

'The husband of one wife' (1 Tim. 3:2): a Trinitarian understanding of marriage

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Introduction

In a well-known and frequently used portion of scripture, the writer of the first letter to Timothy writes that 'a bishop must be . . . the husband of one wife . . .' This qualification is repeated almost verbatim in regard to deacons a few verses further on, and again in Titus 1:6 as a requirement for elders. Of course, most believe that the two letters share the same author. A similar qualification is also applied to widows in 1 Timothy 5:9. In contrast to the usual modern opinion that a person's sexual life is of no relevance to public activity, the writer clearly expresses the view that correct sexual conduct is essential for a Christian leader.

Celibacy?

What is striking here is that the author does not refer to chastity as a requirement for a leader in the Christian community. It would certainly be expected that such a person would reject sexual immorality in such practices as fornication and adultery, and indeed such a quality of life would seem to belong to the rest of the attributes that the writer puts forward, such as temperance, dignity and being no lover of money. It would seem that the writer assumes that a church leader is expected to be chaste, and that he is therefore saying something rather different. The actual marital status of the aspirant to church leadership was a matter for concern, in which case marriage is a positive requirement for the ministry. What may be suggested is that behind the requirements for church leaders in the Pastorals lies the understanding that being married to one spouse is a positive asset for ministry. The text is more than just an encouragement to fidelity.

Probably reacting to Catholic celibacy rather than to this text, some Protestant denominations have tended to look with disfavour upon those who are unmarried but seek to enter the ministry. There are several practical reasons why they should have this opinion. Firstly a leader in the church, especially a pastor, has to relate to a variety of human experiences and difficulties, many of which have to do with the marriage relationship. An unmarried pastor, without personal experience of all the implications of perhaps the closest of all human relationships, naturally finds it hard to provide Christian guidance in those areas. Secondly, the spouse can obviously provide very practical assistance in all sorts of ways in the ministry, just as in the marriage as a whole. It is no accident that Eve was referred to as a helper (Gen. 2:18). Not infrequently a minister can continue in the calling simply because of the money earned from the employment of the spouse, even if this is far from an ideal situation. Thirdly, being married can alleviate what is a far too prevalent hazard of the ministry, that of sexual harassment and temptation. Not only can a minister perhaps be a temptation for sexual advances due to his prominence and because he is more available than other people but he himself can be tempted. The outlet for sexual desire that marriage provides can certainly reduce the power of this temptation.

However, despite the practical advantages of marriage, several influential sections of the church believe that the ministry should be celibate. The stand of the Catholic church is the best known, but some other denominations have adopted, or advised it for some or all of their ministry. The basic reason for this is clear; the minister should be totally dedicated to God, and it is felt that marriage detracts from such single-mindedness. The energies given to sex may be diverted from the

service of religion. Jesus himself referred to some who had made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God (Matt. 19:12). Some have even taken this literally, such as Origen, who by so doing rendered himself ineligible for the priesthood according to the teaching of Leviticus 21:20, but most would view the words of Jesus as a rejection of sexual relationships. Related to this is the view that in so far as ministers represent Christ in the world, and he himself was unmarried, it would also follow that ministers should be celibate.

Paul and marriage

Paul's opinion is however probably the main reason for celibacy, and this is particularly relevant if he was indeed the author of the Pastoral epistles, an opinion which is, despite the contrary view of many, still common. It cannot, it is argued, be the intention of the Pastorals to depict marriage as a requirement for the ministry, for the simple reason that Paul was not himself married, and moreover strongly advocated celibacy. The relevant passage here is 1 Corinthians 7:1, 8-9, 25f.; where in each case he advises against marriage, giving as his basic reason that marriage leads to concern for worldly matters (1 Cor. 7:34), so would detract from a 'spiritual' ministry. However, although Paul is sometimes accused of being a misogynist (e.g. 1 Cor. 14:34f.; 1 Tim. 2:12f, [significantly?]), it is quite clear that for him marriage is not wrong, and indeed that it is normal.² Although many in the early church did use 1 Corinthians 7:1 as evidence for their argument against sexual relations, it would seem that Paul is rather citing this, probably a quotation from the Corinthians' letter to him, as an opinion to be rejected,³ as at the start of the next chapter. He certainly cannot be advocating celibacy as the norm for all Christians. Indeed, he strongly urges that the married should not seek the divorce that would enable them to be single-minded in their Christian life. Such seeming inconsistency may be resolved by noting that interpretation must be in the context of the situation. Fee notes that there are six different marital situations in the chapter, and in each of them Paul gives the same advice, not to change. Indeed it may well be suggested that Paul advocates celibacy, even for himself, only because of the situation. In his personal case, of course, being in an itinerant ministry meant that a stable home life was impossible; this does not make marriage impossible, as Paul did have a right to marry (1 Cor. 9:5), but it does mitigate against it. More importantly however, he felt that it was unwise to change one's marital state because of the unsettled nature of life. This was basically a reflection of the expectation of the imminent return of Christ, although it must be noted that in a different situation he urged continuing with normal life and work as if there was no imminent expectation (2 Thess. 3).

It is the context of an eschatological expectation which provides an explanation for Paul's apparently negative attitude to marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:25f. The division in concern between the spouse and the Lord which is the natural consequence of marriage is not a negative factor, but should be viewed simply as a fact.⁵ He does not mean that marriage is an inferior state, but that 'whatever one is called to is better, as long as it is appropriate and allows one unhindered devotion to the Lord'.⁶ This freedom from distraction by worldly concerns is possible from an eschatological perspective. This of course implies strongly that marriage is not necessarily a distraction from the spiritual life, but rather can aid it.

What Fee and other commentators have done in their examination of Paul's responses to the various marital situations found at Corinth is to go beyond the individual cases to discover the principles by which Paul operates. Such is indeed one of the functions of theology. The texts in the Pastorals can then be approached in the same way to ascertain the reasons behind the requirement of monogamous marriage for church leaders. This is of course the way in which the doctrine of the Trinity was developed; it is an attempt to go beyond the various relevant texts to discover the underlying basis on which they were written. What is now interesting is that the developed understanding of the Trinity can be used to throw light upon the Christian understanding of marriage particularly as it applies to church leaders.

Here, incidentally, it must be suggested that although the text does specifically refer to leaders, if monogamous marriage is a requirement for them, it should also be the ideal for the rest of the Christian community. Particularly if the ministry of the church is seen as the work of the entire body of believers, as has been viewed as the intention of Ephesians 4:12, the whole community should then aspire to the ideal. This should not be seen as a special instruction only for bishops.⁷ Now it must be stressed here that the letter to the Ephesians still makes a distinction between leaders and people, and in no way can monogamy be seen as a necessity for all. On the one hand, there are those who are single either due to choice or circumstance. It is surely going too far to say that a person becomes really human only when married;⁸ full humanity is indeed a result of relationship, but to Christ. On the other hand there are those who are polygamous and who feel, probably quite rightly, that it would not be a Christian act to put away all other wives after the first.

Marriage a spiritual matter

The reasons for the juxtaposition of marriage and ministry are not hard to find. In Ephesians 5: 21f., the writer discusses the relationship between husbands and

wives in Christian marriages and concludes with the striking idea that the union between a husband and his wife can be understood in terms of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32). Sampley⁹ provides a detailed analysis of the passage showing the various parallels. It is the unity of the church that has been the concern of the writer throughout the epistle, and this is seen as based on the relationship that each Christian has individually with Christ. The common relationship to Christ brings about unity, and the same is true in the marriage. The desire for unity with the opposite sex is, more than the act of marriage, fulfilled in the unity which Christ gives; this latter can only strengthen marriage. Thus the relationship with Christ of both the husband and the wife individually strengthens the marriage bond between them.

It is the corollary of this idea that is significant for the Pastorals, and thus for any Christian. If a common relationship to Christ strengthens the bond between husband and wife, then the relationship between the Christian and his Lord is also strengthened by the links that the spouse has with the marriage partner and with Christ. Marriage then has a spiritual dimension. It is significant that Judaism applied the purity requirements for priests (Lev. 21:17f.) also to brides. This is so vital that a celibate minister requires special grace to compensate for the lack.¹⁰ All three relationships are improved; between the marriage partners, and between each other and Christ. This is not only on the practical level, as is obviously the case, but also spiritually, where a spouse can help the minister in prayer, advice, support and even in sermon evaluation. However, the strengthening of a common faith has a deeper basis than this.

Marriage reflects the Trinity

This can be particularly seen if human marriage is viewed as a reflection of the Trinity; after all, '... [man] in all dimensions of [his] existence can be understood only in [his] relationship to God. And his sexuality cannot be excluded from this.'¹¹ This of course does not mean that the understanding of the Trinity which was developed later must be read back into the New Testament and is essential to this understanding of 1 Timothy 3: 2, but this understanding of the reason for the statement is certainly consistent with the doctrine. Moreover, the doctrine of the Trinity if applied to marriage can explain some of the Christian understandings of its nature, such as the forbidding of adultery, divorce and its preference for monogamy.

Trinitarian theology, especially following Augustine, sees the Spirit as the basis of unity between the Father and Son, the 'vinculum amoris', the bond of love (Augustine: *de Trinitate* 6:7). What is then significant

is that the Spirit is the only means by which we are united to Father and Son. 'Father and Son wish to give us that which unites them so that we can be similarly united to them and to each other' (Augustine: *sermon* 71). Ephesians in particular sees the relationship between the Christian and Christ as a work of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:18; 4:3), although the idea is also present elsewhere in Paul's writings (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 4:6; 1 Cor. 12:13 etc). The Christian is the Temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). New life, as biological life, is a gift of the Spirit (Jn. 3:5 cf. Gen. 2:7; Ezk. 37:9).

Thus, in so far as the Spirit links husband and wife in a Christian marriage, such a marriage may be seen as a reflection of the Trinity in which the Spirit links Father and Son. Jesus bases his teaching on divorce (Matt. 19:4f) on Genesis 2:24: 'they become one flesh', the text also quoted in 1 Corinthians 6:16 and Ephesians 5:31. This can be seen as similar to the relationship which Jesus claimed between himself and the Father. 'I and my Father are one' (Jn. 10:30). Significantly, in all cases there is no fusion of persons; in the case of marriage the two become one flesh, while the Father and Son are one (the word is 'hen', which is neuter not masculine). In the cases of both marriage and the Trinity, there is thus no loss of individuality, no merging of one into the other; on the other hand there is no utter separation but real participation. The Genesis account of the making of Eve from the rib then emphasizes the unity of essence but differentiation of person of the human couple. The picture of the rib thus gives an inherent closeness of relationship, which is fulfilled in the marriage relationship where the two are indeed 'one flesh'. The love between a Christian couple is more than a biological attraction, but includes the spiritual love which can be generated only by the Holy Spirit of God. Interestingly Barth¹² believes that the image of God referred to in Genesis 1:27 and 5:1 is actually explained there as the differentiation of humanity into male and female.

Here it is noteworthy that Augustine rejected mother-father-child as an image of the Trinity (*de Trinitate* 12:5). Although children may strengthen a marriage, the basic bond in a Christian marriage is from the Spirit; children are not essential. Children are however a natural result of the union, paralleling the act of creation in which the Father created through the Son (Col. 1:16). Thus, 1 Timothy does not put the existence of children as a requirement. If this had been the intention of the writer, he could easily have said so explicitly. Rather, children are seen as a natural result of a normal marriage, and certainly Christian leaders would be expected to bring them up well if they would be entrusted with bringing up a church.

Cairns¹³ believes that it is the Christian community which is referred to in the New Testament as bearing the image of God. This is consistent with Barth in that

the married couple is the basic human community. In this case, whereas it has been argued that all ministers should be male because they represent Christ who is male, the location of the image of God in the couple would imply that the couple, as a couple, ministers. The couple would, as in the Trinity, have distinct functions, but minister together, as a unit.

Monogamy

The parallel with the Trinity then also explains why monogamy is advocated in 1 Timothy. The text emphasizes 'one'. Indeed the obvious understanding of these words is of a prohibition of polygamy, so that a bishop, elder or deacon should not take a plurality of wives. This was an early interpretation by such as Tertullian. Even if a stable polygamy would be an improvement on the loose morality of the day, where women could be used and discarded at will, the standard of 1 Timothy is higher. Polygamy must imply an inferiority of women as one man could then relate to several; this is in contrast to a Christianity which must see equality (Gal. 3:28) on the grounds that both sexes are saved on an absolutely equal basis.

However, the thought could well be that if a spouse strengthens the relationship between the minister and Christ, then a multiplicity of spouses should be more effective. But the Trinity is three, Father, Son and Spirit, and so Christian marriage is also three, husband, wife and Spirit. Indeed Richard of St Victor argues that three is the correct number for the Trinity on the basis of the idea that love is thereby maximized. The same is true in human marriage, where a second or third wife is frequently the source of tension.

Adultery

It is for the same reason that adultery is condemned. Human experience clearly shows that an extra-marital relationship harms not only the relationship to the spouse, but also harms the relationship with God. This is for two reasons. Firstly, as the relationship with the spouse is harmed, then clearly that relationship cannot be as effective in strengthening the other relationship, that to God. Secondly, the entry of a fourth party into the relationship means that the ideal of three is destroyed; each of the relationships is weakened. Adultery therefore effectively steals from each of the three parties in the marriage, from the husband and the wife, and also from God.

Divorce

Similarly, of course, divorce between a Christian couple cannot be seen as acceptable. Obviously from a human perspective both parties suffer from a breakdown, with

all the inevitable and well-known consequences for the nexus of relationships of each party, especially for the children of the union. However, if the Christian marriage is seen as effective in strengthening the bond between each and God, then this is naturally lost in the case of a divorce.

The one qualification of this principle is found in 1 Corinthians 7:5, where a couple deliberately abstains from full marital relationships 'for a season'. The purpose is to enable the suggested strengthening of the relationship to God through prayer, so again the marital act in fact serves to enhance the overall relationships. Indeed it would be illegitimate to separate a husband and wife except for such a reason, as the weakening of the relationship to God would need to be compensated for by other means, such as by prayer. Of course here the 'separation'; which is perhaps too strong a term, is definitely intended to be temporary. Such a separation is also less than the ideal; Paul refers to it as a 'concession' (1 Cor. 7:6). Human nature would seem to be such that occasional separation in fact serves to strengthen the bond; 'absence makes the heart grow fonder'. Perhaps a parallel can be seen in the mystical experience of the 'dark night of the soul', where the experience of perceived separation from God in fact serves to strengthen the relationship to God.

It is also relevant here that the interTrinitarian relationship is eternal, so that marriage, when paralleled to this, should also be permanent. There are obviously two qualifications to this. Firstly human beings are not eternal, so do not have a relationship that existed before the foundation of the world. This is unless Origen was correct in his belief in the preexistence of eternal souls, in which case marriages could also truly be said to be 'made in heaven'! Less speculatively, Jesus specifically indicated that '... in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage . . .' (Matt. 22:30 also Mk;. 12:25; Lk. 20:35). It seems strange that relationships are lost in the consummation, but firstly, there is no reason for sexual relationships when there is no further propagation of the race. Secondly, it must not be overlooked that marriage is not just a union between husband and wife but a separation of each from all others. If perfect harmony is achieved, this latter is no longer the case. This would mean that the consummation involves not a loss of relationship, but rather a gain. It is notable that the unity that Jesus prays for in the church (Jn. 17:11) is a reflection of that between himself and the Father, where the words are reminiscent of John 10:30, using the same word for unity, and referring to the same context, that of keeping believers from being lost.

On a practical level, the unity between the marriage partners is strengthened by having all in common. If each partner maintains possessions distinct from the other, there will be inevitable friction and a loss of unity.

This is also reflected in the Trinity, where such sharing is referred to as 'perichoresis', the interpenetration of the persons (cf. Jn. 14:10). Because of this a real separation between the Persons is impossible, and if there is real community between the marriage partners, separation and ultimately divorce is much less likely.

In fact, the lack of perfect harmony between people is basically a result of sin which generates separation, symbolized after the fall by the clothes which separated man and woman. Divorce likewise, a further separation, is always viewed as wrong, and allowed only as a concession. Thus the separation between Christ and his Father which is removed at the consummation is likewise a result of sin. Here it is noteworthy that Christ's subordination to the Father due to generation is expressed in incarnation as necessary for salvation, so also due to human sin. Similarly whereas the relationship between man and woman is described in Genesis as the woman from the man, the effect of this difference in origin becomes serious only in a state which is less than ideal.

Despite the clear disapproval of divorce in the Bible, where it is permitted only as a concession, the one place where it seems almost to be advocated is in 1 Corinthians 7:12f, where Paul discusses the case of a Christian married to a non-Christian, where if the non-Christian desires a divorce, this should be permitted. The reason for this is that as the non-Christian does not have a relationship to God in the Spirit, the marriage is of no benefit to the relationship between God and the Christian. Here a second marriage of the divorced Christian would seem to be in order, as it would then have a positive spiritual benefit. Paul does however point out that the divorce would have an effect upon the unbelieving partner, because due to the relationships between husband and wife, and between the believer and God, the unbeliever is consecrated (1 Cor. 7:14). Such is lost by divorce.

The discussion about divorce in 1 Corinthians 7:12f could well be the result of the very common difficulties that arise when there is a marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian. The former not only receives no help in spiritual matters, but quite normally the non-Christian is a positive hinderance and discouragement. This would lie behind the command of 2 Corinthians 6:14: 'Do not be mismatched with unbelievers', which is often applied to marriage. Even if a marriage to a nonbeliever is merely of no help, and not a positive hindrance to the relationship between a Christian and God, it should not be considered as a possibility for Christians to marry non-Christians.

Homosexual 'Marriage'?

A further application of a Trinitarian view of marriage relates to the possibility of homosexual relationships. It

would seem that the same argument should pertain in this case as with heterosexual marriage, that the Christianity of each party would be strengthened by that of the other. Indeed, positively, the Nicene understanding of the Father and the Son as 'homoousios' could be taken as an indication that a homosexual union could in fact be a better parallel to the Trinity than a heterosexual union. Nevertheless there is a clear rejection of homosexuality in the Bible (e.g. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:27). Paul in particular rejects it, seeing disorder in human relationships as a symptom of disorder in the relationship between God and humanity. A Trinitarian understanding is indeed that the Persons of the Trinity are 'homoousios', but this refers to the essence of deity. In this regard men and women are similarly 'homoousios', because they are all human. On the other hand, the distinction between Father and Son is that of relationship, the Father generating and the Son being generated, a complementary relationship. This could not be paralleled between two partners of the same sex. A homosexual relationship would imply a trinity of two fathers or two sons, which is not correct. In this case, Christian marriage must be heterosexual.

Subordination of the Wife?

Modern discussion on the Trinity makes a distinction between the 'immanent' and the 'economic' Trinity. Such a distinction is vital to resolve some of the difficulties in understanding the nature of God, notably the vexed question of the subordination of the Son. Evidence for this subordination is clear in the Bible (e.g. Jn. 14:28), yet the result of the discussions in the course of the Arian controversy of the fourth century was an absolute affirmation of the equality of the Persons, that they are indeed 'homoousios'. As Athanasius and others realized, if they are not equal, then we are not really saved. A solution to this is to appreciate that in the immanent Trinity, God in himself, there is absolute equality; all three Persons are equally God, all equally eternal, and so on. However, in the economic Trinity, God as manifest to the world, there is subordination, for the Christ had to limit himself in order to relate to the world (Philp. 2:7). Emphatically there is no loss of deity, but a deliberate self-limitation, an accommodation to the situation, so that a real incarnation is effected. Now the same distinction may be made as regards marriage, and may likewise resolve one of the thorniest issues, that of the 'subordination' of women. This can be done by a distinction between the 'immanent' marriage and the 'economic'. Such a distinction can perhaps be justified from the Genesis account of the origin of humanity. The original creation was of humanity with an inherent sexual distinction only, so that the sexes must be seen as absolutely equal in Adam; this parallels the absolute equality of the Persons in the

immanent Trinity. It was only later that the woman was generated from the rib and was as it were incarnate in the world; likewise the incarnation of the Son into the world.

Just as the Persons in the immanent Trinity are absolutely equal, so are the persons in a marriage. It is one of the glories of Christianity to insist that all people are absolutely equal. There is a lack of religious difference between men and women implied in Galatians 3:28, which is so different from the situation under the old covenant where only men were fully obligated to keep the law and is seen in the fact that both sexes are baptized in contrast to circumcision; all are saved in exactly the same way, and so are equal before God, and also in relation to each other. In the marriage, husband and wife are equal; there is no subordination of one to the other. '... the primary differences between men and women do not lie in ability [so in essence], but in their varying responses within personal relationships'.¹⁴ The ideal Christian marriage is then one of harmony between husband and wife in a reflection of interTrinitarian harmony. There is then no domination; decisions should be made by agreement, by consensus, and not by any exercise of authority. This reflects the unity of will of Father and Son (Jn. 5: 19 et al.). The word 'helper' of Genesis 2:18 does not necessarily imply subordination.¹⁵

But this is not the case for the 'economic' marriage. Jesus was fully incarnate, and identified fully with the culture and situation into which he was incarnate. In the same way, in their expression in the world, a married couple is incarnate, identifying with the culture of the day. In the case of the New Testament, this meant the acceptance of a patriarchal culture. Just as the incarnate Christ acted with the authority of God and was subordinate to him, so a woman acts in the world under the authority of her husband (1 Cor. 11: 3). Women are then not inferior to men in essence, using the Trinitarian term; so are under no obligation to obey men in general, but a married woman should be obedient to her husband.¹⁶ This is perhaps less true today, but the marriage must still be culturally relevant. Indeed, in a matriarchal society, a Christian marriage would then reflect that cultural pattern, even if on the surface it seems to be contrary to the New Testament. This also of course does not mean that Christians should just accept every aspect of society, on the contrary they should seek to change what is wrong. Perhaps a parallel to this principle could be the situation of slavery, which would seem to have been accepted by Paul, and other New Testament writers, yet was vigorously opposed in later years, in a different social climate. Indeed, and this is clear when compared with the situation in other religious environments, Christianity has achieved much for the status of women.

The enigmatic text, 1 Corinthians 15:28, could also

be of relevance to this point, where at the consummation the Son himself is subjected to the Father, so that 'God may be everything to everyone'. Fee¹⁷ points out that this is to be understood soteriologically not metaphysically. As in 1 Corinthians 3: 22, 23 and 11:3, the subordination is functional and not ontological (as it pertains to the economic not immanent Trinity). This implies that it was due to the work of salvation that the unnatural relationship between Father and Son occurred at all, but that in the consummation it would be fulfilled. The same would then be true for a Christian marriage, where the relationship, which includes a measure of subordination in this life, is deepened and fulfilled at the consummation.

Christian wives thus accept the authority of their husbands. In practice, of course, this cannot be a despotism, but an acceptance of the combined will of the couple. In the case of the Trinity, Jesus was effectively obedient to God, but Father and Son are of one will; thus the wife is obedient to the will of the couple, not just of the husband. It is not necessary to argue that unity in fact demands a measure of subordination,¹⁸ as there is unity without subordination in the immanent Trinity. However, it may validly be added that as Christ as the head of the church is its servant (Eph. 5:25), so the husband similarly serves his wife.

The Role of the Partners

Very much related to this, of course, is that each party in the marriage is consciously working for the good of the couple, not for himself or herself as individuals. Jesus deliberately related all that he did to the Father; Christians too consciously seek to work for the couple. The phenomenon of the 'absent father' involved with business and so rarely seeing his family, is well-known. This is perhaps better than when a father spends months and even years away from home, such as on military service, or on contract employment, as has often been the case in the past, and is still quite common, but can hardly be right. It is no accident that Genesis 1 relates the image of God to the primal couple. Working for society is good, but the family should be the primary referent for the individual.

This raises a further point, for while the economic Trinity is the manifestation of the Son and the Spirit in the world, they refer constantly to the Father, who remains effectively transcendent, apart from the world. He acts in the world only through the other Persons. God was the creator, but the actual agent was the second Person (1 Cor. 8:6). Emphatically however, all the Persons were involved, but in their own way. This is clearly paralleled in one of the primary functions of marriage, that of bearing children, where the wife is the

agent. Here a patriarchal attitude often resulted; children were viewed as born to the man only through the woman, who was seen as effectively passive. This however cannot be supported biblically as the Old Testament uses the same preposition (*I-*), whether children are referred to as being born to husband or wife (cf. 1 Chron. 3: 1, 5) and the New Testament refers to children being born 'out of' (*ek*), not 'through' the wife. A difference in function is not subordination, or a non-involvement of the inactive party.

Now modern life, especially in the West, is one in which very often both parents work; both are, as it were, incarnate in society as a whole. The effects of this are well-known, with detrimental results for the marriage relationship and especially for the children. It may well then be suggested that as the couple images the Trinity, in which the Father is not directly involved in the world, there should be a maintenance of a strong home life, apart from involvement in society, to which the working situation can relate. This does not necessarily mean that only one of the family can work, but that when one partner works in society there should be an experience of support by, and relating to, the other partner, and this might well be difficult if both work. In particular, it is hard to see how children can be adequately brought up in a home where both parents are usually absent.

Conclusion

Just as Jesus constantly and deliberately related all that he did to the Father, Christians as adopted children of God should do likewise. Of course the term 'Father' immediately bears a connotation of the marriage relationship, and so it is particularly needful for Christians to relate this central feature of their lives to the Father, and so to the Trinity, because 'Father' is also a fundamentally Trinitarian term. In close proximity to the likening of marriage to the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:32) is found the idea that the human family relates directly to the Fatherhood of God (Eph. 3:14). What is then striking is that the context of Ephesians 3:14 is that of worship, and that the request is for strength. A proper marriage relationship is one which so much needs the grace of God to make it

successful and so reflect the Trinity, but a successful marriage is an act of worship in itself. May God grant his people grace in their marriages so to reflect the Trinity and thus worship and glorify him.

Footnotes

1. M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann, *The Pastoral epistles: a commentary* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), p. 52.
2. L. Morris, *The first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: an introduction and commentary* (London: Tyndale, 1958), p. 105.
3. W.E. Phipps, 'Is Paul's attitude toward sexual relations contained in 1 Cor. 7.1?' *New Testament Studies* 28, p. 128.
4. G.D. Fee, *The first epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 268.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 344.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 348.
7. Dibelius and Conzelmann, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
8. Cf. e.g. M. Barth, *Ephesians: translation and commentary on chapters 4-6* (New York: Doubleday (Anchor Bible), 1974), p. 707.
9. J.P. Sampley, 'And the two shall become one flesh': a study of traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33 (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1971), pp. 103f.
10. Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
11. H. Thielicke, *The ethics of sex* (London: James Clarke, 1964), p. 18.
12. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatic 3(1): the doctrine of creation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), p. 195.
13. D. Cairns, *The image of God in man* (London: SCM, 1953), p. 43.
14. S.B. Clark, *Man and woman in Christ: an examination of the roles of men and women in light of scripture and the social sciences* (Ann Arbor, Mich: Servant, 1980), p. 591.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
16. M. Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 610.
17. *Op. cit.*, p. 760.
18. as Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

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