Lord, not in our works or achievements. 'Therefore it is of *faith* that it might be according to *grace*, so that the promise might be sure to all [of us].'<sup>38</sup>

We should become genuine in accepting the process by which our faults and lacks are uncovered, for then we live by faith in the word of

35 See footnote 33

36 Rom 6:4

37 This is what it means to 'stand up' in identity.

38 Rom 4:16

destiny, and we can impute *toward* the realisation of His grace.<sup>39</sup> We are elect of God, therefore ‘it is not of him that *wills* [thinks positively] or *runs* [tries hard] but of Him Who *calls*’.<sup>40</sup> We must believe in His call, and not try to keep up a good performance.

## Highlights within the study

Moving into the body of our study, note the following overview of the high points that we hope to examine in detail.

- There is an image that God intended for mankind.
- This image, in its foundational definition, is a share in Christ’s Sonship, either as male or as female.
- Sonship is the capacity to reveal the Father’s zoe-life, either as male or female.<sup>41</sup>
- The image is only reclaimed in Christ, who is *the* Image.
- Entry into Christ is by baptism into His death. This is where His inscription – that specific naming of our individual sonship – is reclaimed.
- The baptism He was baptised with, ie His death, burial and resurrection, is the model (image) of sonship givenness. It is by walking in this baptism, by laying down our lives in givenness to the death, that the sonship image is regenerated.
- Communion is the regular point of commitment to show forth the Lord’s death. This is where we continue to ‘eat’ our share in His Sonship. This is where we continue to engage the process of transformation.
- Two-way reckoning or imputing (‘dead to sin’ and ‘alive in identity to God’ is the daily process of baptismal living - the

39 It is interesting to note that Jerusalem’s collapse was mighty because she did not give appropriate attention to this destiny. Lam 1:9.

40 Rom 9:11, 16

41 *Zoe* is the Greek word referring to the higher life – and therefore to the life that comes from the Father

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moment-to-moment reconfirmation of baptism. Reckoning is the means of transformation.

- Specifically, the image is that of sonship,<sup>42</sup> for we are sons of His love like Christ.<sup>43</sup> One who is born of God is a son of love. That is, we bear the image of love in the way it operates as a fellowship of three persons in the Godhead.
- To stand up and love is to be born. We do not simply *have* love, we *are* love. We are not simply loved ones, but each *is* a son of love. Upon being born, we are born to love.
- Standing to love requires parenting to mature from child to adult. There has to be a change of reckoning – from the way a child reckons ('when I was a child I reckoned as a child'<sup>44</sup>) toward a complete renewal of mind. We have to make a total shift of base: from the legal/carnal mode of child (a babe<sup>45</sup>) to the love/sonship of a 'man'.<sup>46</sup>

42 His eternal Sonship is His own 'intrinsic' Sonship and cannot be shared. The mystery of sharing His Sonship unlocks once we understand this important precept: it is as the Father's begotten Son, the 'Son of His love', the incarnate Son who *emptied Himself to reveal another*, that He is able to share His Sonship. This is a most important building block, since without this understanding, we could not believe to share His Sonship image, and would diminish both His promise to share it with us as well as the real nature of what is shared. We would be left, as has traditionally been the case, with mere faith 'in' the Son and His own unique atoning work, rather than sharing the qualities 'of' the Son as He intended.

43 Col 1:13

44 1 Cor 13:11. The Greek word translated 'thought ... as a child' is the same word (*logizomai*) translated elsewhere as 'reckoned'.

45 1 Cor 3:4; Heb 5:13

46 1 Cor 13:11. This is where the perspective of the book of Romans fits in, for while it appears to be a Hellenised treatise, it is in fact written by the Hebrew of Hebrews (Paul, Phil 3). Romans is a very specific account of how to be a valid person - one who is justified (legitimate) not by the principles of law, but by the faith of a son of God. Paul declares that we can now be 'right people' (or 'righteous') because we can exercise the faith of sonship, and impute (produce) toward the substance of our destiny as we cooperate with God. The book of Romans is a complete 'zoe-identity' proposition.

- The action of love, as sons, is expressed in a context or ‘image’. Accordingly, our study moves from the image of sonship to male and female in the image.
- From there, we can examine the snare that captivates each marriage to an alternative model or image, and look at how to break the snare.

## Major highlight

In all, the image of sonship is the main point that needs to be understood. This ‘image’ or model of sonship is the capacity to empty oneself (lay one’s own life down) to show forth the Father’s *zoe*-life. *Zoe* is a life of giving love. It is a life of offering. It is also a life of faith that bears, believes and hopes all things. And because faith is always ‘other-centred’ – always faith *for* the other and *toward* the other – then sonship life is one of worship and relationship. We will take time on the sonship qualities of offering, faith, worship, and relationship further on in the study. All sonship, by definition, is ‘other-centred’, because it is seeking, like Christ, to be entirely revealing the Father’s glory *to* the other, for the sake *of* the other.

## The image and glory of God – revealed in sonship

Let us endeavour to embrace this key statement about the image of sonship. The way, mode or image, of sonship is fully described when we see all the self-emptying givenness of the Son, giving to the death such that the glory of God could be outrayed (shine forth). He emptied Himself to reveal the glory of another – the glory of the Father. This is the key. The outraying of the glory of God moves like a wheel. Christ outrays the glory of God. Christ is the head of every man. And the man is called to be ‘the image and glory of God’. The woman is called to be the ‘glory of man’. The only way to understand these statements is if we picture a wheel of glory, in which the glory of God is imaged out by

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Christ, then by each man, then by each woman, who by the glorious process of *procreation enables a multiplicity of sons* to rebound to the glory of God. This was purposed in the Everlasting Covenant, and explained in the blessing of Abraham.<sup>47</sup> It requires man and woman in the image of sonship, to show forth and bring forth the image and glory of God. What God purposed within the Everlasting Covenant – what the Son purposed in emptying Himself to share His Sonship – is not possible without the creation of male and female in the same image. This is a staggering revelation once we capture it.

Can we begin to understand the power of Malachi's statement: 'But did He not make them *one* [ie husband and wife], having a vestige<sup>48</sup> of the *Spirit*? And why one? He seeks *godly seed*. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.'<sup>49</sup>

There's no mistake. The image and glory of God becomes the image and glory of mankind. It's God's glory, and it's man's glory. We have been given the privilege of, and also been made accountable for, this image and glory. How significant and awesome, then, is the work of procreation – a work which we should properly understand as co-creation with God, cooperation with Him in one single purpose – the outward imaging of His glory. There is one circle, one order for the outraying of glory, in which God and man both participate in a single image. 'Let us make man in *our* image' – *our* image. Can we see this? And the point of connection, of joining, within this circle of the glory, is headship. We are *joined* to the Lord as 'one spirit' with Him.<sup>50</sup> And the only dimension which describes our joining, or our connection, within this 'one spirit', is *headship*. God is the Head of Christ, Christ is

47 *Miracle of the Seed*; 'The Everlasting Covenant'.

48 See 'The unique conception of the first marriage' on page 39 for the exegesis of this verse from Malachi.

49 Mal 2:15

50 1 Cor 6:17

the Head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman. Much more than implying a chain of command, headship is the point of connection. Each one in the wheel is described as head ‘*of*’ the other. And in Christ, the man and the woman are clearly defined as being the glory ‘*of*’ another. This is the focal revelation of sonship. Sonship is that dimension which images ‘the other’, not oneself. As it was for Christ, our bread (cf communion) is to do the will of another.<sup>51</sup> We each reveal the other. We look at Christ, and yet it is the Father we are seeing. We look at the man, but it should be Christ we are seeing; at the woman, yet it is the glory of man that we are seeing. (While the woman reveals the glory of a specific man in Christ – in terms of cultural shape and colour etc – the glory of the whole of mankind is outrayed in this way).

### Revealing the ‘other’

The mystery of this process is this: we are not just channels. To reveal the ‘other’ is in itself identity for us. It’s me, yet it’s Christ. This is what Paul meant when he said, ‘I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.’<sup>52</sup>

An obvious illustration of this principle is in the parenthood of our children. Parents ‘lay up [and lay life down] for their children’, and children are the glory of their parents.<sup>53</sup> This is the gospel of the glory that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. This is why we turn, each one, to the face of headship. For in the face of headship – the woman looking into the man’s face, the man looking into Christ’s face, who in turn is the face of the Father’s glory – is a magnificent revelation of the glory of God. This is the real meaning behind the words, ‘Lift up your *heads*, oh you gates and be lifted up you doors, and the King of Glory

51 John 4:34

52 Gal 2:20

53 2 Cor 12:14; Prov 17:6

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shall come in'.<sup>54</sup> As we turn each to the other, lifting up our heads toward the order of headship, the glory of God floods in and fills all who are abiding in the image with the grace of God.

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The first point is that the ‘image of God’ for man and woman is actually *sonship* – sonship as male and female. We must understand what it means to be true sons who show the Spirit of Christ in the way we live. This is fundamental Christianity. We cannot begin by talking about marriage. We must begin by talking about sonship. Why is this? Because both the husband and the wife are ‘sons’, who find their image in *the* Son, Christ. The second point is that sonship is expressed in a relational context. For many of us, marriage is the foremost relational context. However there are no exceptions, for we *all* have a relational context, or image, in which we express our sonship. This context involves the home or household where we live, and then extends outwards toward the world, and back toward the church family. The overall context (image) for everyone, whether married or not, is the body of Christ.

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A helpful Scripture reading on this point is found in 1 Peter 2-3. Here the apostle describes the *quality* of Christ's sonship, and says that 'Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example'. As we read on, the apostle tells the wives to do 'likewise', and then the husbands to do 'likewise'. Wives who are following Christ's sonship example are to be 'submissive'. Husbands who are following Christ's sonship example are to be 'understanding'.<sup>55</sup> We won't discuss submission and understanding here, but simply take the point that Christ's sonship is the image for our sonship.

Christ is the image for both male and female, in *two* ways. First of all, He is the example. But more than this, He is the context. Remember we are 'in Christ', who is the image of God.<sup>56</sup> Every Christian relationship is in Christ.<sup>57</sup> He is the image for every relationship, both the example and the context. Christ is the context for every marriage, although not all men and women have accepted His Lordship. He is the 'third person' in every marriage – the cornerstone. Complete allegiance to Christ, through His cross, is the only way a marriage can be in the image.

If we are setting out to talk about the *glory of the image* to which we are being transformed, we must begin with the *glory of sonship*. As husbands and wives, we must all seek the Spirit of Christ, and grow in the glory of His love, His givenness, His offering, His faith, His worship and His capacity for relationship.

### Baptism into Christ – reclaiming the image

As we said in the opening 'highlights' summary, the image that God intended is only recovered in Christ, who is *the* Image. The breaking of the snare, the removal of the curse of law, begins with the command,

55 1 Pet 3:1, 7

56 2 Cor 4:4

57 Col 1:2

‘Arise and be baptised’.<sup>58</sup> And this command is addressed to ‘you and your household’.<sup>59</sup> Baptism is the mode for reclaiming the image.

The continual mention of ‘your household’ throughout the book of Acts is quite striking, and links with our subject of marriage. Men and women alike, such as the jailor and Lydia, believed the gospel, and *household* by household they were saved and baptised.<sup>60</sup> The key point is that baptism is the act in which *God lays claim over every other covenant, and reclaims man and woman to the image that is named in Christ*. Baptism reclaims a household for the image of God. Baptism into the death of Christ nullifies every other claim of allegiance upon us, and recovers the prior claim upon us to be in the image. This is true because a covenant cannot make a claim over a testator who is dead. We die to every other name and claim upon our allegiance, and offer total allegiance to the image of Christ. Thus, we are freed from the law of the marriage covenanted in the Fall.<sup>61</sup>

### Whose inscription?

This is why baptism has always been such a point of cost and martyrdom throughout the centuries of the Christian church. Note Jesus’ illustration using the coin bearing Caesar’s ‘image and inscription’. ‘Render [give] to Caesar’, Jesus said, those things that bear his inscription. But ‘render to God’ those things that belong to His image. We belong to God’s image. And baptism is the point where we submit to the image and inscription of God, and deny allegiance to every other claim upon us. The image of Christ has *prior* claim. Baptism surrounds the matter of image and inscription. Whose image and inscription has been written upon us? Baptism in the name is a

58 Acts 22:16

59 Acts 16:31

60 Acts 16:15, 31-34, 18:8

61 Heb 9:15

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baptism of naming. We are named in baptism as specific sons in the image – male sons and female sons.

### No gospel of salvation without baptism

Salvation, by its very nature, involves a recall to the image of God. And there is no way back to this image except by baptism into Christ. Baptism, then, can never be as it was in some periods of history, an infant token that nominates a Christian as belonging to the state-church alliance. These dilutions of truth have constrained many believers throughout the centuries to embrace *re-baptism*, when in so doing they were often subjected to violent persecution. And why were they re-baptised? Isn't any baptism as good as another? Obviously, these martyrs did not think so. This raises a question about the 'one baptism' that Paul referred to in Ephesians 4:5. What is the *one* true baptism? The one baptism is *Christ's* baptism. In the strict sense, there is no baptism of our own. What was Christ's *own* baptism, since *this* is the baptism in which we must participate? Jesus was quite clear on this point.

'Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with? They said to Him, "We are able." So He said to them, "You will indeed ...".<sup>62</sup> And in Luke's gospel He said, 'But I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how I am distressed [Gr. allows *constrained*] till it is accomplished!'<sup>63</sup>

There is only one baptism – not an infant baptism, or an adult baptism, a Jordan baptism or a high-church baptism. Christ's baptism was His *death, burial, and resurrection*. This was the one baptism with which He had to be baptised, and to which He was constrained – the entire three day and three night operation. This is the operation into

62 Matt 20:22-23

63 Luke 12:50

which we must enter by baptism. Baptism signifies the beginning of a life that is lived in this process: death, burial, and resurrection. We are to *live* a baptised life, to put it simply. To be baptised is to accept this process of laying life down to the death, and being raised in the *newness* of Christ's life. Baptism is a *way of life* – of *new life* showing forth the *image* of God.

This is why we must raise the subject of baptism in relation to marriage. To be immersed without a commitment to a whole new way of relational living (including marriage) leaves baptism with no meaning at all. We might use the term 'baptised living' to describe this way of life. To reject the process and reality of baptised living is to strip one's baptism of any reality, since baptism is the entire process of following Christ. The daily Christian life is daily death, leading to life.

Of course, this is where the sword of division enters every marriage, for there *will be division* and trouble if both partners do not make a commitment together as a household. This is the point where some will choose religion without embracing the reality of baptism – or else they will be baptised without embracing the reality of the image to which they have been reclaimed.

## Accountable for the image – male and female

Here is the focus of this discussion on baptism. Baptism is a *recall* to the *image* – male and female in the image! The baptised man, woman, or child has not merely been identified as a 'Christian', or 'confirmed' as a member of the church. Baptism has a much stronger meaning, and carries a much more weighty accountability than this. Baptism is a recall to an image – a specific image as male and female. Therefore, if we have been baptised, then at each point of choice in our lives, the questions are: Whose image is written on the heart? Whose image will we choose? To whom will our allegiance be? This is a major issue for a man within the marriage, since he is called to be the head as his

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participation within the image and glory of God. Within the image, the woman is called to be the helper to this particular man. This is the image into which each is baptised. We cannot separate Christian commitment and baptism from this matter of the image in which each is to rise and walk. Male and female, living properly in the image, is the description of the ‘newness of life’ to which Romans refers.<sup>64</sup>

Stepping the matter through: Christ is the image. To speak of ‘male and female in the image’ is the same as saying: we are male and female in Christ. But note, to be in Christ is not just a nebulous, religious experience. For a man, to be the ‘image and glory of God’ doesn’t just mean to be more Christ-like, or to radiate some kind of peculiar beauty or comeliness. It means to demonstrate, as man, all of the givenness that is inherent in the image of sonship. Indeed, it requires all the cross-love of Christ, in a man’s sonship, to redeem his marriage to the image. This is what the Scripture means when it talks of husbands loving their wives as ‘Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her’.<sup>65</sup> A man’s allegiance to the will of Christ must be absolute. He must lead his family in the pathway of total allegiance to Christ. Being renewed and transformed to the image for every man-husband-father will mean a very deep conversion to this kind of givenness, and to this kind of accountability, as a son of God.

For the woman to be the ‘glory of man’, as her unique calling within the image, defines a most astonishing accountability. Mankind has to co-create with God and bring about a multitude of sons. The place that the woman has been given within this mandate, in her motherhood within this circle of glory, is most amazing. It is given to her to be the outraying and adornment of mankind back toward God – the glory of man, as enjoyed by God Himself. What accountability the

64 Rom 6:4

65 Eph 5:25-26

woman has for this particular glory within the image, and what need therefore to manifest all the cross-love of Christ in the way He gave Himself.

All marriages should aspire to this glorious image – and it is to this image that baptism releases us. Even more, we are mindful of the significance of the communion as the specific and regular flow-on from baptism, for ‘as often as we eat’ the bread and drink the wine, we *reaffirm* that which we accepted in baptism. We ‘show forth the Lord’s death’.<sup>66</sup> ‘Death’ is the operative word here. At each communion meal, we reaffirm the miracle of being transformed into the image of God.

The moment-to-moment flow-on from baptism and communion is the exercise of reckoning or imputing (focused in other studies<sup>67</sup>). The goal of baptism is to be conformed to the image.<sup>68</sup> We are transformed into this image by *reckoning*. The book of Romans teaches us that from the point of baptism, we are able to reckon in the same way as the Son. ‘Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.’<sup>69</sup> Reckoning is the constant, daily expression of baptismal-communion living. We are immersed in water, as the signification of our baptism into Christ, *just once*. Then at the *regular* communion gathering, we reaffirm our baptism into Christ’s death by showing forth His death. The power of transformation is reactivated in the communion – we are able to eat the bread of identity, and overflow in blessing toward one another as a result. Then as a *daily* activity, we reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. This is how we walk in ‘newness of life’ – in a new way of living, a new culture of first love.

66 1 Cor 11:26

67 See *The Miracle of the Seed*

68 Rom 8:29

69 Rom 6:11

## The image – true being – love

Through baptism, we recover the image of sonship. We are born of God. We become ‘of God’. We are born to love and love is not just an attribute. Love is a matter of *being*.<sup>70</sup> Why do we say this? Because God is love. Love is not something He *has*; love is what God *is*. Love describes His being, not His attributes. This is the point above all points, and one that has received little attention in theological systems.<sup>71</sup>

*The capacity for love is commensurate with the capacity for identity.* This is our primary tenet. Accordingly, to speak about love, we must discuss ‘being’ (identity), not feeling. This is why love is *personified* in the famous 1 Corinthians chapter thirteen. ‘Love suffers long and is kind.’<sup>72</sup> *Love and being* have to be linked. To ‘have love’ is to *be* a person (cf being), growing from child to man.<sup>73</sup> If I ‘have not love’, I *am* nothing. To lack love is to *be* ‘nothing’ and nobody.<sup>74</sup> If we do not link love and being, the focus is only ever on how man is to *behave*, rather than on the image of who man actually *is* in relation to God.

The second point is that if God *is* love, and we are *born* of God, then it follows that we are born to love. God, love, and our birth ‘of God’ must always be linked in our understanding of the gospel. ‘Beloved ... for love is *of God*; and he who loves is *born of God* and knows God.’<sup>75</sup> In

70 When we use the term ‘being’ in this case, we mean the essential capacity of identity which has its origins in God, and is given by God to the individual.

71 In fact, as we know, it is ‘goodness’ – the fact that God is ‘good’ – that has been stated as the essential foundation; and because God is good, He therefore manifests virtues like longsuffering and love etc. The formulation that ‘God is good rather than evil’, is a direct result of moral judgement that comes from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And accordingly, there has arisen an entire theological system that first highlights man’s moral agency, then links this with the ‘image of God’, and thus with the nature of God.

72 1 Cor 13:4

73 1 Cor 13:11

74 1 Cor 13:2

75 1 John 4:7 AV

the words, ‘he who loves is born of God’ we have one of the clearest statements indicating that the very being of God is love. And those who are born of God share His substantial being, not just His attributes. The individual who loves has actually come to birth as a person.

### Born – accountable being – love – light

When we are born of God, truly we are born as people. We stand up to be *accountable*. This means that we recognise and activate our personal responsibility (before God) for the expression of our identity within the relational community. We would say that a person is ‘born’ if and when they stand up in full accountability for their relational impact. We are all born to love. We are accountable to love. When we walk in this way, we are walking ‘in the light’, ie the light of individual and relational accountability.

If to ‘be’ is to love, and vice versa, then love is the key to identity. The goal of all parenting and of all development is accountable being. We must grow to be individuals who ‘count’ and who act accountably. The parented formation of true being will lead to maturity in love. We will no longer think (Gr. reckon) as a child, but as a ‘man’ who puts off childish things.<sup>76</sup> This is the goal of all parenting. The word of God awakens us (cf light) to identity and relational accountability.

### Fundamental being - love or self-centredness

Our fundamental ‘being’ (or identity) is either ‘born of God’, and therefore founded in love as a dimension of being, or it is self-centred. The motivations of man will then either move ‘upwards’ *through the cross* toward the *release of the self* into being, loving, giving and appreciation; or *remain self-centred*, becoming increasingly insecure,

76 1 Cor 13:11

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fearful, envious or selfish. In his book, *The Four Loves*,<sup>77</sup> C S Lewis highlights what can happen to the various dimensions of love, if the power of self-giving *agape* is not present through the cross. *Affection* will move to either strong appreciation or hateful rejection. *Friendship* will move to either faithful inclusion or bitter exclusion. *Eros* will move to either worth-ship of the other, or self-willed, demoniacal rebellion. ‘People in love cannot be dissuaded by kindness, and opposition makes them feel like martyrs.’ (In other words, neither kind persuasion nor strong opposition will have any impact on someone ‘in love’.) If love is to develop therefore, it is essential that we refresh our understanding of the cross.

77 C S Lewis, 1960, *The Four Loves*, Harper Collins Publishers

### 3. Understanding the cross

Since we have written elsewhere on the cross,<sup>78</sup> we shall move quickly to the point that concerns us most within this marriage discussion. In relational development, we will either become bogged down with the cross in the aspect of conflict, enmity and curse, or we will move to the mature view of the cross as the dimension of self-giving.

Practically speaking, we would all admit that with the mention of the cross, we often dwell upon the conflict of wills – the ‘cross-up’ that occurs as we seek to resolve our relationships. And, indeed, the gospel brings this kind of conflict. Jesus Himself declared that He had not come to bring peace but a sword of division right into the midst of family life.<sup>79</sup> This ‘sword’ can both include and exclude us from all

78 See V J Hall, M A Wylie, 1990, *Lift Up Your Heads*, Section Four, Seedlife Publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.

79 Matt 10:34

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relationship. How do we reconcile this with the angels' message, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace*, goodwill toward men'?<sup>80</sup>

We know the simple answer to this contradiction. Christ wants to take us beyond the initial conflict (sword) to discover the peace of reconciliation. By the blood of His cross, He desires to destroy all the enmity that is caused by the curse of law, and to make us one.<sup>81</sup> These are the two actions of the cross that concern us in marriage – the *removal of enmity*, and the process of *being made one*.

#### The cross – curse from one tree or blessing from the other

Let us dwell on these two points. The cross both destroys the curse of enmity (arising from the forbidden *tree* of stolen law) and makes us one (by feeding us from the *tree* of life). If we focus on the giving-cross that makes us one, we will be able to see past the cursed-cross that results from enmity. These are the opposite edges of the two edged sword, which on the one hand 'separates' us to the new creation, and on the other hand 'cuts off' the old nature. The first of these is the cross that we would desire in our homes.

These two very different images of the cross are both legitimate, and we could ask ourselves, 'Which of these is the most apt symbol?' The first is the crucifix – the body of Christ on a tree. 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who *hangs on a tree*".'<sup>82</sup> It's a helpful coincidence that the 'curse' all began with a tree – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. While Paul doesn't state the connection when he links the curse with Calvary's tree, it is certain that the

80 Luke 2:14

81 Eph 2:15-16

82 Gal 3:13

beauty and symmetry didn't escape him: Christ hung on one tree to remove the curse of the other tree.

The other image that declares the cross is the 'bread and wine'– the broken flesh and shed blood. Our point here becomes clear. Both of these images depict the cross, but one depicts the conflict in time, while the other transcends time and depicts the eternal givenness of God. Looking through the keyhole of the cross into the Godhead, we do not see a man hanging on a cross; we see the provision of the life of God. We don't just see the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world; we see the Lamb as the expression of pure offering. The bread of heaven and cup of blessing (the flesh and blood of the Everlasting Covenant) were produced entirely by Their agreement to overflow in blessedness toward 'the Other'.

The time-restricted nature of the 'curse' image is reinforced by a most helpful observation. The crucifixion tree was left standing for that particular day only. The body was taken down by evening, a practice that was intended to signify a time limit – a time restriction that needs to be placed upon this particular image or dimension of the cross. This image only belongs to the cross in *time*, not to the cross within God Himself – not to the *timeless* Godhead dimension, for in Him there is *no* law. Only where law was wrested from the harmony of God's love into the hands of self-seekers, did the cross typify a curse.

## The cross in marriage – giving love

In the relationship of marriage, we choose to esteem the baptism/communion image of the cross, since we magnify the provision of Christ Who says, 'Take, eat, and drink'. His givenness is manifested to us in these elements, as is our transformation to this *same* image of giving love. With this in mind, we embrace the reality that both of the cross dimensions will be present in our marriage relationships – both the conflict of law, and the resolution of pure

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giving – and there will be an obvious overlap. The conflict of the cross will be evident wherever the curse of self-seeking is introduced. In each of us as individuals, and in our relational interactions also, the flesh wars against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary to one another.<sup>83</sup> However, the conflict of the cross is the only way to remove the enmity.

So our interactions may at times be tense and untidy. However, our faith and commitment is this: if we give utterly, in full identity, and if we meet and intersect with one another in the process, we believe that the giving dimension of the cross will carry us beyond the curse and *make us one*. The cross will be manifest at the meeting point of our givenness to one another, and the *cross is the dimension which forms* and brings to birth. This is vital. We know this because Christ, the new creation, was brought forth by the travail of the cross. The offering and labour of His soul brought forth seed.<sup>84</sup> In a most compelling prototype, the Scriptures have transposed this same ‘birth’ image back into the relationship of Adam and Eve. Let’s now explain what we mean by this.

#### The cross in the first marriage

Adam’s sleep and Eve’s formation from His side have an unmistakable connection to Christ and the wound in His side that followed His death (death and sleep are also connected in the Scriptures<sup>85</sup>). Paul tells us that the church is to be purified by blood and water as a bride for Christ without any blemish whatsoever.<sup>86</sup> John proclaimed that the blood and water by which our hearts are sprinkled and our bodies are washed, fell from the side of Christ. A

83 Gal 5:17

84 Isa 53:10-11

85 eg Psa 13:3

86 Eph 5:27

bride from His side – this is the connection between the marriage of the first Adam and the last Adam.

The marvellous point for us is that Eve's formation during Adam's sleep is an obvious image of the cross as a place of birth and formation. And so it was in the Everlasting Covenant where the giving cross-love of the Godhead produced an explosion – a multitude of sons, like the sand of the sea and the stars of the heaven for multitude.

### The cross makes us one

What this says to us, is that wherever the cross is expressed by the dimension of giving love, in the meeting of identity being offered, there is a powerful dimension of birth and formation present. Identity can be formed. Change can occur. Transformation can be produced wherever the cross in givenness is articulated. The man becomes redefined toward the image of this particular marriage relationship. He leaves father and mother, and is no longer defined by the family context, as it existed before. But neither is he independent. He must now give and express himself toward an image where he needs the wife as helper. He makes an entirely new statement about himself. Like Adam he says, 'This is now bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh'.<sup>87</sup> The person of his wife is now his 'own flesh', and he regards her 'as himself'.<sup>88</sup> For her part, the woman was also previously defined in her family context. Now she can be formed by the cross within the image (by absolute givenness) to be comparable to *this* particular man, in this particular relationship. This is amazing. *This is the key to becoming one in the image.* Neither loses identity, for each one has sonship-identity from the Father, in Christ. Yet each one is redefined and formed in relation to this particular image. The man will now offer himself as head, and

87 Gen 2:23

88 Eph 5:28

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will function in the image ‘through the woman’. The woman will now offer herself as helper, and will function ‘of’ the man, ‘from’ and ‘for’ the man. ‘But woman is the glory of man ... woman *from* man. ... woman *for* the man ... nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, *in the Lord*.’<sup>89</sup>

This is the image. This was what God had in mind for each married couple – that through offering we might ‘image’ the same dimension of identity and relationship as in the Godhead.

#### Meeting and being made one

The most essential element of marriage then, is to *meet* in giving love, in order to be *made one*. To meet, we must offer ourselves in accountable identity. We cannot meet if we do not give our *selves*. The offering of identity is absolutely essential. To meet in identity, given to one another, is to meet in the cross. And this meeting in the cross is the realisation of the atonement at work in the marriage covenant. *Atonement* (often helpfully explained as at-one-meant) is the process of *being made one*. The purpose of the cross of Christ was to take two and make them ‘both one’ (in every sense: Jew and Gentile, God and man, husband and wife).<sup>90</sup> The blood of the cross removes enmity and makes peace. Where we meet in the cross, God makes us one. God joins us. ‘Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.’<sup>91</sup>

#### Summary – meeting, choosing and giving

The key elements in a Christian marriage can be summed up in the three words: meeting, choosing, and giving. We *meet*, we *choose* the other, and we *give* from the basis of a sanctified (separate and distinct)

89 1 Cor 11:7-11

90 Eph 2:14

91 Matt 19:6

identity. We meet the other. We cannot *be* the other. We honour and worth the other. We recognise the capacities of the other. We choose the other, in the sense that we give to and receive the other, without any sense of trading or exchanging – much less using or violating. This is the holiness that belongs to true relationship. This is the ‘holy ground’ of relationship. This is the true *koinonia*, whether in the marriage or in the church – a fellowship of giving and receiving.

On the subject of trading, we are reminded of the communion between Abraham and Melchizedek, where the king of Sodom is offering a ‘trading’ (give and take) relationship. ‘Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, and *take* the goods ... but Abram said ... I will take nothing”.’<sup>92</sup> It provides an amazing illustration that this should take place right at the point of a communion relationship. Our response to trading within a relationship must always be as Abraham’s was. ‘Not a shoestring!’ We will take nothing. We seek only to give without condition. Receiving the offering of the other is an entirely different response. We choose the other. We receive his/her offering as a sign of choosing the person. Even this is a giving, committing action.

At the moment we choose, we accept full accountability for the choice we have made. This is the essential element of the choice of a marriage partner. This is a true covenant. We meet, we choose, we give and we are made one.

When we make an accountable choice, we might say that we ‘name’ this choice. (More on naming later.) We name the choices we make, in that we accept full accountability for the outcomes of our choices. Only this choice, this accountability, defines a true marriage covenant. What we choose, we name as ours. We own it. We are separated to it. We are fully alone and accountable in our offering and

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choosing. We are fully self-conscious. We are fully aware of the other. We meet, we choose, we give and we are made one. We say, 'This is now bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh'.

#### Removing enmity

Meeting, choosing and giving will activate the *cross*, and in turn, the cross will destroy the *enmity* that exists between the 'two' – Jew and Gentile, brother and brother, husband and wife. 'He Himself is our peace, who has made both one ... having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the *law* ... contained in *ordinances*, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two. And He came and preached peace to you who were *afar off*.'<sup>93</sup> The two in marriage are certainly a primary expression of this principle. Indeed, man and woman are 'afar off' as the Scripture says (as far as east from west, we might say). Nevertheless, the cross can destroy the enmity and the two can be made one. The enmity *can* be slain.

What then is enmity? The above Scripture passage gives a clear outline for our instruction. Enmity is based in law, and law is contained in 'ordinances'. The key word, in practical terms, is ordinances. What are ordinances? The best example of ordinances is found with the Old Testament law-keepers (like the Pharisees), who took every law and created a myriad of other smaller laws. They added the 'fine-print', we might say. This should make it quite clear why the subject of ordinances is applicable to the marriage situation. In every marriage, there are a great many ordinances or covenants, vows, arrangements, expectations, conditions, assessments, bargains, unspoken agreements and unwritten laws of behaviour. These are the basis for perpetual enmity. All these 'fine print' ordinances are actually law; and law is the reason for enmity.

93 Eph 2:13-15

## The removal of law

The removal of *law* is the key to the removal of *enmity*. As we know, the law is brought into our relationships by our functioning from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Resorting to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a mode of assessment and relational interaction is common to both male and female. However, the key to the removal of law is found by understanding the way in which the law was *first introduced* to the marriage. The simplest way of stating the point here is to refer to Paul's teaching. What he says is that the woman was the first transgressor.<sup>94</sup> The implication of this is not to make the woman accountable for all the law and enmity in the marriage. Remember, we are looking at how *sin works* in the image, ie in the marriage context, not just as an individual operation. We are each accountable for our own sin, for our *own* use of the law. Paul is teaching us how sin enters our relationships. It enters every marriage in the same way as at the beginning. It enters because the woman is attracted toward it and deceived by it. Then the man is disobedient and non-accountable, and so he becomes snared by the law also.

The lesson that Paul is declaring must be understood, because this is where the answer lies. If the woman 'brought law *into* the marriage' so to speak, she is able to take a foremost initiative in sending law *away* from the marriage covenant. This is a most dignifying action for any woman who desires to be accountable. If she will take up this accountability, there is an amazing key here. No woman is a victim of her husband. *He* is not the source of the enmity. The woman has the capacity, and the accountability to forsake all of her ordinances, and to take a Christian stand by refusing to give place to those fallen mechanisms.

## Sending away ‘Ishmael’

What is the husband’s role in this? The husband is accountable to refuse all ordinances, both hers *and* his, and function in obedience and accountability toward the headship of Christ. He should call her away from law, and also deal with his own law. He is also accountable in another way. He is accountable for the *fruit* of the culture of law – just as Abraham was accountable for Ishmael (born of Hagar, who becomes a symbol of flesh and law). In time, Abraham had to deal with the sending away of Ishmael.<sup>95</sup> Practically, this means that every husband must refute all fallen culture. The man is accountable for whatever is produced in his family. He must bear this accountability. However, he cannot and must not carry the accountability of his wife. She must send away her own ordinances. She must do this as part of her response and accountability before Christ as Lord. To take up the Hagar-Ishmael illustration again, every wife must *own* the culture of Hagar (a symbol of the law and of flesh), and must herself proclaim the need of its exclusion.

In this area, in the matters of rejecting law and ordinances, the man *does* listen to the voice of his wife. Now let’s be clear. The man must *not* listen to her when she is functioning by her own ordinances etc. He only listens when she is being individually accountable, and is designating what must be *rejected* from the marriage. This is a most important precept. The man, in particular, must not be confused here. If he is confused, he may listen to her in the wrong way, and then start ‘covering’ for his wife. He will start absolving her, and in this way he will carry the accountability that *she* should bear before the Lord.

The man must not bridge the gap of accountability for his wife, or his children. He must not carry his wife. He cannot allow her to ‘sound off’ as if he is the ‘overlord’ and she is the victim. He must call her, trust

95 Gen 21:10-14

her, and separate her to carry the accountability for her *own* words and actions. If not, he is actually serving and servicing the law in the marriage. Thus, he is not preserving the holy ground of the image. No man can set out to ‘silence’ his wife, but he *must* keep the ground of the image holy, by refusing to act by the ordinances that she introduces.

## Understanding headship

The man must also reject law in himself, and his reflection and protection in this matter cannot come from his wife. This is where a man must maintain a headship relationship with his brethren, because there is only *one* source of headship. Headship flows from the Father, through Christ, to every man. We have said that a man cannot be independent of his wife, within the image of marriage. He must be committed to her. But neither can he be independent of Christ’s headship. Christ’s headship is a common source for all men, even though all men have an individual relationship and accountability toward Christ. Men must be completely committed to the one mind of headship among the brethren and elders within the body of Christ. This is where many men lose all capacity to resist the operations of law in their marriages. They are ‘doing headship’ on their own, rather than opening their hearts to the unity of mind and heart, from one Father, that is found through right connection in the body of Christ.

The conclusion is that if men will stand properly in relationship with their brethren, they will be able to see law and enmity abolished in themselves. In the same principle of headship order, if wives submit properly to their husbands, they will also be able to send law and enmity away.

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We have discussed the image of sonship, and also the cross, which is central to that image. We began with these subjects rather than with marriage itself, because it is only from a study of the Son and the image of His life that we can understand male and female ‘in the image’. Our sonship as male and female all finds its image in Christ. Maleness and femaleness are not secondary to our sonship, but are *essential* to our sonship. Without thinking it through clearly, we can find that we have adopted a mindset that our identity as husbands and wives is only a passing phase – having no bearing on eternal identity.<sup>96</sup>

96 It is a fallacy to think that the aspects of ‘male’ and ‘female’ have no relevance to the new heavens and new earth. Remember, God did make man in His image as male and female. We understand clearly that the element of procreation, ‘marrying and giving in marriage’, is caught up into a greater dimension in the new heavens and earth. However the sonship capacities that we are developing are all part of the order of headship - which is in no way merely a human or temporary order.

We need to be clear on this point. ‘Male and female in the image’ was God’s summit purpose for mankind, not just an opening stanza. Every marriage then is a ‘mini-culture’ in the same image as God’s eternal kingdom.

What then is the image or ‘model’ for maleness and femaleness, and thence for Christian marriage? What does it mean to be Christians as husbands and wives? Does it mean that church attendance, prayer and devotional life in the home make our marriages ‘Christian’? Indeed there is much more to it than this. Headship doesn’t merely mean that in the major issues of life, the man should make the final decision. Submission has been seen as the woman following his lead in these vital issues. Many of us have felt that, with these responses, we have had the basics in place.

### The ‘headship crisis’

Then as the word on ‘headship order’ intensified, we gradually upgraded many of these values to something more definitive in our marriages and homes. Now we have begun to realise how sweeping the change of culture needs to be. Coming under lordship, and participating in the order of the life of God, requires a complete cultural change. For every one of us, the Fall has produced an entire ‘package’ of fallen culture within each home. Our largest insight by far has been that the dynamics of the Fall are re-enacted from day to day as part of the familiar culture of every home. The mechanisms of the ‘body [package] of sin’ within every family are much more formidable and far reaching than we first thought. We have understood the Fall in its individual impact (the stolen law, producing shame, alienation, insecurity etc) but more importantly, we have begun to understand the Fall in its *context*; ie it took place in the specific context of the relationships within the image. Each of us *is fallen from the image of male (husband and father) or from the image of female (wife and mother), and*

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furthermore each is fallen as regards the image of male to female relationship, or female to male relationship.<sup>97</sup> The redeeming message is the call to the man to recover the image of headship, and to the woman to be 'of the man' in the image.

#### A crisis of 'Lordship'

If we 'call on the name of the Lord', we are actually calling on Him Who names all those within His household.<sup>98</sup> To call Him 'Lord' as a man means that one submits to being named as male-husband-father. To call Him 'Lord', as a woman, means that one submits to being named as female-wife-mother. If we have truly come to this basic lordship response, the very foundation of the Christian faith, then every other change should flow from this.

One of our earnest considerations has been that the changes that should occur have been very slow and often inadequate. This has caused us to question whether some believers have actually made a quantum shift to the true gospel, the gospel of headship that is in the face of Jesus Christ. Are we now able to reform our culture so that the blessing of Abraham, the family life of God, can be restored to us? We have been recalled to 'look on Him [whose face and Headship] we have pierced'.<sup>99</sup> Every family has been called to mourn to find a change of culture. We have been crying 'Abba, Father', by the Spirit of Christ, seeking to recover fundamental Christianity in identity, relationship and structure. The question is, 'Are we making progress?' Do we just keep gradually changing? Or is there a lordship crisis wherein we make a fundamental shift, and then having called on the name of the

97 It is important to consider the impact upon children of the maladjusted female-to-male relationship, and the maladjusted male-to-female relationship. Briefly, we know that the overpowering or dysfunctional mother-son relationship, as well as the abusive father-daughter relationship, has an enormous effect on identity development.

98 Rom 10:13

99 Zech 12:10

Lord, are we progressively transformed into the full glory by the Lord, the Spirit? Indeed, this last proposition is the answer.

Yes, regeneration is a process; cleansing is a process; sanctification is a process. But an unequivocal response to lordship is *not* a process. A shift to the holy ground of lordship, and therefore to ‘the image’, is not an incremental shift. By a specific response to lordship, within the context of headship relationship, we must recover the holy ground of the image, the house of *Yahweh*. Then, standing on holy ground, walking in the light, abiding in the vine, living in the Spirit, we are transformed from glory to glory.

### Making a shift

What then are the indications that we have made this fundamental shift through the lordship crisis? How does a husband, a wife, or a child respond if he/she is genuinely resolved in headship/lordship order? First of all, we know that responses are never perfect, for if we ‘say we have no sin’ we are liars. However, when fault is found, a truly Christian response will show itself as respect for headship, the order of the Father’s life. It will also show itself as a readiness to hear a word that is beyond the scope of one’s apprehension. It will show as a repentant response to the fruit of sin that is evident to others, even if not immediately clear to ourselves; and as a deep and accountable response to the relational impact of one’s actions.

Peter is quite clear in his letter that where the Spirit of Christ is present, it will be seen in the ability to endure injustice; in a submitted spirit in a woman, an understanding attitude in a man, a compassionate tender-heartedness toward one another, and a readiness of mind to suffer in the flesh.<sup>100</sup>

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In each marriage, *four* indicators are paramount. Both husband and wife need to hear messenger/headship (the word that proceeds from the mouth of His appointed messengers, whoever they may be). Both respond readily to the human face of headship (husbands toward the elders, wives to husbands). Husbands seek, entreat, and respond readily to fatherhood, while wives seek and entreat motherhood (for in this they demonstrate sonship, regardless of age). Finally, each responds eagerly to the reflections of brotherhood and sisterhood; they show no partiality (pecking order) in regard to hearing a word, for they live at one level, in first love.

The point is that if we are consistently showing an obvious lack in the readiness and genuineness of response in these areas, then we must conclude that a fundamental submission to Lordship is still not in place. Instead, we are still double-minded, negotiating, presenting, ‘packaging’ the tree and falling into the snare of the devil.

#### The unique conception of the first marriage

God’s purpose to make male and female in His image was inaugurated with the unique conception of Adam, followed by the unique formation of Eve from the man. Obviously, no other two people have been formed in this way since that time. Our aim will be to note the most basic of all points – that the image, the original and true image, or prototype for marriage, was developed in a particular way (the man in headship, the naming of the creation, the addition of the woman, the declaration of their relationship etc). In fact, these same dynamics must be invoked in every subsequent marriage if the image is to be recovered.

Our next aim will be to show that despite the *special* formation of Adam and Eve in the image, *all* marriages are to aspire to the same

dimension of being one flesh and ‘one Spirit’ in the image,<sup>101</sup> as were the first married couple. Adam and Eve were uniquely formed and were the first expression of ‘in Our image’, as purposed by God for mankind. God intended that the human race would continue in this same image.

## The formation of the image

Let us view the formation of the first marriage in relation to *three* aspects noted in the Scriptures.

*First* of all, Adam was joined to the Lord in what we may call a *headship relationship* and fellowship. He was given a mandate that we shall describe as ‘naming and proclaiming’ – that is, he was naming the animals, and thereby proclaiming and imputing order to the creation that was part of his dominion. The glory, creativity, authority, and mystery of this cooperation with *Yahweh*, in the garden of man’s inheritance, cannot be underestimated. This is significant for us, for to emulate Adam’s progress the first step is for the man to establish the ‘ground’ of the relationship with the Lord alone. He must know the name of the LORD; he must know his own name; then he can name and proclaim the whole image of godly relationship, before he names the relationship with his wife and family.

*Secondly*, upon the creation of woman from his rib, *Adam named* and proclaimed the nature and relationship of the helper that was

101 Mal 2:15. Lit. ‘But not one did He make[them]? And a vestige [or ‘part’, Heb. *she’ar*] of spirit to him? And to what [purpose] the one? He was seeking a seed of God.’ The word *she’ar* allows for ‘a vestige left after a judgement or catastrophe’, which is an impressive support for the idea of being a ‘part’, or indeed a ‘vestige’ if torn away. David Stern translates: ‘Hasn’t He made them one in order to have spiritual blood-relatives’. He would appear to allow this because *she’ar* has a companion word *she’er* used in Isa 18:6 and Lev 18:12-13, meaning ‘relative’ or ‘kinsman’. If we allowed the sense of both words, we could paraphrase the verse thus: ‘And a “relative” or “kinsman” in spirit she is to him.’ For a further discussion on ‘one spirit’ in marriage, see notes on ‘The Nature of Man’.

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‘comparable for him’.<sup>102</sup> He proclaimed that she was ‘of his bone’, and ‘of his flesh’ and that she was taken ‘out of him’ (ie from him).

In his apostolic commentary on this God-ordained headship and helper relationship, Paul reinforces Adam’s proclamation. Paul says that the woman is ‘of’ man and ‘from’ man and ‘for’ man.<sup>103</sup> The man, he says, is ‘through’ the woman,<sup>104</sup> meaning that while woman finds her definition as being ‘of’ the man, the man similarly finds a definition in relation to the woman – viz. that he is ‘through’ the woman. Upon reflection, the woman’s role as helper explains the way in which man is through the woman. The mandate of headship is facilitated through the woman – by virtue of her ordination as a helper who is precisely matched, and comparable in every way.

Thirdly, it is stated prophetically,<sup>105</sup> that ‘for this cause a man shall leave father and mother and cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh [also]’. What does this really mean? It is prophetically stated that all subsequent marriages, while not emulating the unique form of this first relationship, should in fact aspire to be formed in the same image. All others after this, it is declared, while *having* fathers and mothers (unlike Adam and Eve), will in fact ‘leave’ these families, and ‘cleave’ to become ‘one flesh’ just as were Adam and Eve. While men in

102 Gen 2:18

103 1 Cor 11:7, 8, 9

104 A simple reading from vs 11 to vs 12, leaving aside the ‘italicised’ insertions to the Greek text, leads us to conclude that on the matter of being mutually interdependent within marriage, while the woman was created to be ‘of’ and ‘from’ the man, the man is best described as being ‘through’ the woman. In the context, Paul is not merely saying that every man is born of a woman (and is therefore ‘through’ or ‘by’ woman, in that sense).

105 It is entirely appropriate to say that Adam made this prophetic statement of vs 24 (written of course by Moses) in that it is recorded immediately after Adam’s proclamation about the woman taken from man. The poignancy of the series of statements is enhanced if we understand that the future definition of all subsequent marriages is proclaimed immediately, and as a part of the perpetuation of the ‘image’ into which God intended all male and female relationships to be formed – albeit not in the unique manner of the first relationship. Without this first formation however, the real glory of being ‘one flesh’ and one Spirit in the image would never have been manifested.

the future would be born of women, they would not be ‘of’ the woman. Rather, each would leave father and mother, be joined by God to a wife, and this woman would in fact be ‘of’ the man.

‘For this cause’, the Scriptures declare – what cause is that? For the purpose of being ‘one flesh’ in the original image purposed by God for male and female. *This is our key starting point.* Adam proclaimed that ‘for this cause ...’ (or shall we say: ‘with this in mind’, or ‘for this particular goal and dimension’), men after him would leave father and mother to be joined each to his wife *in this same image* to which Adam and Eve were created.

### The two shall be one – what does this mean for us?

This sounds simple enough, but the issue is this. Are we able to be formed in this original image? As men and women who have fathers and mothers of our own, and who seek marriage, we don’t have this unique formation. Wives aren’t made from the ribs of their future husbands. Prior to marriage, men have had *no* experience of establishing a garden (or shall we say, holy ground) where they name and proclaim with all the expressive creativity that flows from headship. Likewise, women before they are married, are not ‘of’ the man in that specific sense.<sup>106</sup> So neither the man nor the woman, aspiring to marriage, has any concept of, or natural disposition toward, the true image of marriage.

### The alternative image – the two shall be two

If we add to our considerations the impact of the Fall, we can see exactly why marriage has developed another image entirely. Perhaps the most concise way to describe the customary alternative to ‘one

106 Although they should have learned to be the ‘glory of man’ in the general sense of ‘mankind’.

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spirit' marriage is the compatible marriage – or the parallel marriage. How would we explain this model?

Clearly, for those who already have an identity and relational context that is defined by 'father and mother', the most logical and desirable model for the marriage is one that doesn't redefine who they are. Each would logically seek one who was sufficiently the same, yet sufficiently different – one who would neither pose a threat nor upset the expectations that one might have for a future life. This is what we mean by 'compatible'. The best guarantee of success would be for each to cleave to a relationship that seemed to *complement* their attributes, and *compensate* for their needs.

#### Christians do the same

It is no surprise to find that Christians do exactly the same. The fact that two Christians marry, does not in itself make any difference to the basic model or 'image' of the marriage. Yes, they are Christians, and their commitment may be more reverent, and their behaviour may be more godly. But the basic bonding of the union is not 'in the image'. Many Christians have not sufficiently understood the image to which they are cleaving, and have not sought transformation into this image.

To make the situation for Christians even more difficult, the presumption and glib assumptions that Christians allow as the reason for their union can make their marriages more self-centred, worldly, and parallel. Why? Because religion and hasty claims about the 'will of God' become a foil for the lack of real substance, and even a panacea for stupidity.

#### Redefined by marriage

Paul shows clearly that those who are 'in the Lord' are to regain the dimension that is 'in the image'. 'Nevertheless, neither is man

independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, *in the Lord*.<sup>107</sup> 'In the Lord' and 'in the image' mean the same thing, since Christ is the Image. In marriage, both the man and woman are redefined in relation to one another and toward all other relationships – 'for better or for worse'. Neither one is independent of the other, as they were beforehand. They are joined by God and redefined in a new context. The obvious example of this is that the relationships of new partners toward their own parents are redefined.

Identity within marriage is defined from the point when God joins them together and they are no longer two, but one. This point of transacting the covenant of marriage is like a baptism, for it has the same dynamic as baptism. In what way? In baptism, we exercise the faith of sonship to lay life down into Christ's death, in order to become one with Him. We lay life down to be *reclaimed to the image*, and to be *renamed within the image*. Marriage is the same. *We lay life down to become one, and to be redefined toward this specific image*. Each is renamed toward the other and toward their specific image with all its unique circumstances and outcomes.

Christ is now the image of God for us – as in baptism, so in marriage, and in the whole of life. The baptismal redefinition of marriage is this: man is through the woman and woman is of the man. Neither is independent of the other.

## Joined to the 'Lord'

Paul says, 'He who is *joined* to the Lord is one spirit with Him'.<sup>108</sup> One Spirit with the Lord – this is amazing. When we say that we are 'one Spirit' with God, or with one another in marriage, we do not mean that we are dissolving into an amorphous (unstructured or ill-defined)

107 1 Cor 11:11

108 1 Cor 6:17

#### 4. Male and female in the image

mass, or abdicating identity for a mystery romance. God, who is Spirit, functions in full identity and community. 'One spirit' describes all that is named as being 'of God' – of the same essence as Himself – identity in community.

In marriage, we are joined in one spirit. The element that joins us is headship, not because one is *over* the other, but because one is head *to* the other as regards the outraying of glory. And when we are joined in this order, each is the glory of the other, as we established earlier. So we turn to the Lord, within the order of headship, to have the veil of law removed, and to allow the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ to outray. When man is through the woman and woman is of the man, the grace of life from the source (the Father) is expressed in a glorious wheel. The circle of headship, the wheel of glory, is the administration of endless life from God. From the Father to Christ, to the man, to the woman, each is 'head of ...', 'head of ...' and 'head of ...'. From the other direction, from the woman to the Son, each is the 'glory of ...', the 'glory of ...' and the 'glory of ...'. Each reveals the 'self' to the other, and reveals the other. The name of one is glorified by the other and guarded by the other. For the man it becomes absolute identity to profess the glory of the Father and the headship of Christ, and also to commit to the image to be through the woman. For the woman it becomes absolute identity and relationship to be of the man, and to be fully given to be the adornment of man.

#### Male and female – 'head' and 'helper'

Drawing from both New and Old Testaments, the terms 'head' and 'helper' are the best descriptions of male and female in the image. These are completely unique expressions and dimensions. They cannot be shared or exchanged. They are completely complementary. God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper

comparable to him'.<sup>109</sup> Adam was 'alone' in terms of relationship, but not lacking in terms of identity. Eve was made 'comparable'. She was not the same, nor did she make up for a lack. She was formed to be comparable to the man so that there would be complete diversity of identity, with one community, within the image. This was the same image as the Godhead – complete identity as three, yet total unity as one. One God – three persons. We know that the givenness of love explains the bonding of identity in unity.

## The practical 'work' of relationship

Adam and Eve were created 'in the image' of God. This image is best understood as a context for life and relationship. Within this context, the mandates of 'head' and 'helper' were to work together to subdue the earth and have dominion over the animals.<sup>110</sup>

God gave Adam a mandate. He was to name everything within the garden, and proclaim or declare the nature of its individual 'being' or identity. He also proclaimed the nature of its relationship to everything else in creation, in accordance with the will of God. This capacity for sight and understanding concerning identity and destiny also extended to the naming of the woman, and the defining of the nature of the relationship of man and woman, when she was created for him as helper.

God gave Eve to Adam as a helper comparable to him *in his work*. This meant that they together could *tend* (cultivate) and *keep* (protect) the garden.<sup>111</sup>

When we remember that Eve was created *for* Adam, and that Adam was to be *through* Eve,<sup>112</sup> we begin to see the definition of the

109 Gen 2:18

110 Gen 1:28

111 Gen 2:15

112 1 Cor 11:7-12

#### 4. Male and female in the image

relationship that they were to cultivate. The cultivation and protection of the garden defined the physical work that they were to address together. Much more than this, the cooperation of one with the other in the work would also result in the cultivation and protection of their own relationship. Then they would bring forth fruit in multiplicity. The straight lines of identity and mandate would gain greater definition and clarity for relationship and work as they gave themselves to each other in sanctification and honour.

*For* and *through* become important words to help our understanding of the lines of distinction or sanctification (*'defining limits'*, much like the straight furrow of a ploughed field) that mark out the image for male and female. They help us to understand the pathway to fruitfulness that belonged to the blessing of their marriage.<sup>113</sup> This subject is discussed elsewhere so we will not dwell on it now.<sup>114</sup>

### Submission and lordship

There, in the garden, God blessed man and woman with relational perception; that is, the ability to give and receive worth, submission and authority concerning the earth and its inhabitants (including themselves). We find this understanding in the blessing pronounced upon man and woman, who were to fill the earth and subdue it, and also to have dominion over the animals.<sup>115</sup> Submission was to be learned in relation to the earth, and ruling in relation to the animals. Let us not forget that the man came from the dust of the earth, and the woman came from the man. Thus they are placed within this created order of authority, albeit at its head.

113 Gen 1:28

114 See *Reforming our Culture*, p36-46

115 Gen 1:28

Everything related to the earth was to be brought into submission to the man and woman. We find later<sup>116</sup> that it is in relation to the man that everything that is of the earth would no longer offer its submission willingly. His wife, also, would not readily yield her submission. He would rule over his wife, and she would desire to control him, rather than offer up her submission willingly.

### Failure in the mandate

Adam and Eve failed in their mandate to ‘tend and keep’. We do not find much evidence in the Scriptures that the garden had become unkempt. We do see, through the gap in their own relationship, that the lines of distinction had not been *cultivated* to the degree that Eve would stand with Adam in relation to the serpent’s advances. The relational aspects of submission and lordship (ruling) were not cultivated. As a result, *protection* did not operate in the garden of their relationship, and death became its fruit.

Adam and Eve did not maintain the godly cultural lines of sanctification and holiness. The ground (garden) was cursed for the man’s sake. Why? Because he had ‘listened to the voice of his wife’.<sup>117</sup> In this instance, Adam had listened to his wife’s voice, instead of submitting himself to God. Eve stood apart from Adam, upon the ground of her reason. This ‘reason’ she then offered to Adam, and he ate of it. He yielded to the ground of her reason, and thorns and briars were now to be the fruit of the ground, and the fruit within the marriage covenant.<sup>118</sup> We could take the illustration a little further by saying that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is thorns and briars. The tree of life was lost to them and from that day, they died.

116 Gen 3:16-19

117 Gen 3:17

118 *The Miracle of the Seed* pp146-7

## Naming

The capacity to *name* has to do with the principle of *understanding*. This is significant. All husbands are called to ‘dwell with them [wives] with understanding’.<sup>119</sup> This is not just an understanding of the differences of physiology or emotion. It is an understanding that has to do with the essential ‘being’ (identity) and destiny of the woman, who is to be his helper and sister. It also has to do with the understanding of his own being and destiny as her head and brother. Then it has to do with the enunciation of the context of the image, the definition of the house that the Lord has given to him. It is also an understanding of the holy ground, or we might say ‘headship ground’, onto which he calls his wife, who joins him to express the glory of this particular man in multiplication and fruitfulness.<sup>120</sup> Out of this relational definition and application, the relational capacities for multiplication, which are expressed as ‘fatherhood’ and ‘motherhood’, are developed.

‘Glory’ is the name or identity of a person expressed outwards in sanctified relationship. Woman is the glory of man. Thus, the ‘glory of the man’ is revealed in the fruitfulness of the woman. Man is the image and glory of God, and as such, reveals this glory to his wife and family. The fullness of this glory is expressed in the face of Jesus Christ. To illustrate the authority of this order of glory, we can say with Paul, ‘the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God’.<sup>121</sup> We shall find later that the nature of sin can only be understood in relation to authority.<sup>122</sup> Because of this, the order of headship also becomes a crucible in which the cross can act to process sin and bring about change, thus restoring the image.

119 1 Pet 3:7

120 See *Building a House* pp67-72

121 1 Cor 11:3,7

122 See section ‘Sin and Authority’, p9

## Christ the creator

Let's ponder this a little further using Christ's example as a template. In the beginning, Christ, the word, enunciated (named) the creation into existence. He called light into existence and then named it 'day and night' in relation to all of creation.<sup>123</sup> These names declare both the nature of their expression as well as their purpose in relation to others in creation. In truth, He proclaimed the nature and relationship of all creation to itself. The headship of Christ then operated after Calvary, when He was glorified and made 'head over all things to the church'.<sup>124</sup> The bride was brought forth from His side, and the Father then glorified Him so that He could touch headship and be the Head over all.<sup>125</sup>

Adam began to participate in this capacity toward the animals and also toward the woman. But Adam touched Calvary, following the type of Christ's headship, when God took a rib from Adam's side and formed the woman from it. Why use Adam's rib instead of making her from the dust as He did Adam? God's reason was simple: so that the woman would be *from* the man. The cross has made an eternal distinction here. God has no interest in equality, as though being male or female made one less equal. Man and woman are different, not equal. In making woman from the rib of the man, God ensured that within the image, life is available and ministered to all via the order of glory and headship. Mankind was to live in the same life and relationship as God lives, and God ministers His life through that order of glory.<sup>126</sup> God made man head of the woman, and the woman helper to the man.

123 John 1:1-3; Gen 1:3-5

124 Eph 1:22-23

125 John 17:1-5

126 1 Tim 2:12-15

## Authority in creation

Let's take this further now. God did not create Adam and Eve to be mutually equal. God made Adam first, and then He formed Eve from Adam's side. God made Adam from the clay, and then Eve from Adam's rib. Paul writes, 'and I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve'.<sup>127</sup> The reason for the formation of one *from* the other has to do with authority. This is what Adam alludes to when he declares their marriage covenant, 'this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man'.<sup>128</sup>

The order of creation is also an order of authority. Eve was taken from Adam's bone and flesh; God formed her from him. Then Adam named her in relation to himself: 'this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh'. Adam is describing the nature of their relationship, ie she is (taken out) of the man. This is the order of creation, and also the order of authority, fashioned after the order of glory. 'For this reason shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'.<sup>129</sup> Because the whole faith and mode of the woman is of the man, in Christ, the life of God activates to join them in the image within the order of authority, glory and headship. This means that they become more than 'one flesh', but also 'one spirit' with each other and with God in the capacity of the Everlasting Covenant.

## Eccentricity

The 'reality of being' (ie who you really are) is known individually and corporately via the principle of understanding and naming.<sup>130</sup> We

127 1 Tim 2:12-13

128 Gen 2:23

129 Matt 19:4-5

130 See section 'Naming' above

can understand the reality of individual formation and maturity in this relational interaction, where we perceive and know ourselves in relation to God and others.

A person becomes eccentric when he replaces the order of authority and glory (headship) with another, reasoned, approach to their life, culture and relationships. The eccentric person reinterprets and perverts every other relationship in relation to himself. For example, when a man tries to reconstruct the way a woman relates to himself, ie other than in the order of glory, he becomes eccentric. His behaviour and mindset towards her will be perverted to another reason or wisdom – not the wisdom of God.

For a man or a woman to be anything other than what God named for them is unholy and eccentric. Sanctification illustrates clear lines of relationship that allow for a right mode of relating. Effectively, sanctification sets one apart from all eccentricity. All elements of identity, mandate and definition given by God are honoured in this mode of relating, which occurs in the relational context that we call ‘the image’.

## Two kinds of reason

Let’s revise the matter of ‘reason’. We have identified the reason that came from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Note that this reason did not come from the *apple*, which represents the fruit of the tree [death], but from the *serpent* who lived in the tree of knowledge, Satan.) We have also identified another understanding which says ‘for this reason’, and identifies the authority of the order of relationship within the flow of life from God.

How do we identify the source of our reason? How do we know whether we are reasoning from the wrong tree, or from the tree of life,

#### 4. Male and female in the image

which could also be said to be the headship tree?<sup>131</sup> The key is to look for the seat of the power in our relational expression. Are we empowered by objective reason? Objective reason is the self-centred exercise of reason from the tree of knowledge, which generates power for presumed authority based on our own judgements and assessments. This will cause us to behave as though we are the source of all wisdom – this is eccentric!

If we are to be empowered at all, it is to be from the Father, through the Son, to the man (in terms of what God gave to the man who lives in right order), to the woman, and to the family, in the flow of headship life. If this is our approach to relationship within the image, then *protection* from eccentricity will result, and growth and maturity in true identity and relationship within the image will be as God intended.

#### Sin and authority

Now let's remind ourselves of this point. The seed of deceptive wisdom given to Eve by the serpent refocused her understanding away from the authority of God and onto the authority of reasoned law. From then on, objective reason (her law) would weigh up good and evil, as though it was the measurement of righteousness or godliness. In fact, what the serpent gave her was the key to *god-likeness* not *godliness*.<sup>132</sup>

Eve was deceived, not understanding the difference between god-likeness and godliness. Godliness is the life of God revealed in us as righteousness; god-likeness is a moral comparison, reducing God's life to an argument between good and evil. From that time to this, goodness has been equated with God and evil with Satan. The basis of

131 See *Miracle of the Seed* p147

132 Gen 3:5

objective law is a self-centred assessment of what is good or evil for me, based on my desires.<sup>133</sup>

The truth that must strike home to every marriage and household is that good and evil have nothing to do with the measurement of sin. While we do seek after good, it is through righteousness, and not the law, that 'good' can truly be generated. The true measurement of sin is known through the personal offence of the authority that gave a command. Paul says, 'I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died'.<sup>134</sup> This *law* is the commandment of the *authority*, which is contrary to my own law. Sin offends the authority (person) by denying the commandment given to me, which is the expressed will of God for my life.

To say this another way, 1 John 3:4 defines sin as 'lawlessness'. Jude verse eight profiles certain ones who crept into the fellowship unnoticed, but lived by the rule of their own law, as 'dreamers' who 'reject authority and speak evil of dignitaries'. Many of us struggle at times with our own reason over what is sin, and what is not sin. We mistakenly believe that sin is somehow attached to good and evil. We believe that evil is sin and good is not sin. If we understand sin in relation to authority, then surely the offending of authority is what constitutes sin. Remember that lawlessness is sin (rejecting God's will or law). The command of which Paul speaks is the law of the will of God (authority), which causes us to die. Why do we die? We die (in sin) because we do not want to do the will of another, especially if it costs us something. We die because we are offended at the authority that has given us the command; and we die because we offend the

133 This reminds us of James' teaching concerning the pathway of sin. We are tempted and drawn away by our own desires and enticed. Desire conceives (through objective law) and gives birth to sin, which grows and brings forth death. Do not be deceived. Jas 1:14-15.

134 Rom 7:9

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authority that gave us the command. Their law or will is contrary to our own.

The Scripture is full of commands which support this thought. 'Obey those who rule over you.'<sup>135</sup> 'He is God's minister to you'<sup>136</sup> ... 'if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge.'<sup>137</sup> The supposed wisdom of our assessments and judgements do not put us above the law. In fact, sin, so that we can see it as sin, energises even more when the commandment from authority comes.<sup>138</sup>

### Exceedingly sinful

Why does sin then become exceedingly sinful? It becomes sinful because of the addition of our self-centred law (reason), drawn from the tree of knowledge. When the command came, it defined sin in our members, for our sin is that which is contrary to the command. Then the whole emotion or 'package' of sin in our members activated, because we were offended at the command.<sup>139</sup> Why are we offended? We are offended because the command is contrary to our own law. Once we ate from the tree of knowledge, sin became exceedingly sinful through the addition of the law. Sin is not just the disobedience, it is the offence of the disobedience to the person who is the authority calling us to obedience.

Let's say this again. At the tree of knowledge, we know two things. Firstly, we know our own reason through Satan's word (ie the corrupt 'seed-word' that the serpent gave to Eve was the source of Eve's own reason or law). Secondly, we remember the command of God towards the true seed, asking us to lay down our own will and conform our will and life to God's will and command. What is the essential difference

135 Heb 13:17

136 Rom 13:1-7

137 Jas 4:11-12

138 Rom 7:13

139 Rom 7:5

between these two modes of reason? In the first, we think that we are the real authority and that our judgements are law. While this is our law, it is not God's law, and He is not bound by our judgements. He is the authority and He gives authority to His messengers. God's command asks us to 'lay down' our '*born in sin*' lives, and conform our will to His will. Then sin becomes exceedingly sinful when we respond to God by approaching the tree of knowledge in order to source another 'reason', another way to get what we desire instead of being obedient.

God had given Adam a word and a mandate. He was to relate with his Head, and tend and keep the garden with his wife, who was to be his helper in the work. But through the serpent, another word or doctrine was preached to Eve and to Adam through Eve. Another fatherhood spoke to them both of an alternative image – one that was a deception. Satan spoke of god-likeness. Some of the angels had fallen with him in this lie, and now he preached this to Adam and his wife. He preached it to them so that they would believe in it. This produced sin. When they believed the word of god-likeness, they ate of the tree and died. The law of sin in our members is Satan's word. The law of death is from the tree (the fruit of sin). These both war against our mind and our reason. Reason is a 'soul-ish' action that focuses on the works of law, and not the life of righteousness.

### Summary: Sin produced death in me by what is good

Let's briefly step through this subject in the language that Paul uses:

1. The law, or command, was to obey and believe God's word. It is a word that commanded obedient discipleship to another form of doctrine, not my own; denying the old man and leaving father and mother, obeying the doctrine of Christ.'

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2. The law of sin in my members *reacts* against the command. Another law of reaction and sin<sup>140</sup> warred against the law of my mind and will. (The inward man that delights in the will of God, moral agency, regeneration – and reason.)

3. I recognise the law of my mind and will (inward man) that delights in the will of God. This becomes the source of my integrity and goodness.

4. My inward thoughts now become the action of law and reaction of sin. This is sin motivated by a word born of Satan – another seed.

5. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes me free from the law of sin (Satan's word) and death (the tree). That is, the composition and interaction of another word and another food, the true bread.

6. The law of the mind is set either on the flesh or on the spirit, death or life.<sup>141</sup>

Carnal mindedness has the elements of mind, flesh and law and is enmity with God – sinful. But spiritual mindedness results in life and peace.

To the spiritually minded, the body is dead (no life or power to be righteous) because of the effect of sin in the Fall. But the person lives because the Spirit gives life to our mortal bodies. We can see then that resurrection life in its first element is the power for righteousness, and that righteousness is therefore possible because of the power received from the Spirit. In a marriage, both head and helper must walk in the Spirit to receive this reality.

The Holy Spirit gives power to my spirit to put to death the deeds of the body. Thus, through the Spirit, we have put to death that which

140 Rom 7:21, 23

141 Rom 8:6

is causing death in ourselves and our marriage. The Spirit then tells us we are children, therefore heirs, of God. ‘There is therefore no condemnation to those who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.’<sup>142</sup>

## Law, sin and marriage

The effect of sin upon the marriage covenant is significant. It is because ‘all have sinned’<sup>143</sup> and therefore become slaves to sin,<sup>144</sup> that slavery to sin also becomes the mode of operation within marriage. We could say that the man and woman have become married to the law. The action of law and reaction of sin now governs their relationship. This brings two other elements to the marriage – the fruit of sin, and a curse.

The fruit, or wages of sin, is death.<sup>145</sup> Now, death is not the judgement on our sin as though it is disconnected from our actions, but it is the wages of our disobedience. The curse is different. The curse is a divine act of judgement.<sup>146</sup> It is God’s sovereign hand at work, because He is the authority that has been offended. So death is the fruit of our own work, while the curse is the injunction of God against us because of lawlessness. God’s action in judgement is just; but the action of sin is exceeding sinful, producing wages and fruit, which are death. These two elements, the judgement of God, and the fruit of sin, are not the same.

Salvation touches a marriage at the point of death because of sin. Because of the Fall, mankind became enslaved to sin, to law, to

142 Rom 8:1

143 Rom 3:23

144 Rom 6:16

145 Jas 1:15

146 Gal 3:10b15l

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rightness, to another form of doctrine.<sup>147</sup> Satan is a ruler and He has a kingdom, and there is a corporate 'old man' who is under the sway of the wicked one, the prince of the power of the air.<sup>148</sup> However, justification is individual and personal. Sanctification only works where relationships find their place in the corporate new man. Husband and wife find relational sanctification through participation in the order of life (headship), and not in eccentric behaviour.

### Restoring the family ground

In order to restore the family ground to holiness, a man must stand as the head of his house as an action of obedience to Christ. In so doing, he provides the ground of the home, and thereby gives his wife and children the right of choice in relation to himself and his ground. Will they, or won't they, join his ground in obedience to Christ? While on the one hand he is 'laying it all on the line' and risking losing it all, on the other hand this allows faith and grace to operate in family members as individuals. In not seeking to save his life, lifestyle and comfort, he activates the cross towards each member of the family. The choice calls them to account and to be accountable. Relational responses then develop either for the wellbeing of the family or for its undermining.

A wife cannot provide the ground of the home for her husband. Her role is to *sanctify* the ground that *he* provides. When the man does not stand in obedience to Christ to provide the ground of the house, then the house has no direction. It is in confusion and in danger of falling into sin. The wife has one of two options. Acting from anxiety, she can override the man and seek to control the family, becoming the decision maker for the household. Alternatively, she can, with an attitude of

147 Rom 6:17

148 Col 3:9-10; 1 John 3:12; Eph 2:2

obedience, sanctify the ground of the marriage by submitting to the order of God's headship. An attitude of active and faithful obedience will open a door of grace to the family even without a word from her husband.<sup>149</sup>

The attitude of the wife should be to facilitate the true culture of godliness in the home. That is the focus of godly womanhood. Sarah demonstrated this attitude towards Ishmael and Hagar, who represent the flesh and its motivations, when she requested that Abraham send them away.<sup>150</sup> This was a valid, proactive attitude. A wife must have this attitude when a husband fails to exercise his headship. 'Her desire toward her husband' is sanctified because her desire is towards Christ and His headship. She seeks to be an heir of the grace of life, with and through her husband.

The boy Ishmael, with his backbiting culture of law cannot cohabit with the true seed Isaac. There can be only one culture in the home, for no person can serve two masters. Sarah's attitude was to protect the godly seed and its culture – she was not just sending away a difficult person with a vindictive attitude.

A godly wife is the crown on the head of her husband, the glory of his headship, and she must be a woman of war.<sup>151</sup> The wise woman is a builder, who builds according to the plans of the Master Builder, Christ, through submission to her husband.<sup>152</sup>

When a woman rises in faith as 'a woman of valour', she is also the *glory* of his headship. This marvellous expression is the beginning of the definition of 'comparable'.<sup>153</sup> She is virtuous. This defines her

149 1 Pet 3:1-6

150 Gen 21:9-14; Gal 4:21-31

151 Prov 12:4

152 Prov 14:1

153 Gen 2:18; Prov 31:10

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worth and worthiness as a godly woman.<sup>154</sup> She is a worker, presentable to God, who does not need to be ashamed.<sup>155</sup>

Let's pause for a moment to compare these two key scriptures – Genesis 2:23 and Proverbs 12:4. She is 'bone of his bone'. She does not bring 'rottenness' to his bones. We could say that the bones of a marriage are its foundation, and the flesh of the marriage is its form, beauty and strength. If she is godly, she is joined to her husband in one spirit. This is comparability – she is resolved to the same foundation as her husband, and becomes the expression of the beauty, form and strength of their entire family culture.

If she is enslaved to the law (which always happens voluntarily<sup>156</sup>), she brings rottenness to his bones. The woman who is shameful brings rottenness to her marriage. How does rottenness come to a man's bones? Proverbs 14:30 tells us that a 'sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones'. For the man, the 'sound heart' is a heart that can safely trust in his wife. She will perform her obedience. She will do him good and not evil.<sup>157</sup> The woman who is foolish tears down her house with her hands.<sup>158</sup> She is worthless,<sup>159</sup> with a perverse mouth, speaking evil of dignitaries.<sup>160</sup>

A man becomes envious of the life and relationship that he cannot have without a helper comparable. He also becomes lazy, envying a peaceful and comfortable life, and so he will not challenge disobedience in favour of maintaining an easy relationship with his wife. Of course this is a lie and unreality. Without God, the man will opt for an easier life, rather than an ordered one.

154 Prov 12:4

155 2 Tim 2:13

156 Rom 6:13,19

157 Prov 31:11,12

158 Prov 9;14:1

159 On 'worthless see also 1 Sam 1:16 – 'Belial'

160 Prov 6:12

## Sanctification

The term ‘sanctification’ explains the absolute uniqueness of identity that still abides in community. When Jesus said, ‘For their sakes I sanctify myself’, He lifted the meaning of sanctification to its pinnacle – beyond the notion of ‘cleansing’.<sup>161</sup> Sanctification, by Jesus’ definition, is the act of separating oneself to unique identity, entirely for the sake of the other. In sanctification, one is alone, but is given to the process of being formed in such a way as will benefit the other. This is, in effect, the process to which Adam gave himself, and in which Eve was then presented to Adam. Each was absolutely separate and unique, but absolutely given to the other. This is love. This is sanctification. This is where a wife is a ‘sister’ to her husband, who is her brother.<sup>162</sup> This element is absolutely essential to the Christian marriage in the image.

The roles of head and helper in marriage cannot be confused, shared, exchanged, violated, or merged, without destroying the sanctity of marriage. The assumption of equality will drive identity toward a unisex distortion. Diversity must be maintained if marriage is to be holy.

Sanctification is not alienation. The one who has become remote and alienated through lack of giving, cannot be said to be ‘sanctified’. The one who has become too ‘holy’ to relate to others is alienated, not sanctified. However, when you *are* sanctified, you must stand alone in identity – absolutely accountable for identity, and for relational impact. This is where we struggle, for we are often unwilling to stand accountably and alone in these roles. For example, the situation

161 John 17:19

162 On the aspect of the wife as ‘sister’, refer to *Lessons from the Patriarchs*. Gen 12:13

#### 4. Male and female in the image

confronts all of us where we feel we are standing in responsible identity, while our partners are not. The degree of this contradiction can be very challenging in some marriage situations. In fact, all trauma in marriage can be traced to the fact that one or other feels alone, but does not want to *be* alone in identity, where he/she must 'count' (be accountable). We all want someone to love us and 'do it' for us. We are afraid of the aloneness of being fully accountable.

However, we should remember the example of Christ. His most defining moment of sanctification was when He was alone upon the cross, fully accepting His own sonship role as the Saviour of the body.

Are we willing to be sanctified or separated to our own place? It is only when we are alone in accountability that we can actually find community. Otherwise, relationship would have to compensate for true being, and could only therefore produce the destruction of identity and alienation. Any violation of sanctification, either by imposing on another, or by failing to 'be', will result in alienation. In the cross, every man and every woman must stand and say, 'I am alone'. Then, in this act, you are not alone, for you are absolutely sanctified *toward* the other by offering *to* the other.

#### The confession of 'weakness'

At this point it will be good to highlight an important implication of what we are saying here. In true sanctification, and in due regard for the atoning work of the cross, we confess that there is nothing we can do to guarantee the relationship of the other. We can only give and offer in faith. This is where we are weak and vulnerable. We certainly cannot 'be' the other, and we cannot even 'do it' for the other. This is our weakness. We confess that we are incapable of bringing to the marriage what only our partner is able to bring. We cannot demean, or impose on, the other by compensating *for* the other. We can only offer who we are in an attitude of laying life down. This is Christ. This is the

image of God. This is where the Godhead's own mode, described by the 'cross', begins to operate. Here, there is the power to compel every situation toward atonement.

Then, as the man offers headship and the woman offers to be helper, these offerings form the image. Together they constitute the glory of the image. Each becomes defined in relation to the other, and each is released by the other. Each gives the other to be what only he/she can be. This is another aspect of giving. We each give the other to be and do what we are weak and incapable of doing.

When we acknowledge that we are weak, we are also able to confess that we are chosen. 'God has *chosen* ... the *weak* things of the world.'<sup>163</sup> Weakness is the result of being fully extended in givenness, in laying life down. This is the unique capacity of sonship. This is the Lord's death. We have faith to die, to become weak, and even to be despised. In fact, we come to understand that we are called and chosen to this weakness, for 'God has chosen the base things, and the things which *are not*, to bring to *nothing* the things that *are*'.<sup>164</sup> The entire ministry of those who are 'called' is to bring everything to nothing. This is how the kingdom of God will prevail over all the works of the flesh.

163 1 Cor 1:27

164 1 Cor 1:28

## 5. Understanding the snare

There are many angles from which we can discuss Satan's destructive snare, and the fall of mankind from God's image. Our purpose here is to discuss the Fall in the specific context of the marriage. Thus, we will observe its impact *on* the marriage. Our overall aim will be to show that the basic snare is the 'parallel' model of marriage, as against the 'one spirit in the image' that God intended. We will broaden the discussion of the 'parallel' model by variously substituting the terms: worldly, compatible, and romantic.

### Which model – 'parallel' or 'one spirit'?

As we have said, every marriage is either 'parallel' or 'one spirit', or somewhere between the two. We are focusing on the parallel description, rather than the compatible or romantic, because this is where the biggest deception lies. All these conditions exist in marriages *between* Christians, whereas only the 'one spirit image' is *truly*

Christian. Of course, we are all still in process, which means that elements of the snare and features of the alternative models are still being identified and forsaken. We are still reforming our culture.

In the parallel/compatible model, two people come together with identities that are already defined by their previous contexts (families). If they begin to bond because of a superficial compatibility, or with harmonious religious ambitions, then they will synthesise their independent positions. They will not commit to laying down their lives in the baptismal commitment which we have previously discussed. There will be no fundamental shift of base. They will marry as Christians, and with Christian ideals, but with no understanding of how to be ‘one spirit’ and ‘one flesh’ in the image according to God’s original intention. The one spirit model calls for a very specific understanding and commitment, and as with baptism, both need *faith to lay life down into the image of God*. In this marriage, Christ is the third partner. The two meet ‘in the name’ and their identity expression and relational context for that expression is not synthesised or parallel, but rather it becomes redefined (of the man, and through the woman), each in relation to the other.

### The worldly model

Let us now describe the normal ‘worldly’ image of marriage, reflecting on some of the most common symptoms.

The world’s image of marriage is based on common interest – on compatibility. Informal and even formal tests of this compatibility are often the basis of relationships – personality types, material interests, lifestyle, social status, education, recreation, sexual compatibility etc. The discovery of compatibility increases the sense of romance. In time, the compelling nature of this romantic love may lead to marriage. Such a couple believes in their suitability and feels assured of success because their foundations are laid in common interest and suitability.

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Whatever marriage advice they now seek or receive will do nothing to reappraise or reset the covenants and beliefs they have about their union. They have already formed a covenant as to how they will live, communicate and co-operate.

All communication from this point on will be based on the early foundation. Their assessment of their compatibility will become a self-sourced, and self-centred covenant. This lays the basis for parallel living. Because communication is based largely on self-interest, sooner or later conflict will arise. At this point, there will probably be an incapacity or unwillingness to renegotiate beyond the impasse. The couple will attempt to solve conflicts by finding a unifying common interest. But they are always approaching one another from two different bases. This has to be the case, because they can only be one spirit if they are joined in the cross. The parallel relationship has never been joined in one spirit despite their sexual union.

The best prospect for such covenants is that the partners 'mature' (as they see it) in the ability to sustain themselves in an amicable agreement, while still living in a self-centred, parallel relationship.

Maturity in marriage is then gauged by the ability to sustain oneself personally and socially while living relationally parallel. The concept of two becoming one flesh is never understood, and where it is offered, it is seen as unacceptable anyway. As this order corrupts further, the images of masculinity and femininity become distorted, and the roles of fatherhood and motherhood become confused and diminished. Family 'order', such as it is, becomes a synthesis of self-centred negotiations that aim for an equality in the distribution of roles. While both feel empowered by this arrangement, in truth, one will eventually overpower the other. Outside community influences will have a further effect on this relationship. Feminism will tend to empower the woman, since she will lean toward being part of a feminine subculture as part of her relational structure. Men, for their

part, also join ‘the mates’ as a subculture, but are much more likely to become individualistic in their mode of marriage relating. Many men *are* dominated by their wives, and have no answer to the lack of esteem that progressively overtakes them. Others show apparent humiliation and quiet subservience, but quietly justify their own position and take a legal ‘high ground’ for the good of the family.

Adding religion to such a marriage, or imposing it, only adds another set of pressures, since the basic chemistry cannot change. Many manage to maintain a sophisticated appearance that bridges all the anomalies. Others hold on in very dysfunctional situations. Very many relationships of this type simply don’t survive.

### Defining the snare

A relationship is snared when it is bound to these dynamics and when the man and woman are not able to love in a self-giving way, and recover the image that God intended. When we follow the story of Satan’s deception, we discover that the ‘snare’ is somewhat different for the man and the woman. In effect, the woman was tempted to usurp headship, and the man was tempted to forfeit the same in favour of a successful relationship.

### The snare for the man

While the woman’s snare was the voice of Satan (linked to the tree), the snare for the man was different. The snare for him was the voice of his wife. Satan did not tempt Adam. His wife gave him the fruit to eat. He preferred the enticements of his wife instead of obedience to his Head. Colloquially speaking, he preferred a ‘free lunch’ with his wife to ‘keep her happy’. Let us not forget this point. The man’s snare lay in pleasing the wife, not in yielding to Satan.

This has very important implications. Is it possible that there are many situations where a man responds to his wife in matters where he

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should be submitted to Christ first of all? We could ask, 'Is he laying his life down *for* his wife (as he should), or *to* his wife?' When we look through the Scriptures, we find that there are a great many references to this same theme. Solomon said, 'I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be trapped by her'.<sup>165</sup> It is not just to the immoral seductress that the Scriptures are referring. We are being instructed that the entire way of a man leans very much toward the propensity to be snared, rather than exercising the headship that was intended in the image.

Genesis says that as a result of the Fall, the man 'will rule over her'. Once the man is snared, he will tend to imprison his wife. He does this because he blames her, just as Adam did. 'Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate"'.<sup>166</sup> This is an amazing anecdote of a man's behaviour. He blames her. He is not accountable. His falsification is that he *blames* her, and yet he seeks to *please* her by accepting her deceptions. So, in an attitude of non-accountability, and to service his own self-centred interests, he see-saws to and fro between blaming and pleasing. It is in his best interests to find her cases plausible. Why does he yield to this? Because he desperately wants the relationship the way it was, or the way it could be according to their covenant. But when she won't act in a giving way, the man demands and forces the situation. If he gives, she will use it to her advantage. She will use the power of enticement and seduction. He will use the power of conquering and abuse. Seduction and abuse link directly with the desire and ruling of which we have spoken earlier.

165 Eccl 7:26

166 Gen 3:12

## The snare for the woman

The snare for the woman was that she was beguiled from the simplicity of walking in obedience. ‘So when the woman *saw* that the tree was *good* for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one *wise*, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.’<sup>167</sup> Eve ‘saw’ with her eyes that the fruit of the forbidden tree was good for food, and could make one ‘wise’. She took, ate, and gave to her husband also. We would probably read this story without drawing too much from it, if it were not for Paul’s teachings in the New Testament. This is not a naïve garden myth about ‘what went wrong’. This is a disclosure of the dynamics of the woman’s deception and the man’s disobedience and non-accountability (blaming the woman). These are the snares which have been inscribed in the very nature of male and female, and which have established themselves in every marriage.

We have shown in other studies that the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil introduced the stolen law into the marriage covenant. Instead of the marriage functioning in the image of giving-love, as we described earlier, both partners made use of the law of ‘right and wrong’ to establish their own self-centred position. The marriage became the operating base for the law. And the law brought the curse. ‘For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.’<sup>168</sup> According to Paul in Romans chapter seven, there is *no relief from law* until a partner *dies* to the law by the body of Christ. This death to law is effected in baptism.

It is most important to understand that *the very first operation of the Fall* (the woman eating the tree and then handing it to the man) is repeated day by day, in every situation. It is inscribed in the fallen

167 Gen 3:6

168 Gal 3:10

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nature of the woman that she will seek to take hold of the law and give it to the man to eat. Paul taught that the woman was first deceived.<sup>169</sup> He highlighted this for two reasons. Firstly, to warn her not to usurp the authority over the relationship. But secondly, when we read Paul's teaching elsewhere, we realise that he is instructing the woman to take the initiative in sending the law away, just as Sarah did with Hagar.<sup>170</sup> This is a magnificent truth for every woman to grasp. In the same way that the woman held the first initiative in *snaring* the marriage, she likewise holds the potential initiative to *release* the marriage from these fallen dynamics. If she does not exercise this prerogative, she is warned in Proverbs that she will 'tear down the house with her hands'.<sup>171</sup> It is striking that no such warning is ever directed to the man.<sup>172</sup>

The woman is not more or less accountable than the man is for the imbibing of the tree. All concepts of goodness ('saw that it was good'), all sight ('pleasant to the eyes') and all wisdom ('a tree to make one wise') – all perspective that does not come from the image, whether it comes from the man or the woman, is fallen. In human terms, there is always a male perspective and a female perspective, since both are fundamentally different. In the image, however, there is intended to be a meeting in the cross, which does not simply synthesise these perspectives. Rather, both lay down their lives to submit to headship order. Thus, there is one sight, the mind of Christ.

When we see how the woman functioned at the Fall, it is easy to see why feminine perspective has been promoted to such an important place. Women who are seeking to understand the snare, need to realise that there are a great many feminine ways, cultures, views and

169 1 Tim 2:14

170 Gal 4:30

171 Prov 14:1

172 Which is not to say that a foolish man may not destroy a house; the point is merely that the woman is given a specific initiative if she will but seize upon it.

perspectives that do not come from headship order, but come from the fallen, worldly nature.

Women often feel that feminine perception and opinions are essential elements of their identity. So they will want to be heard. They want equal ‘say’ in all matters. If they are not given equal voice, they complain about the aggression and power of the man. They accuse men for suppressing them, and believe they will lose identity if they are not included as they feel they should be – if their opinions are not heard. This is where the deception begins.

To be a true helper, a woman must reject all the worldly views, control, and independence which come from feminine perspective. She must not confuse these with identity. Rather, she must bring *only* sanctified identity and obedience onto her husband’s holy ground. Then they will be together in the image, and become ‘heirs together of the grace of life’ for every situation.<sup>173</sup>

All the attributes and skills of the woman are designed to complement the man and be the glory of the man. The problem is that if innate skills, quick thinking, reason, facilitation, and perspective are drawn from *outside* the headship order, and if these are presented to the man as religious adornment, then the adornment is actually fallen and takes *control* over the marriage.

### From ‘parallel’ back to ‘one spirit’

We can begin to see that many of our approaches do not come from an understanding of the image. Again, we must see that all perspective, male *or* female (even if we try to justify it as headship or helping), if it derives from the self-source (the tree), is fallen. The responses and approaches that come from ‘the image’ are entirely different. We must examine every response and mode, and ask ourselves, ‘*Is this from the*

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*image or from the tree?* Unless we resolve ourselves in the image, we will end up living parallel, and our contributions will be contrary, not complementary.

### Indiscretion – lacking direction

One of the symptoms resulting from an unresolved, parallel marriage is indiscretion. One partner or other, most often the woman, develops individual expression that is *out of character* with the ‘one flesh’ relationship. In the wife’s case, she often lacks direction, appearing to have no ‘rudder’ within herself by which to judge the appropriate relational behaviour. It could be that the husband is not providing a firm rudder in the way he directs the image of the marriage. It can also be that the woman, having found no clarity about her own identity, merely supports and complements the man’s expression, believing she is doing the right thing. Another common observation is that a couple’s unresolved, parallel relationship will cause one to behave in public in ways that ‘uncover’ and embarrass the other. If one or other is reverting to a self-source that is independent of the marriage, it is easy to see why this kind of behaviour will result.

### Three steps in re-establishing the image

In studying the original formation of the image we find that there were three steps. It will be possible for us to use these three steps as a model by which we can see ourselves established in the true image of marriage. In the story itself, Adam was formed and given a mandate within the garden of God. This was step one. Step two was that a helper was made and presented to him, of whom Adam said, ‘This is now bone of my bone’ etc. Step three was that Adam proclaimed the goal of this image, both for himself and for every other couple to

follow: ‘For this cause a man will leave ... and cleave ... and they shall be one flesh’.

Let us then identify and study these steps as a model for our recovery of the image:

1. Headship – naming the ground;
2. ‘This is now’ – naming the relationship;
3. ‘For this cause’ – naming the goal.

## 1. Headship – naming the ground

God placed Adam in the garden to ‘tend and keep it’.<sup>174</sup> *God brought the animals to him to be named.* By extrapolating upon these activities of ‘tending’, ‘keeping’ and ‘naming’ what God brought to him, we can clearly see the superlative nature of headship – the capacity to cultivate, tend, protect, identify, work and walk in fellowship with God Himself.

How then does a man return to the image? We have already highlighted that Adam and Eve’s formation was unique. One lost a rib, and one was made from the rib. Can we regain the essence of this unique construction in such a way that we are truly one in the image? The answer is, yes! And the first step is the same. It is important for every man to see that he must establish the true, holy ground of the marriage. The woman cannot do this. The man also must not assume that whatever he thinks and however he functions is already ‘good headship’, and then expect his wife to respond to this image.

The man must move to the proper ground of the image first. As we shall see when we study the three steps in Adam’s establishment, he must recover a relationship, as Adam had, with the headship of Christ. He must recover the mandate in which he is to *name* the animals and *proclaim* an order in which he has proper dominion. ‘Naming and

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proclaiming' describe the first duty of a man in recovering the image. Before Eve even came into the picture, Adam had to demonstrate a quality and expression of headship from which every man must take his example. He made preparation for the image.

This is the key to understanding how to recover and form the image of a marriage. How was it originally intended to operate? It is quite a crisis for a man to face the challenge of being the one who is the image-setter, as the glory of Christ toward his wife and family. He must forsake his snare, his anger and unbelief, and his propensity toward non-accountability. He must fearlessly name the ground of his relationship according to new, holy principles. He has to give up his comfortable, dependent position. Every man comes 'from' his mother with a feeling of being 'of' his mother – when in the image, the woman is going to be 'from' the man and 'of' the man. This is a turn around. The man is to be 'through' the woman, not *dependent* upon her for his security, his direction and his success. If he does not recover his headship in Christ, he will begin to listen to 'the voice of his wife', and will slowly conform to her expectations. Inadvertently, she will become the image setter.

### Practical implications

Remember, the tendency in a man is to be disobedient and non-accountable, whereas the woman will tend toward deception and control. A man must make quite a shift, then, toward a completely new image, if he is to take up the naming, proclaiming, and direction-setting responsibilities of headship. This is where a man must accept his weakness, and confess that the capacity for this is not resident within him. Yes, he has the basic equipment in his natural abilities, but his corrupted identity can only be recovered in Christ.

Many men groan under this call and become lazy and dependent. This dependence will cause them to bind their wives under their

expectations, and transfer a load of accountability to them that they are not equipped to handle. They will live by their wives' affirmation, rather than in obedience to Christ.

This is where a man must be sanctified to that quality which he alone can contribute to the image. He must learn to put distance between himself and his wife – the distance of the cross – *so that his confidence does not ride on the performance of the family*, or on his wife's performance and acceptance by others. Only then will his wife be free to stand as his sister.

The man must also make sure that his wife is not dependent on his affirmation or governed by his lack of it. He must call her to carry her own accountability. If her confidence rides on the approval-disapproval of her husband, it will be an identity destroying exercise for her. If she is sanctified, and assured of her own sanctification, she will learn not to be subject to his anxieties and struggles. It is possible, and essential, for a woman to stand accountably, without becoming independent. This is what it means to be a 'sister'.<sup>175</sup> Many women 'get on with being accountable', as they see it, but are in fact reverting to a strong, controlling stance. To stay steady in the image then, the woman needs to *refer* to her husband, and be secure to seek his reflections. If she has a submitted heart, she will not be afraid of the suitability of his input.

Quite often, women are afraid to interact and bring to the light the reactions and uncertainties that they may have. They believe that the husband may not cope with having his competence questioned, and that he may become threatened if they raise 'thorny' issues. And in truth, some men are so dependent and so comfortable with life as it is, that they do feel threatened by their wives' discussions.

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This is where givenness and sanctification must operate if the two are to meet in the cross, resolve their relationship in the image, and avoid becoming increasingly parallel. Each must be fully given to the other as an identity response before the Lord. Each must be sanctified and fully accountable in identity. Each must hope, believe, and love, *through* and *beyond* the conflict, pursuing a true meeting and an accountable dialogue in the image. Neither must be governed by affirmation or lack of it from the other. Neither must be drawn to being self-sourced and self-assured by living independently. Care is needed, because just when one says, ‘I feel sure of myself before the Lord’, and ‘I don't need your assurance’, it may in fact be that this is not genuine accountability, but rather a return to the snare of self-sourced religion.

### 2. ‘This is now’ – naming the relationship

As the first step in the creation of the image, Adam named the ground of the relationship, in the sense that he established his headship ground before the Lord, and paved the way for his helper to be joined to him. It is interesting to note that his helper was ‘brought to him’ by God in the same way that the animals were brought for naming. ‘Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man”.’<sup>176</sup> We may say that Adam named the relationship – the substance, character, and image of it. He named her in relation to himself and himself in relation to her. While she was unique and separate as an individual, nevertheless he proclaimed that she was of ‘my’ bone and ‘my’ flesh. He said, ‘This is now ...’ my reality. This woman is *of* me. He named what she was to

him, and he to her. He also named what he accepted as part of the covenant in the image. This is what every man does when he receives his wife. He names the reality, the covenant. Before the Lord, a married man proclaims, ‘This is what I have chosen and named to be part of me’.

This is where the miracle of transformation begins to take place within the image of marriage – or at least, it *should* begin, if the couple understand the ‘baptismal’ reality of marriage. Each is now redefined, just as in baptism, but this time in relation to the other. The marriage covenant ‘names’ the relationship, as if the two are baptised toward a specific image. If they have been baptised into Christ already, then marriage is the most significant point where the image, to which they are baptised, must be taken on.

When Adam proclaimed, ‘This is *now* bone of my bone ...’ he ‘named’ and proclaimed the nature of his unique bond or yoke with his new-found helper. The strength of this point is that when each man bonds with, and is joined to, his wife (a process which begins in courtship), he is in fact ‘naming’ and declaring *what he accepts and believes to be essential to his new-found yoke*. This is a cardinal point. Whatever is agreed upon as being part of the covenant (including expectations, ordinances, conditions etc) and whatever is accepted as ‘*now*’ being the very nature of ‘*my bone*’ and ‘*my flesh*’ (speaking from the headship view), is written into the covenant. Each has become redefined in relation to the other, and the mode of their joining is now named at this point.

The implications of this are most crucial. For example, many couples courted and married in an independent manner. Many of us ‘named’ elements of our relationship, we accepted certain conditions, attitudes to life, and even levels of commitment to Christ and His body. These agreements led to ‘unequal’ yokes and covenants, which are now difficult to renegotiate. When we accepted that this was the

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nature of our bond, when we named the arrangement, we effectively said, 'This is now ... of "my" bone and flesh'. We must accept that this is the real nature and strength of our marriage covenants. We freely chose them, we named them, and we are accountable for them. It is only if we come to terms with this accountability that we can face Christ as to how we can reclaim the will of God for our lives, through baptismal renegotiation.

### Baptism compared with marriage

At the point of baptism, we have a choice (and we can make the same choice subsequent to our baptism, once we understand the power of baptism to reclaim the image). We can choose to rework our marriage covenant properly, either at baptism, or as a consequence of our baptism. Baptism establishes us in the way of imputing, whereby we can reckon some things dead and other things alive to God. We must also reconfirm our baptismal commitment at every communion gathering. If we do not break the old covenants and make a new one at baptism, *the former covenant will be normalised and empowered*. No matter how hard we try to find a better way thereafter, we can never be properly conformed to the image of Christ. Baptism can break the power of every false covenant, and we can then reckon (impute) toward the true image for both man and woman.

On the negative side, if we fail to rework our covenant as a baptismal issue, and *continue to normalise the covenant* within the communion-presbytery context, then we must live with what we have named. We will have to accept the shortfall in fruitfulness that may result. This explains why many of us have unchanged marriage situations. Where there is a shortfall, we have to accept that we have fallen short of the call and purpose of God for us. This raises the thorny issue of *judgment* in our marriages.

Any marriage that does not reform to the image is under judgement already. Malachi 2:15 teaches us that ‘treachery’ (perpetuating a dangerous lie) in our marriages is the cause of judgement on both husband and wife, and the progeny of their covenant. These children could also be called the sons of disobedience.<sup>177</sup> (We will discuss this theme further in *Lessons from the Patriarchs*.) It is the disobedience of the husband or wife that produces such progeny. They are the children of disobedience. While this subject is discussed elsewhere, it is worth remembering that judgement does begin in the house of God,<sup>178</sup> despite the sophisticated trend in Christian attitudes that presume upon the forgiveness of God.<sup>179</sup>

We must realise that if we are not found in the life and fellowship of God, then there is no other life that is able to justify us in the face of His judgement. God, who is jealous over the godly seed, whose life and destiny He has named, is not well pleased with the alternative covenants pursued by His people.<sup>180</sup> Although some might have had the same spiritual experiences as others, from birth and deliverance, to baptisms, to communion, this does not then mean that God is necessarily pleased with us.

When we opt for another covenant, expressed in cultural values and approaches that are less than godly, we enshrine idolatry and unfaithfulness, temptation and murmuring as our cultural mode.<sup>181</sup> We will then respond to the word of deliverance in accordance with these attitudes of disobedience. For instance, if we are challenged by another regarding our cultural way, we will *complain* that we are opposed or

177 Eph 2:2, 5:6; Col 3:6. See also ‘Sons of disobedience’ section from Culture Series Volume 2, *Lessons from the Patriarchs*.

178 ‘The absolutes of the gospel – such certainties as judgement, wrath and eternal hell – have been watered down.’ Victor Hall & Murray Wylie, 1999, *Lift Up Your Heads*, Seedlife Publishing, Forest Glen, p10.

179 1 Pet 4:17

180 1 Cor 10:1-12

181 1 Cor 10:7-10

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unfairly treated. We will use sophistication to press on, or even to go beyond the bounds of sanctification, thus *tempting* Christ. We will wish for an easier lifestyle, even pining for things we know we should not do or have, and eventually this *idolatry* will bring forth the fruit of *unfaithfulness* both to God and in marriage. We need to take heed to this admonition, lest in seeking to reform, we reproduce the Fall and are snared again.

Because we are all fallen, and still immature, it is true that to some degree, every 'yoke' is somewhat 'unequal'. One partner cannot change the entire chemistry of a relationship on his/her own, since all are individually accountable and will face the judgement seat for their own works. However, we have another key, 'For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are *judged*, we are *chastened* by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.'<sup>182</sup> This reference makes up part of the conclusion of one of Paul's clearest chapters on the order for man and woman, especially when it comes to participation in the life of God offered in the body and blood. He asks us to judge for ourselves on a number of issues including the issue of 'covering', which we have discussed previously. Our point here is that judgement is with us now, either in our own action to reform our culture, or in the work of God against us because of our unreformed culture. If we will accept and work with His judgement or chastisement of us now, then we will not be condemned along with the world on that judgement day.

The point of our urgency here is that, one way or another, we will eat the fruit of our works. And our works are loyal to the covenant choices that we have made that either line up with the will of God, or cement us in our way in opposition to God.<sup>183</sup> Sadly, many will never

182 1 Cor 11:31-32

183 Luke 11:23

achieve what could have been, due to the things they have named within their marriage covenants. The point here is that if we understand these realities, we can make responses as individual believers, and also as couples, to find the power of Christ's death to bring transformation.

### Romance – mutual empowerment?

We have established that every couple must be careful with what is 'named' within the marriage covenant – if we are seeking to be one spirit in the image. We are not 'one name', but we are one *in* the name, each having identity that is named in relationship with the other. There is no such thing as identity without relationship. Identity has a relational component. The soul in a person leans toward the individual side, while the spirit of a person reflects the community or commonality of humanness. Before marriage, the corporate component of identity is related to 'father and mother'. At the point of marriage, the relational component of identity is redefined within the context of this new, specific relationship. This is the meaning of leaving father and mother.

Where there is no understanding of faith to lay life down toward the image of one spirit, the meeting of two people is a compatible, parallel model. The two are not seeking the power that comes from laying life down. They are seeking to be empowered and validated as *individuals*. The degree to which the relationship meets this desire will govern the strength of the relationship. If it empowers and makes one feel good, the individual will continue to enjoy and love the relationship. If the sense of empowerment and validation is mutual, the relationship will strengthen, and the romantic love for one another will grow. People then believe they are 'in love', and indeed they are, as far as romantic love goes. The 'love that lovers are in' is how C S Lewis

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defines romantic love.<sup>184</sup> The truth is that romantic love on its own is based in this mutual, empowering dynamic.

The woman needs the man ('her desire is toward her husband') to empower her ideals and expectations. The man needs her to support and empower him by legitimising his secular or religious aspirations. The synthesising of two perspectives adds to the romance, and wherever this union is projected toward Christian ideals, the result is devastating. Why is this? Because eventually the maintenance of a parallel relationship will resist the Lordship of Christ and of the Spirit, who are at work to reclaim men and women to the image of God. Further, they will not perceive the aspect of judgement, which also impacts on the present, and future, of their union and reward.

Romance, based in the mutual empowering process, is the dynamic of a parallel marriage. This marriage is based in the snare (both the woman's snare toward the tree, and the man's snare toward the woman) and is flawed in its basis. The only way this relationship can be maintained is to perpetuate the pseudo-relational trade of mutual romance. The expectations of both husband and wife must be met in order for this to seem successful. Trading and bargaining, and compensation for the duties and responsibilities carried, are dynamics that overtake the relationship more and more. In a curious twist, the very thing that brought the two together now tears them apart.

Restating this empowerment principle, the parallel couple are seeking mutual empowerment. She is looking for empowerment for her sight, choices and wisdom, which come from the tree. He then rejects the naming of the Father, rejects the true image, or model, for the relationship, and seeks to rule (gain empowerment) outside of the will of the Father. He therefore empowers her assessments and

184 For a summary of *The Four Loves* by C S Lewis, see Appendix 2 in V J Hall, M A Wylie, D V Hall, 2002, *Building a House*, Seedlife Publications, Forest Glen.

legitimizes what she brings from her self-source (the tree). He ‘rubber stamps’ her parallel position, and hands her the ‘steering wheel’ of the marriage – in the sense that she sets the agenda from henceforth.

### The lost rib?

In this second phase of the establishment of the image (‘This is now ...’) we must comment on the fact that the man lost a rib in the process of receiving a helper. The point of this within our subject should not be overlooked. Was the man caused to be less than he was before? And does he now yearn for the lost rib, in the sense of having an aching need for the woman? Most men would answer ‘yes’ to this question. We should clarify however, that in fact the man was made to be much more, within the image, by the loss of the rib. He could now say of his helper, ‘This is now bone of my bone’. He has not lost anything, but gained.

Where a man does genuinely have an ache, is in the facilitation of his mandate. In the entire *operation* of the image, he yearns for the multiplying capacity that his wife is able to provide within the image. Of course, if this is so, we should also highlight that the woman yearns for the headship capacity that provides an image and ground for her to give all that she is.

Taking the ‘lost rib’ further, we should examine the fact that there seems to be a belief deep within a man that he is not sufficient, that he lacks something. What he actually lacks is the full expression of the image that is possible if the woman will commit to being ‘of the man’ as God intended. A man should not give way to a false belief that he is lacking or incomplete. The truth is that he is potentially much more if he will accept the mandate to be head to his wife, to name her in relation to himself, and to define the relationship ground as holy.

## True romance

We should not conclude this section without endorsing *true* romance, the genuine ecstasy which results when two meet in genuine appreciation. In the ‘one spirit’ marriage where life (power) is laid down, true ‘romance’ prevails. What is true romance? It is the mystery and ecstasy of ‘worth-ship’ where the couple, free from the bondage of self-centredness, give worth to one another in the infinite power of love that loves to the death.

### 3. ‘For this cause’ – naming the goal

The third step in establishing the image is contained in the prophetic statement: ‘For this cause a man shall leave father and mother and cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh [in the same way that we are]’. (We have inserted the parenthesis ‘in the same way that we are’, to review our earlier point). What is the real meaning of this statement? It is a prophetic statement about all future marriages. All subsequent marriages, Adam proclaimed,<sup>185</sup> while not emulating the unique form of this first relationship, should in fact seek to be formed in the *same* image. All others after this, having fathers and mothers (unlike Adam and Eve), would in fact ‘leave’ these families and ‘cleave’ to become ‘one flesh’ just as were Adam and Eve.

This was to be the goal. Now every man was to say, ‘For “*this*” cause’. What cause is that? For the purpose of being one flesh in the *original* image purposed by God for male and female. For this cause, with this in mind, for this particular goal and dimension, men and women would seek the specific goal of being one flesh. But one flesh was not the end of the matter.

185 See footnote 105

## One flesh – one spirit

We have taken the liberty throughout the study of using ‘one flesh’ and ‘one spirit’ somewhat interchangeably. It is time to add some more content on this subject. To begin with, we notice that the very same ‘bone ... and flesh’ statement is made about Christ and His church as about Adam and Eve. This elevates the term ‘one flesh’ to a much greater level than a reference to physical union. The passage in Ephesians on husbands regarding their wives as themselves adds to this point. It is more than just a physical dimension of relationship. Marriage is a ‘person to person’ union. In fact, we have discovered that the image of the marriage relationship is found in the Godhead Himself, where there are three, yet one. They have unity of spirit and individuality of personality (we could say soul, if we lean the term ‘soul’ toward individuality).<sup>186</sup>

There is no Scripture to say that man and woman are one spirit in marriage, although it is strongly implied in several verses. And there’s a good reason for this. Paul says that, ‘He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with Him’.<sup>187</sup> ‘Spirit’ as a term must always be allowed to denote the unity of substance, which is ‘of God’. God is Spirit – He is not a spirit. So if we are properly ‘joined to the Lord’ within a marriage, then this marriage is one particular expression of the image and dimension of one spirit. A marriage is not the exclusive one spirit dimension.

To be of one spirit is to demonstrate the same two elements as in the Godhead model – individuality and unity. Spirit is not a nebulous term, as if we are part of some cosmic, mystical unity. We are *individuals* in regard to spirit – this is why the Scripture says, ‘Take heed to *your* spirit’.<sup>188</sup> And spirit also has a corporate, *relational* aspect

186 See the ‘Nature of Man’ and ‘The Miracle of the Seed’, BCF notes.

187 1 Cor 6:17

188 Mal 2:16

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– precisely as the above Scripture says: ‘He that is joined to the Lord is *one spirit* with Him’.<sup>189</sup>

What is important here is to see that the term ‘one spirit’ *does* describe marriage in the image, denoting something more than the term ‘one flesh’. And this is important because unless we focus on being one spirit, we can entirely miss the intended depth of the marriage relationship. While the term ‘one flesh’ ties us to the earth in the sense that the flesh cannot glory in His presence, the term ‘in spirit’ denotes a relationship that is joined to the Lord. Anyone apart from the new creation is capable of the one flesh union. Only those who are joined to the Lord and released to be (identity) and give (community) can experience the reality that is one spirit. We should have *no doubt*. Male and female in a marriage are to be one spirit. The two are to be one. This is the goal that Adam proclaimed, and which we must proclaim as the third step in establishing the image.

### One spirit – godly offspring

Earlier, we commented on the Scripture from Malachi. ‘But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.’<sup>190</sup> Other translations of this verse are shown in the footnote below.<sup>191</sup> To keep to the point, we

189 There is an individual aspect to ‘spirit’, just as there is a corporate aspect. There is an individual aspect to ‘soul’, and there is a corporate aspect. The priorities work this way: The individuality of every living soul is reflected outwards into the ‘spirit’ or community in which we all share. The commonality of spirit that we all share is reflected outwards through the individual nature of each ‘soul’. Therefore the essence of an individual is not contained wholly in the ‘spirit’ or ‘soul’ but in both. Nevertheless, we do not share identity, and we do not find any community without full identity. In the end we have to accept the Godhead model as our image.

190 Mal 2:15

191 NIV: ‘Has not [the Lord] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit ... and do not break faith.’ Mal 2:15-16. NASU: ‘But not one has done so who has a remnant of the

need to simply say that God seeks seed for eternity from the union of husband and wife. He seeks 'godly offspring'. This is the strength of the issue about being one spirit. Whatever this one spirit relationship is, it is essential to the formation of godly seed. A one-spirit relationship is more than a covenant between intending Christians. This is why God hates treachery and divorce, because true union (and right family order within the image) are essential to godly offspring. On the individual level then, we are told to take heed to our spirit. And why is this important? Because the faith or treachery of marriage is determined in the spirit, or in the essential being, where a unique relationship of one spirit exists in marriage.

Clearly then, within the one spirit relationship of all who are joined to the Lord, there is one specific joining, namely marriage, that has been created and designated by God as a union of spirit, a specific oneness, enabling procreation, which itself continues to produce totally unique individuals within the fellowship of one Spirit.<sup>192</sup>

The term 'one spirit' refers to what is fully named – for all being that is 'of God' is fundamentally spiritual. In the relationship of one spirit, as in the Godhead, each one gladly lays life down (he does not lay *identity* down) to *be* one spirit. In marriage, each lays life down to be named in relation to the other (and no longer with respect to his/her own points of reference, ie father and mother). The man, like Adam, is required to name the relationship and set a ground, or context, for full identity and full community. It is for this relationship that God has named man. He names and proclaims the nature of his relationship to the woman, and calls her to it as the godly exercise of womanhood. Likewise, she will forsake all others (people, attitudes of control, expectations and covenants) in order to be joined in one spirit with

Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit.'

192 1 Cor 6:17

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her husband. Why does she separate herself from all other expectations and covenants? So that they can be joined in one spirit, in the Lord, in the image, as we have said. There is no thought of identity of her own, because she is committed to revealing the other. This is her eternal identity expressed, which, like the man, is never apart from a relationship which reveals another.

### Summary of three points of establishment

Adam and Eve had a unique one-flesh conception, and yet the three steps by which that first marriage was conceived give a clear model by which *all* marriages can be established in one spirit. Each head and each helper can exercise faith and commitment toward this image. First of all, each man can name the ground of the relationship as holy. He can establish a relationship with Christ as his Head, and redeem the capacity to name and proclaim the ground of his intended relationship.

Secondly, as his helper commits to the image, he is able to name the relationship within the headship order of Father and Son. ‘This is now ...’ the ground that God will honour as the two make covenant and define their relationship within the image of God’s choosing. It is tremendous to note that Adam clearly knew his wife’s destiny, and he named this also. Later he called her ‘mother’.<sup>193</sup> Clearly, his mandate was to know her absolutely in that individual identity that was utterly described and functional. He named her dimension in the image as being ‘of him’ and therefore ‘for him’ in that sense, but as being specifically formed by God (not by him) for the one spirit relationship.

Thirdly, the man is able to set the highest possible standard for the relationship. They will both leave ‘father and mother’ as the corporate definition of identity, and be renamed toward this relationship as the

193 Gen 3:20

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new one spirit expression of God's image. By this means, and 'for this cause', they commit to God's will for godly offspring. They covenant to work together with God Himself in the generation of the Everlasting Covenant. This is where a man must rightly take up the authority, as part of his name, to call the woman to the cause of Christ – for this cause. What cause? This cause is the establishing of a new ground to do exactly what Adam was doing – naming and proclaiming. Adam caught this glorious image – given to them in the image, to impute, with God, toward the tapestry of creation and procreation. What an amazing mandate!

## 6. Recovering the marriage

So, the recovery of the image begins with the three steps outlined above. First of all, every man in headship must *name the ground* and call his wife to it. He must choose and *name the relationship*, and set the ‘now’ image for their lives together. And he must *name the cause*, so that they can leave and cleave together for a new cause, an entirely revolutionary purpose – to be one spirit in the image, with a unique purpose and destiny that will be recorded in eternity. For her part, the woman needs to respond with absolute identity and accountability toward these initiatives of the man. She also must answer her own questions about the snares to which she binds the marriage, preventing its recovery.

## The couple in process

Let us make an important comment about how to be in process toward recovering our marriages, before we conclude with some practical and challenging questions for us all to consider.

First of all, as we said at the outset, we must accept the need for process if we are to recover the image. This is a whole of life exercise, an exciting adventure, provided we are not intent on trying to attain some position where we have no further need to hear the word of transformation. Process will be untidy and frustrating at times, for we can only proceed at the speed of our apprehension, as individuals, and as couples. We must surrender our fanatical desire for the ideal life, as we see it, since the Lord's agenda must dictate the process from day to day.

## Three scenarios

There are at least three situations in which the call of this study will find us (and variations of the three). Firstly, some of us will feel that we have never really met one another in the image. We will realise that we have never *become* one spirit, and perhaps we have been strongly snared in the parallel position.

What should we do? We will need to take time to examine the way in which we were joined in the first place. We will have to look at all the pre-marriage and early marriage covenants, the unresolved elements, the ordinances, cultural dispositions, lock-ups and expectations, that have caused the image to be well and truly lost. This exercise may be weighty, but it will bring great joy as we come to weakness and rely entirely on 'faith that it may be [entirely] by grace' that we recover ourselves by the miracle of God's power.<sup>194</sup>

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Secondly, some of us will feel that we *have* made a fundamental shift to ‘Lordship’, but that we are struggling to make all the necessary cultural changes. Perhaps we have accepted the ‘Lordship-headship’ crisis, but in the aftermath, there has been incapacity to make or sustain genuine cultural changes. Many of the cultural malformations still remain and still dominate the agenda. Many of us are still basically parallel and find ourselves subject to constant expectations and negotiations. One or other partner may still be quite untrained, unhealed, incapable, or even anxious and neurotic. We find that attempts to establish, and success in maintaining, the new culture fluctuate, and changes tend to be temporary and cosmetic. Where this is the case, a greater givenness to one another, and to the process, may bring a greater sense of being one spirit. If the cross is activated through givenness, the cross is the power and wisdom of God to reform the image. Our constant return to the snares of the past can be forestalled, and the ability to deal with the thorns of familiar culture can be released.

And thirdly, some of us may realise that we are frantically polishing up our image, making a good presentation, and trying hard to avoid painful change. In this manner, we are falling right back into the snare of the tree, and merely making up another package of the same fallen elements. We are ‘re-packaging’ the tree, we might say, and deceiving ourselves.

These marriages that have become adept at packaging the tree – meaning that they make a quick response to ‘polish things up’, and take on the new terminology, when in fact the chemistry is still fallen. In this profile, compliant agreements, hasty commitments to openness, and heart-felt professions of working things through, are often quickly presented. Commitment is expressed, but the fear of being wrong, the propensity for anxiety, and the need to faithfully uphold the standard

(fly the flag), dominate the marriage and mitigate against genuinely meeting and becoming heirs together.

It would be fair to say that, at times, we all show features of all three of these responses. Our point here, however, is that it is important to use these profiles as a measuring stick. Then we can take a good look at ourselves, and try to identify the mode in which we are functioning. Then we can join the process properly – the baptismal-communion-reckoning process that will lead to genuine transformation.

Repeating the point from the introduction, let's endeavour to be real and open about ourselves, in the home and in the church. We should stop trying to qualify, and arrive, at some performance that will gain us acceptance from others. Many of us are so worried about our performance that we simply cannot dialogue or process at any level whatsoever without 'dressing up' and controlling the interaction.

## The issue of double-mindedness

Before we conclude, we should remind ourselves that the *'double-minded man is unstable in all his ways ... for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind [and] let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord'*.<sup>195</sup>

It is very easy for a man to be double-minded about change. In truth, very few of us came to Christ and joined the body with the intention of changing. We may have wanted more, and we may have been tired of some troubling conditions. But we did not come to *change*. Even now, when we see the need for change, we are still very double-minded about proceeding onwards. As James says, we are driven by the wind and tossed by the waves. This is also true when a woman becomes weak in faith.

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In practice, this means that we tend to delay and negotiate on the points where transformation needs to be accepted. As men, we hesitate as if we are waiting to be 'clear'. We then hide ourselves in the need to keep working to provide for the family. Men can also be great idealists, believing everything will work out as it has done in the past. As well as this, men tend to take up headship as a *position*, without any submission to the massive change that will be needed if they are to function in the image.

For her part, the woman who is double-minded has an amazing ability to keep shifting the terms of reference, and adding on other religious platitudes. She may even speak of repentance, confession, standing in identity, being accountable etc. She can keep reinventing herself to respond to the pressures. She convinces herself and others that she is acting 'without a word',<sup>196</sup> but in truth she is showing very little basic Christian virtue and discretion. Even her body language can be condescending. Her double-mindedness creates a clever cop-out. Think of it this way. If she decided that her husband was basically an unbeliever (in attitude), then as a Christian, she would be called upon to demonstrate all the silent virtue that the Scriptures enjoin upon her. If she were to decide that the man is a believer, who is seeking a recovery of the image, she would then need to *give up all the 'victim' attitudes* and give herself one hundred per cent to the process. So it is convenient to be double-minded. Let us be single-minded lest we receive nothing from the Lord. Let us give ourselves to facing the difficult questions, and make sure once and for all, that we have joined the process of salvation so graciously made available to us.

## Challenge to men

In response to this challenging content, men may well ask themselves these following questions:

- Have I understood the *zoe* proposition myself, as a man, and begun to demonstrate fundamental Christian quality in my relationships?
- Alternatively, and in practice, am I expecting my wife to do this while I continue in disobedience to Christ?
- Have I been prepared to empty myself of the laws of being, the traffic of assessments, the laws of self-defence that cause me to arrive at these assessments, of which others then become the victims?
- Am I committed to naming the ground and proclaiming the image for the family? Am I prepared to call my wife to meet me there?
- Do I understand how to ‘call on the name’ [naming] of the Lord, who names all those who step on to the holy ground of the house of *Yahweh*? Have I understood the basic proposition of the Christian faith – that there is a ‘word of you’, an image of my predestination that was set by the Father that I need to recover? This image involves manhood, headship and fatherhood.
- Have I left father and mother, tradition, history, lineage and performance as the bases for identity and validity? Have I found my validity in these?
- Have I presumptuously said, ‘I know who I am! I am who I think I am’? Have I then added headship to this self-assessment, with no real change of position or base?
- Have I been compensating away from the ground and image of the family, toward finding validation in work or Christian service?

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- In submission to the headship of Christ, have I moved to the holy ground of relationship with other men, and with those who are overseers in the body of Christ?
- Have I genuinely opened the door of the home to the messenger's word?
- Have I accepted that I only have headship as I am properly connected to Christ as my Head?
- Have I genuinely submitted in the body to be a disciple and to be fathered by the headship word that is proclaimed in the midst?
- Do I simply and gladly accept that the headship 'rudder' is not given to my wife, that she is 'weaker' in this dimension, and that she requires me to set the mandate of accountability to which she can offer to be helper?
- Do I serve the agendas of reason, drawn from the other tree, by using logic, explanation, and self-defence to overpower the family? Do we arrive at solutions through finding an identity-to-identity meeting, which is the hallmark of the *zoe* proposition?
- Do I have a proactive headship agenda, or do I only act when things go wrong, run roughly, or press me to the degree that I finally have to act?
- Do I use emotional tactics such as silence, withdrawing of relationship, or visible offence, to 'make a point'?
- Do I genuinely maintain the organic Christian proposition: ie hearing the messenger's word, seeking the face of Christ for its implications, then facilitating this word at the altar of the home?
- Do I keep my family current with the content of the word and direction that is proclaimed from week to week?

### Challenge to women

The questions for women are just as searching, and may include the following.

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- Do I readily accept that calling my husband 'lord' is absolutely central and essential to the Christian proposition?
- In what way, at what point, and in what practical situation of which I can testify, did I actually make this profession?
- Have I actually demonstrated that I can hear, then clearly believe and act upon, a word from my husband, which I did not myself have?
- Do I function in the organic Christian proposition, ie in hearing a word from the messenger myself, which I then proactively process at the face of my husband, at the altar in the home, as to its implications for my obedience and life as helper-mother?
- Have I shown that I am prepared to break the snare of captivity to my own reason, perspective, culture, expectations and covenants? Can I shift my focus to the agenda my husband sets, in simple obedience, without recalling him to the agenda of rights and wrongs that I originally set?
- Do I act as though I have another altar, another holy ground, another covenant with God in my own imagination, because I cannot commit to the direction that is being set?
- Have I been naming my own ground, my own relationship, and my own goals, because I want an equal, parallel, and romantic marriage?
- Do I accept my husband's measurement and judgement on these things, or discount his word unless I have seen it for myself?

### A statement of confession

As many couples have done in recent years, it is useful to consider and then write down a confession and profession to one's spouse, as a response to the points made above. This written account could comment on areas of repentance such as –

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- where I have not respected the unique difference that God intended in the expression of zoe-life;
- (for the man) where I have failed to show ‘understanding’ by providing clear and firm direction;
- (for the woman) where I have failed to respond simply and immediately, in all things; (for both) those aspects in which my actual behaviour has belied my Christian confession;
- where I have not trusted the other as proof of the faith I have in Christ;
- where I have not appreciated, promoted, and encouraged the true identity expression of the other;
- where I have not extended myself to show the sacrificial love of Christ;
- where I have not exemplified the Spirit of Christ in humility, fellow-feeling, patience, the enduring of discipline, the suffering of injustice;
- where I have merely employed fear, anxiety and pressure to establish my rights;
- (for the man) where I have used the role of headship to simply overpower my wife and have my own way;
- (for the woman) where I have used submersion as a way of appearing submissive, and as a way of accruing reasons for independence;
- where I have maintained expectations of compensation;
- where I have basically been afraid of the other and therefore lacked courage to stand in God-given identity;
- where I have kept up a good front and protected the marriage from any outside input;
- where I have bound the other to myself and disallowed relationship with others and with the ‘messenger’ of the gospel;

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- where I have protected or appeased the other by siding with his/her reactions, thus providing an escape from accountability to the word of the Lord;
- where I have not brought my own response to the messenger's word back to the altar of the home (either I haven't *made* any response, or else not brought my response *home*);
- where I have held a 'case' against the other, offering no forgiveness or resolution;
- where I have bargained with, or sold, affection and intimacy, on the basis of my criteria being met;
- where I have refused to give affection as a dignified gift, expecting the initiative to come from the other;
- where I have conquered the other by keeping him/her 'on a string', perhaps by withdrawing from, and then conceding to, affection;
- where I have expected the other to serve my romantic expectations, or else judged the other as being uncaring;
- where I have taken no real initiative to communicate my Christian responses to life, opening my own heart in self-disclosure regardless of the reciprocation of the other;
- where I only ever initiate or communicate from reaction, provocation, necessity, duty, annoyance, or anxiety;
- where I run my life in parallel, as long as things are going 'okay' (ie I live independently except for the basic interactions of home life, forgetting the *zoe* imperative that 'neither is independent of the other');
- and finally – where I have not fundamentally been 'Christian' at the minimum level required by those who name the name of Christ.

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Let us confess our faults one to another, that we may be healed.<sup>197</sup> Let us be heirs together so that our prayers are not hindered.<sup>198</sup> Let us, at this crucial time, show the basics of first love disclosure in our marriages, and then from house to house, so that the carnal, stony condition of the church may be surpassed, and so that zoe-life may multiply and overflow greatly in these days.

- Have I understood the basic baptismal commitment to lose my life in order to regain the image that God predestined for our marriage?
- Am I prepared to be a fully accountable helper within this reclaimed image?
- Am I prepared to offer myself to this, regardless of whether my husband returns to the image or not?
- Am I prepared to yield and show the basic Christian spirit, the Spirit of Christ, in accepting hardship, suffering and injustice where they may come?
- Am I prepared to turn to the face of my husband, as to the face of Christ, and keep my face turned toward the order of headship? Practically speaking, do I willingly and accountably refer to my husband in all daily matters of routine and direction that affect our joint mandate? Do I do so without shame, humiliation, and without in any way feeling demeaned by this action?
- Do I believe that despite the humanness of this order, the grace of life is available to us in full measure as we turn to face the glory of God?<sup>199</sup> Have I ever demonstrated my individual commitment to mourning alone so that the veil of blindness can be completely removed?<sup>200</sup>

197 Jas 5:16

198 1 Pet 3:7

199 1 Pet 3:7

200 Zech 12:12