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***With grateful thanks to the many women in Baptist ministry who have paved the way with their many different styles and gifts, and to my husband, for being the best feminist I know.***

**A feminist discussion of 'complementarian' arguments for women in ministry, with particular reference to the Baptist Union of Great Britain**

## Chapter 1

## Introduction

This paper will argue that the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB), has a theology which sees men and women as different but complementary binary pairs and this perspective continues into their conversations surrounding the ministry of women.[1] This means that the vocation of women continues to be defined by their gender and although this is intended to be positive, this limits the roles of women and men within the Union.

The motivation for this study is ultimately a personal one: it comes from a desire to understand what it means to be both a woman and a minister. As I explored a call to ministry I listened to a number of people comment that women in ministry were needed, because they would bring something that had been missing and neglected from ministry, providing an alternative, collaborative pattern of leadership to that of men. At my induction as a minister in training in 2011 a man in his sixties, who did not know me, came up to me to congratulate me: "I think women are really important in ministry, you bring a softer touch. You are good at pastoral care, and families." A woman within my then church reflected during a pastoral visit that she was able to tell me something she had not been able to express to a minster before as "it helps with you being a woman". Of course, many have also told me that the Bible says that being female and in ministry are simply incompatible; yet being a woman in ministry has been seen by many to be an asset, as I bring something different and complementary to the ministry of men. This had been something I had previously believed and argued, but the potential problem with this complementary role became apparent upon announcing my engagement, and subsequently marrying, a male minister. Being a woman has meant that some have told me I should minister as a complementary addition to my husband, despite the fact that I had more ministerial experience; I was asked no fewer than ten times whether this meant I would be giving up my ministry post to become a minister's wife, once being told that I would find wife and motherhood "just as fulfilling a vocation". After discussing the complications of trying to find ministries that could work together with marriage I was asked by a fellow minister in training whether simply being an non-ordained minster's wife would be so bad, "we all know you are good at what you do, and [my wife] and I minister together and it works really well". During my time in the Baptist

[1] The Baptist Union of Great Britain is a union of Baptist churches in England and Wales. Baptist churches are locally governed and so opt into this denominational structure, which means there are Baptist churches who are not part of this BUGB. However, for the purpose of this essay 'Baptist' refers to members of this Union.

settlement system for placing ministers in churches, one church asked outright to speak with my husband about how my potential job role would conflict with the expectations on me as a minister's wife.

These are just a few of the incidents that have constituted my lived experience of being a woman in Baptist ministry; my husband has had none of these comments or questions. This has led me to wonder if arguing that we should ordain women because women bring something special into ministry subtly reinforces an idea that women are a complementary bonus to a normative male ministry. Furthermore, I wonder if this position creates unhelpful expectations; I seek to be good at pastoral care, but I would define my primary gifts as preaching and the leading of worship and church meetings, on the other hand my former colleague's excellence at pastoral care was not diminished by his being male, something that has since been confirmed by his move to hospice chaplaincy.

Living with the language of complementarity has not been only my personal experience, but is echoed by other women in Baptist ministry. Edmond's research on behalf of a Baptist Union listening project to women in ministry recorded comments made to women in ministry that they had found unhelpful or painful, which included, "You will make a good minister's wife… You will be good for the work amongst the women and children… you can only ever be an assistant you know".[2] A year later a Women in Ministry meeting commented that one of the problems was "the tendency to stereotype 'women ministers'"[3]. Ruth Gouldbourne, co-minister of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, observes:

> …the normally unspoken, but sometimes explicit, understanding of complementarity in ministry which surrounded much of my training, and my early service in church was that where women were particularly strong (and by implication, where men were weak and needed help) was in the giving of pastoral support and care.[4]

More recently, Mary Taylor, now Regional Minister in Yorkshire Baptist Association, commented on an incident when the church appointed a second female minister:

> …one negative comment that remains in my mind was "what does Kazia have that Mary doesn't?" There was a clear implication that women are one-

[2] Edmonds, Lesley, *Women in Ministry- Settlement Survey*, Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1992.
[3] Rooke, Deborah, *Women in Ministry meeting 18.3.93 – Report of Plenary Session*, Baptist Union of Great Britain, May 1993.
[4] Gouldbourne, Ruth, 'Do Women Complement Men in Ministry' in Ministry Today, Issue 17, (October 1999) [Accessed at: https://www.ministrytoday.org.uk/magazine/issues/17/97/, accessed date: 22.3.2015]

> dimensional and only have a limited gifting to offer in ministry. What we have discovered is the *complementarity* of our gifting.[5]

The language of complementarity between men and women occurs in a context where women in Baptist ministry are still in a minority, with the last set of statistics numbering women as only 14% of active Baptist ministers, despite the Union having ordained women since the 1920s.[6] The difficulty for women finding ministerial positions through the Union 'settlement' system is something known about by anecdote; of the six women training for accredited Baptist ministry in my year and the two years above me at Regent's Park College, only one settled on a full time, fully stipended post and that was as an associate minister. The former head of ministry, Paul Goodliff, notes this problem of women finding positions, commenting afterwards:

> I suspect that a deeper-seated prejudice, allied to the relatively small number of women in our ministry, means that many churches might allow a woman assistant, but find it harder to see a woman as senior pastor or staff team leader. In some ways this is harder to defend than churches that hold to a theological and biblical conviction that leadership is exclusively male… It is less evident prejudice.[7]

This experience of ministering in a context where women in ministry are not yet at a parity of numbers or status with men in ministry has made me want to consider this language that we should ordain women because they bring complementary gifts and experiences to those of men in ministry. As a practical theologian I want to corroborate my experience: is this language being used within the denomination and in what ways? And if it is being used, is this helpful language in our conversations about women in ministry when we are struggling to achieve an equality of numbers and status?

Utilising a personal bias

It is important to acknowledge this personal motivation, as it will create a bias within this study: I am an ordained minister within the Baptist Union of Great Britain, and I am a woman. It is therefore important to me that this Union encourages the ordination of women and is an environment where women, both ordained and lay, can flourish into fullness of who Christ has called them to be. It also means that the authors and editors of many of the works studied here are known personally to me, churches in this Union have played a significant role in my socialisation into adulthood and my formation as a minister, the associational and

[5] BUGB, *Women in Ministry: Some stories from the road*, (2010),18.
[6] Goodliff, Paul, 'Women's ministry; an Exploration at a Historic Moment', in *Baptist Quarterly 45.8*, (2014),486.
[7] Goodliff, Paul, 'Women's ministry',487.

denominational structures have discerned my call to ministry and at times assisted with the funding of this course. Furthermore, I am a white, middle class woman in a heterosexual marriage with a good university education, so I also share in privilege within the Union that other women and men do not. This bias is not something I can change, but is worth naming, as my methodology will later discuss, as my voice should not be taken to speak for all women. However, it is this personal experience which I believe will also gift something to this research. As Slee explains, "Our listening is informed by scholarly reading, certainly, but it is also shaped by our own hunger to be listened to, by positive experiences of what is to be listened to well, and also by the painful reality of not being heard, of having our voices and lives silenced."[8] It is this move of taking private experiences and putting them into the public academic world, which is, to borrow Berry's language, "to move from privacy to prophecy".[9]

Introducing complementarity

Defining complementarianism involves conversations about hierarchy, whether there is a created, 'ontological' difference between men and women and, if so, how this continues into the roles they take on within society.[10] The vocabulary used in the title of this paper is trying to get to the heart of this conversation, and uses 'complementarian' to mean the view that men and women are different to one another in a way that is essential of their biological sex, and these innate differences of man and woman are designed by God to complement the other sex and together reflect the imago Dei. This means that men, because they are created men, have certain innate tendencies and abilities, and women, because they are created women, have other innate tendencies and abilities.

Complementarianism is often used as a descriptor of a theology of gender propounded by conservative evangelicals, that men and women, whilst having equal worth before God, were created for different roles and functions. This position used to be called hierarchalism, because it understood men were created to be the head of women in domestic, social and church life,

[8] Slee, N. "Feminist Qualitative Research as Spiritual Practice", in, *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls; qualitative research perspectives*,ed Slee et al. (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2013), 18.
[9] Berry, Jan in 'From Privacy to Prophecy', in *The Faith Lives of Women and Girls*,35.
[10] Ontological difference refers to the idea that men and women are different in their very being in a way that goes beyond biological difference. Essential difference refers to the way men and women are different in a way that is essential to their biological sex, drawing from a platonic understanding of an eternal essence that manifests in particulars. These two terms are often used by different feminist theologians to denote the same things, as the idea that there is created essential sex difference implies something in God's ordering of the world. I have chosen to use ontological, as this is used by Judith Butler, whose work will be considered in greater depth later in this essay.
See Thatcher, Adrian, *God, Sex and Gender; an introduction*,(Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 19.

having the authority, preaching and teaching, whereas women were created to take on other roles, especially in the domestic sphere as wives and mothers. Such a view is typified by authors such as Piper and Grudem, who argue "He [God] designed our differences and they are profound. They are not mere physiological prerequisites for sexual union. They go to the root of our personhood."[11] This position, which will be termed 'hard complementarity' in this discussion, continues to find expression within the more conservative evangelical tradition. For these churches, women cannot be ordained because it is ontologically impossible for them to lead men; women were created to be submissive. This position is predicated on ideas which reinforce male dominance and female submission and sees patriarchy as part of God's ordering of creation.

However there is also a prevalence of language about the complementarity of men and women used by those who would be fully in favour of the ministry of women. This egalitarian complementarity seems to have a similar understanding that men and women are created differently and need to work together for the mutual flourishing of both sexes, but the aim of this position is producing equality instead of hierarchy. This paper will demonstrate that this position of 'soft complementarity' is the normative position of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Furthermore this soft complementarity is used as a core argument for the ordination of women: without the different gifts and styles of ministry that women bring, the church is not a full reflection of the imago Dei and the male dominated church requires women to bring collaborative these styles in order to save it from patriarchy.

However this paper will also argue that this position is often used uncritically, creating a language that men and women bring different gifts into ministry and lead in different ways that may limit the expressions of ministry that both women and men can bring. The last chapter will focus on whether the soft complementarity is based on an understanding of innate qualities in men and women that have been decided by a patriarchal heteronormative society, thus continuing to define women as 'other' against a masculine norm. The language of complementarity itself implies that women's ministry might be an additional benefit to that of men. In a denomination which has struggled to see parity in the numbers of men and women finding pastoral settlement, giving a language that argues men are ontologically different to women could give credence to those churches who think in their next ministry "they really need a man".[12]

## Methodology

[11] Piper, John, and Grudem, Wayne,*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton,Illinois: Crossway Books,2012),32.
[12] BUGB, Women in Ministry: Some stories from the road,6.

This study will triangulate the experience I have had with a dialogue between feminism and the texts of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, a methodology that Graham *et al* describe as correlational theology.[13] Correlational dialogue is a methodology that can be traced back to the emergence of practical theology, which is often credited to Schleiermacher, who understood a set of techniques for governing and perfecting the church as the crown to a theological tree, which was rooted in philosophical exploration. This saw theology applied to matters of church government and leadership.[14] Significantly for the methodology of this paper, Schleiermacher saw a sense and taste for the Infinite as present within culture, art and science as much as in formal religion. He believed that truth emerged dialectically through discussion with friends and collaborators.[15] Later Tillich responded to his experience of the First World War by seeing theology's proper task as responding to the existential and moral questions provoked by each generation. Again, he saw this method of theology as correlational with the present philosophy, as the philosophical question requires a theological answer, but to answer theologically the theologian must accept the cultural presuppositions the question is asking.[16] This has been revised by many recent practical theologians, who have reinterpreted this understanding of correlation as something that is critical of both theology and culture. Critical correlational theology is understood to have two strands, firstly the apologetic, giving an account of Christianity in a culturally understandable form, and secondly the dialectical, which holds the possibility of theological insight or renewal coming from secular thought.[17] This discussion fits within the latter category, seeing the insights of feminism as able to offer new ideas within Baptist dialogue about women in ministry.

Arguing theological insight can come from beyond the church, the theological position that underpins this methodology, is one that not all Baptists would agree with. However it is of note that BUGB first recognised the ordination of women at the same time as first wave feminism saw women gain the vote in 1918 and 1928; it would be naïve to assume these two events are unconnected and that our theology of women in ministry is something that has not been done in public and influenced by culture in the past. Using this methodology will enrich this study by giving a framework to compare and understand the Baptist Union language, and conversely, to see what the Baptist Union may offer that is distinct in contemporary understanding of gender

[13] Graham, Elaine, et al. *Theological Reflections: Methods*, (London: SCM Press, 2005),139.
[14] Schleiermacher, F., *Christian Caring: selections from Practical Theology,* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1988)
[15] Graham, Elaine, et al. *Theological Reflections: Methods*, (London: SCM Press, 2005),148.
[16] Graham, Elaine, et al. *Theological Reflections: Methods*, (London: SCM Press, 2005),158.
[17] Graham, Elaine, et al. *Theological Reflections: Methods*, (London: SCM Press, 2005),160-1, see also, 139.

This discussion will therefore continue this dialogue between feminism and the Baptist Union to see what fresh insight might be available for a conversation about women's complementary ministry.

Bringing in a feminist voice is an important corrective to a church tradition that has struggled to recognise the ministry of women. Reuther shows that the difference in feminist theology is not the importance of using experience, but in its use of the experience of women, which has been "almost entirely shut out of theological reflection in the past".[18] The use of this experience exposes classical theology "including its codified traditions, as based on male experience rather than on universal human experience." [19] Feminism has interacted with church life in multiple different ways, but the concern which broadly links different feminist theologies together is that they start from this understanding of a 'preferential option for women', that they need to be granted an epistemological privilege in order to redress the balance of patriarchy.[20] Here it is important to also acknowledge that women do not simply have one voice or experience, but many voices and many experiences. As Harding says:

> Feminist knowledge has started off from women's lives, but it has started off from many different women's lives; there is no typical or essential women's life from which feminists start their thought. Moreover, these different women's lives are in important respects opposed to each other.[21]

Asking critical questions about the role of complementarian arguments for women's ministry could challenge some women's own theological justification of their position. As a practical piece of feminist theology, there is an implicit assumption that by building knowledge we are also changing praxis, which asks an ethical question of this study: is it possible to hold the importance of different women's experience and to also offer suggestions for different practice which do not marginalise or diminish the experiences of some? Harding offers a solution to this quandary of different and disagreeing voices by suggesting that it is in different experiences that the possibility of different distinctive insights might be gleaned and by focussing on the oppressed groups a more accurate picture of society will be developed than simply looking at the version of truth offered by the dominant narrative. There is therefore a need to be ethically aware of the

[18] Ruether, Rosemary Radford, *Sexism and God-Talk: towards a feminist theology*, (2nd ed.) (London: SCM Press, 1992),13.
[19] *ibid.*
[20] Jones, Serene, 'Feminist Theology and the Global Imagination' in *The Oxford Handbook to Feminist Theology*, eds Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Sheila Briggs (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 26.
[21] Harding, Sandra, 'Rethinking standpoint epistemology: what is "strong objectivity?' In L. Alcoff & E. potter, (eds.), *Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 65.

potential implications of this study on other women's understanding of their own ministry, but this must be held in tension with the ethical imperative to deconstruct what may be preventing women from fully participating in ordained Baptist ministry.

Method

Using appropriate method is therefore a compelling task for feminist research, as this approach is particularly aware that research processes will determine the content of the results. As Slee argues, "positivist perspectives which assume objectivity, neutrality and detachment on the part of the researcher in the interests of control are not likely to yield liberating results for oppressed groups".[22] It is therefore particularly important to note the bias that this research will take. Every researcher has a bias, espoused or not, but by taking a feminist angle this work will consciously adopt a hermeneutic which privileges the experience of women.

However the epistemological concern about listening to women's experience is also a practical one. If there are only 14% of women in ministry, how can the voices who are not speaking be listened to, in order to find out if (or how) they have been silenced?[23] The women who are present in Baptist leadership can elucidate their experience of the structures and lived experience of the Baptist Union, but they cannot speak for women who have not followed a journey to ordained ministry.

Therefore, in discussing the Baptist Union's use 'complementarian' arguments for women in ministry, this essay will focus on what is being said in the dominant narrative: literature produced by and for the Baptist Union, both those documents produced with an official 'Baptist Union' stamp, and those authored by members of the Baptist Union. This study will approach these documents utilising what Leavy terms feminist content analysis, which is to examine the content of the texts and to deconstruct what is absent, as a community's values, norms, socialisation and stratification can be learnt from the texts it produces. [24] As well as being a mirror of society, texts go onto influence their futures, as Leavy points out "cultural artefacts do not simply reflect social norms and values; texts are central to how norms and values come to be shaped".[25] She argues that texts human groups produce are embedded with the larger ideas the groups have, whether

[22] Slee, Nicola, 'Feminist qualitative research as spiritual practice: reflections on the process of doing qualitative research', 18.
[23] This statistic is true of 'active' Baptist ministers from the summer of 2013, according to Paul Goodliff, 'Women's ministry; an exploration at an epic moment', in *Baptist Quarterly*, 45, (2014),485.
[24] Leavy, Patricia Lina, in 'The Feminist Practice of Content Analysis' in *Feminist Research Practice; A Primer*, eds Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Lina Leavy, (London: Sage Publications, inc., 2007),229.
[25] *Ibid.*

they are shared or contested, and she makes specific reference to sex and gender as illustrative of this.[26]

Text selection

The selection criteria of these documents are simply those that are arguing for women in ministry, from either a theological or a practical perspective, and written, commissioned or published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, or documents written by British Baptist authors, from 1980 to 2015. The dates are contemporary, but give thirty five years of scope to trace movements in themes. It also encompasses a time period that was significant ecumenically, with the Church of England conversations and gradual approval of women to the priesthood and the episcopate. The size of the Baptist Union means that considering all the documents on the theology or practicality of women in ministry is containable within one study. Whilst it is possible that some documents have escaped notice, these texts are to some degree self-selecting by referencing each other, which means that the documents present are the ones deemed to be of value by the Union or authors within the Union. A significant collection of these texts was made by Haig and Woodman in 2009 on behalf of the Union. Their report suggested four classifications of the texts: historical, biblical/theological, practical/pastoral and ecumenical. The historical includes documents dating from the early years of women in Baptist ministry and the studies upon the history of women within the Union. Ecumenical material is that produced by ecumenical bodies or authors on the issues surrounding women in ministry.[27] These two classifications have been discounted from the study, in the first case because this is a study of contemporary views and sources, and in the second instance because this is a study focussing on what the Baptist Union is producing and arguing. Whilst the conversation about women's ordination is one that is shared with other denominations, this study is limited to understanding the language of complementarity of women in ministry within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. This paper will consider therefore all documents written to discuss women in ministry from a theological or practical perspective.

Because of the emphasis on the local governance in Baptist ecclesiology it is important to note at this stage that documents produced by the Baptist Union are not, to borrow the language of Helen Cameron, 'normative'.[28] A more appropriate term for the discussion of Baptist life would

[26] *ibid*.
[27] Haig, R and Woodman,S, *Report on Written materials*, Baptist Union of Great Britain, April 2009.
[28] Helen Cameron develops the 'Theological Action Research' method, which includes the concept of theology in four voices: normative, formal, espoused and operant. Normative theology is what the

be to categorise texts produced by the Baptist Union as 'representative', with those produced by Baptist Union authors as 'formal'. These two labels will be used as a tool to discover if there is a difference in theology between the official documents of the Union and authors within it. Studying the representative and formal theological voices as a literature review in this paper prepares the ground for further study in the future on the practice and articulation of complementarity within local churches.

This literature review will therefore be a critical conversation between feminist views of complementarity and Baptist Union use of complementarity. The second chapter will give an introduction to feminist treatments of complementarity and gender, drawing out of this some key questions with which to approach Baptist Union literature. The third chapter will contain an analysis of the Baptist texts on women in ministry from a chronological perspective and then an analysis using the feminist questions, drawing out the themes present within the literature about complementarity as an argument for women in ministry. Having examined what Baptists say about complementarity and women in ministry, the fourth chapter will then discuss this in a dialogue with feminism.

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practicing group names as its theological authority, such as scripture, creeds, official church teaching and liturgy. Formal theology is that theology of the academy offering a specifically 'intellectual' form of thought which engages in critical and historically and philosophically informed inquiry. Espoused theology is that which is embedded with a group's articulation of its beliefs, and operant theology is the theology embedded within the actual practices of a group. For Baptists the normative practice is that of the local church meeting, which the denominational structures seek to aid and guide. Thus anything produced by the Baptist Union is not normative, but requires an extra category, 'representative' theology, this represents the position of the Union but cannot be enforced. The possible exception to this are ministerial recognition rules, which can be enforced upon accredited Baptist ministers, however it is still within the freedom of the local church to call a minister who is not accredited.
Helen Cameron et al, *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action, Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM, 2010), 56.

## Chapter 2

## Complementarity and feminism

This chapter will discuss how feminism has challenged that the binary difference between men and women which underpins complementarity is a patriarchal social construct and part of a society that continues to engender people in this way. Secular feminist thought offers critiques of an ontological view of gender, arguing that gender is constructed by patriarchal society and renders women as 'other' to men. Second-wave feminist theology has dealt with questions of gender ontology in the person of Christ and in the desire to reclaim femininity from patriarchy. This has in turn been criticised for not valuing the differences amongst women and perpetuating binary gender norms. The last part of this section will consider the thought of Judith Butler on gender performativity.

Criticisms of essentialist ontology from gender theory

Graham comments that there are those who campaign for women's ordination because of the different experiences and qualities they will bring. Such a view holds to a "vision of complementarity which is axiomatic" which will spontaneously happen when women are admitted to ministry.[29] However, she points out that these assume masculine and feminine are tangible aspects of human experience, where "critical studies of gender theory have increasingly abandoned such concepts as cultural concepts and not empirical realities".[30] As Thatcher argues, "typically religions are *essentialist* about gender, and secular discussions of gender are *constructionist*".[31]

The nodal point to complementarianism is the idea that there are two biological sexes, a male sex and a female sex, which in some way 'complement' each other. This position holds that there are differences between men and women because of their bodies, a position known as biological essentialism. Elaine Storkey summarises this position about human biology, "Men and women are not only sexually different, they are different chromosomally, reproductively, anatomically, hormonally and in terms of weight, height and brain usage."[32] However, this basic premise is worth defining and briefly evaluating in order to raise an initial query with the presuppositions of complementarianism. As Greek philosophy was absorbed into the emergence of early

[29] Graham, Elaine L *Making the Difference; Gender, Personhood and Theology*, (London: Mowbray, 1995), 45
[30] Graham, Elaine L, *Making the Difference,* 45.
[31] Thatcher, A. *God, Sex and Gender*, 19.
[32] Storkey, Elaine, *Created or Constructed? The Great Gender Debate* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 14.

Christianity, a Platonic and Aristotelian binary view of men and women prevailed, such as in the view of Heraclitus who argued that male and female were polar opposites, and since new life emerged from the union of male and female, all creation must be based on this ontological and functional division.[33] Thus Western thought adopted a system of mutually reinforcing binary pairs, such as Male/Female, Culture/Nature, Straight/Curved, Reason/Intuition, Public/Private, Subject/Object, Mind/Body, Civilized/Primitive, Universal/Particular, Master/Slave.[34] This dualism of gender has been pervasive within Christian thought, particularly in Thomistic theology, and in turn these ideas about gender have influenced the ordering of society. Graham shows the scholastic theology of the middle ages taught that women were not made directly in the image of God, but derived their humanity through the man, thus being ontologically inferior to men. Aquinas, for example, argued that women were defective males because of unsatisfactory conditions in utero.[35]

An understanding that femininity is not ontological, but a social construct, comes from the separation of biology and gender that began in the 1960s. Gender theory would not locate the differences between how men and women operate in their created biological sex, but would see it as constructed by culture. This is based on differentiating a person's biological sex from the lived practice, experience and understanding of that biological sex in society. The differentiation of sex and gender began with the work of Robert Stoller in *Sex and Gender: on the development of Masculinity and Femininity*, who argued that there are two sexes, male and female, but gender is a term that has psychological and cultural rather than biological connotations and suggested that the male has a preponderance to masculinity and the female to femininity.[36] Oakley took the idea of distinguishing between gender and sex, developing it to suggest that masculinity and femininity were a product of socialization:

> The actual pattern of male and female activities will be devised by each society according to its beliefs about the reproductive functions of men and women, and these beliefs are culturally determined.[37]

Here Oakley separates the biological sex of an individual from their behaviour, placing the emphasis on the cultural role in defining how men and women should behave. Significantly for the purposes of this discussion, society is understood to be patriarchal and thus the social understanding of femininity is one which favours men not women.

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[33] Graham, Elaine L., *Making the Difference,* 12.
[34] Graham, Elaine L., *Making the Difference*,12.
[35] Graham, Elaine L., *Making the Difference,*14.
[36] Stoller, R. *Sex, Gender and Society,* (New York: Science House, 1968),
[37] Oakley, Anne, *Sex, Gender & Society*, (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1972), 146-7.

Bradley, in her recent book *Gender*, makes three points about the concept of gender which matter for how we understand femininity and masculinity: firstly, it is a social construct and therefore it varies across time, place and culture. Secondly, gender is a construct that is and has been politically deployed, such as by second wave feminist academics in the emancipation of women. Thirdly, it is about people's lived experience: whilst gender is a social phenomenon and not merely the attribute of individuals, it impacts on the experience of each individual.[38] Bradley claims that gender influences everything that humans do, including significantly for the purpose of this study, the jobs that we do and how we are related to. Similarly societal institutions, such as marriage, families and schools, are themselves gendered and perpetuate the formation of gender in individuals and their relationships.[39] Whilst she does not specifically mention religion in her list of societal institutions, it would seem clear that the church would be a significant place of gendering for those who attend, considering the formational and educational role it has. Thatcher responds to Bradley, arguing:

> Churches…are hugely important institutions in "gendering" the people who attend them, in shaping them as men and women, in mediating to us beliefs and practices about ourselves in relation to people of the other sex….When Christians lacking a penis are, for that reason, deemed to be unfit to represent the male Christ as priests, or become preachers, deacons or elders in Nonconformist Churches… these are practices which already "speak" volumes about how these communities think and practice gender.[40]

Furthermore, it could be argued that churches still have something of an external influence on gender in contemporary British society, by continuing to be an institution which, for example, conducts marriages for many people. Grace Davie argues that religion can operate vicariously, and one example of this is by hosting controversial debates that are difficult to have in other arenas of society.[41] She looks to the specific role of the Church of England, suggesting it offers a public space to debate issues that "remain unresolved in the nation's consciousness".[42] This role is ratified through the prominence debates about women bishops and homosexuality have had in the nation's press coverage of the church. Whilst Davie is arguing that the church functions as this public debating arena in order to establish a new understanding of what it could mean to be the state church, this would suggest that the Christian religion more broadly still plays a role in defining gender in contemporary Britain. If this is true for those who do not attend church, then

[38] Bradley,Harriet, *Gender*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 6.
[39] Bradley,Harriet, *Gender*, 6.
[40] Thatcher, A. *God, Sex and Gender*, 19.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] Davie,Grace 'Debate', in *Praying for England: Priestly presence in contemporary culture,* eds. Samuel Wells and Sarah Coakley, (London: Continuum Books, 2008),147.

the gender and engendering of the church for those who do attend it will be significant. The fact that gender is a matter of public debate is corroborated by Bradley's next point, which is that living in a society that is more aware of the construct of society implies a climate of equality, but beneath the surface there remain major divergences of gendered power.

This gendering of society means that even the scientific study which has drawn theories about the social inevitability of biological laws have themselves taken place in a social context which is influenced by the separation of man and woman and the hierarchical understanding of their roles:

> Scientific enquiry and theorisation has frequently drawn upon social and political metaphors for its characterisation of nature; and in viewing much of the evidence through a framework of gender dichotomy, researchers have reified and exaggerated gender difference.[43]

Crawford looks at how this understanding of difference has been perpetuated by language about the 'opposite' sex, in which she argues "a powerful narrative frame is provided and validated: that gender is difference, and difference is static, bipolar and categorical."[44] She critiques this, arguing that difference is fluctuating and variable, often limited to particular sub groups and not replicable in further studies, and this seems inconsistent with using them as fundamentals of human nature. She argues that the meaning of sex difference is the product of social negotiation in a context of a pre-existing system of meanings in which difference is polarised.[45] Here we can see that gender theory challenges received Christian theology that our God-given biology defines how men and women act, instead suggesting that the differences between men and women are something that have been constructed by a patriarchal society.

<u>The ontology of gender within feminist theologians: the maleness of Christ</u>

A key argument about whether women could be ordained within traditions that contain an ontological understanding of the priesthood surrounded the ontology of women. Arguing that women were not ontologically inferior or different to men was a key point in arguing that women could represent a male Christ in the Eucharist. Feminist theologians questioned why there was emphasis on the ontological difference of sex over other particularities of Christ's humanity, and if this position were followed through, does this mean that a male saviour cannot save women?

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[43] Birke,L. 'Cleaving the Mind: Speculations on Conceptual Dichotomies', in The Dialectics of Biology Group, *Against Biological Determinism, (*London: Allison and Busby, 1982),60-78.

[44] Crawford*,* Mary, *Gender and Psychology Volume 7: Talking Difference; on gender and language,* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 1.

[45] Crawford,Mary*, Gender and Psychology Volume 7,*4.

This discussion argues that the ontological maleness of Christ would prevent him from having taken on female humanness, and therefore redeeming it, following Gregory of Nazianzus' aphorism, "For that which He has not assumed He has not healed".[46] If the maleness of Christ is ontological, then a male saviour has not saved women. If Christ's maleness was not ontological, then it follows that this is not true for any other man, or indeed for women.

Ontology within feminism: reclaiming femininity

Second wave feminism of the 1960s-1970's saw the equality movement in the West expand from women's suffrage into other areas of women's lives, such as family, work and sexuality, with publications such as *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan criticizing women's experience of domesticity. The perception of women as Other in de Beauvoir's 1949 work, *The Second Sex,* was taken on by some feminists in the 1970's as a positive alternative to patriarchy.[47] The qualities of non-competitiveness, sensitiveness, imagination, sharing and nurturing, motherhood and mutual creativity were seen to be qualities that could be fostered as a woman-centered alternative in society and the church. Reuther comments on the movement to create woman-church at this time:

> Distressing as it may seem to males who imagine themselves sympathetic to feminism, this process of consciousness raising must necessarily have a separatist stage. Women have to withdraw from male-dominated spheres so they can gather together and define their own experience …in exodus from patriarchy.[48]

However, this has come under criticism for assuming that there is an essential experience of being female. Even if one wished to maintain that there is an essential difference between men and women, second wave feminism came under significant critique for assuming that women were one homogenous group. Lorde emphasises that women's difference from one another is as significant as their difference from men.[49] Lorde made this point in a development of the womanist movement, which saw black women critiquing white western middle class feminists for talking for all women's experience, something that had parallels across the globe such as by the Latina/Mujeristas. Although many Baptist Union texts arguing for a difference between men and women have been authored by women, it is worth being conscious that this group is in the

[46] For an overview of this discussion, see R.R. Reuther 'Christology and Feminism: Can a Male Saviour Save Women?' in, *To change the World*, New York: Crossroad, 1981), 45-56.
[47] de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex,* trans. H.M. Parshley, (London: Gallimard,1949),16.
[48] Reuther, R.R., Women-church: theology and practice of feminist liturgical communities (San Francisco:Harper&Row,1985),59-60.
[49] Lorde, Audre, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches,* (Berkley: Crossing Press, 2007),16.

majority white, middle class, and by the very authoring of papers, well educated. As Zappone explains:

> To accept the 'difference among women' as part of our starting point means that we will have to be self-critical as well as critical. It will challenge the theory that many of us struggled hard to create. And it will relativize the universalizing attempts of women who hold dominance in terms of class, culture, sexual orientation and/or race.[50]

The other particulars of human existence have the possibility to define people's experience of being women or men in ways which may be more significant than their biological sex. Johnson uses the historical example of a black slave woman in the American South, for whom race would be more fundamental to her identity than being a woman.[51] To emphasise complementarity between biological sexes is to ignore the other differences between women and risk universalising the experiences of a few who hold a position of power.

The challenge to ontological gender difference has been continued by the work of post-structuralist gender theorist Judith Butler, who considers feminist discourse on whether there is a commonality amongst women that pre-exists their oppression, or perhaps a commonality from their shared experience of being oppressed.[52] She questions feminism on whether there is a something 'specifically feminine' which is both different from what is masculine and recognisable across a presumed universality of women.[53] Butler argues that this understanding of a unity and universality of 'women' as a subject of feminism "inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category".[54] She looks at the many other signifiers of identity that interact with a male/female binary and argues:

> "The feminist "we" is always and only a phantasmatic construction, one that has its purposes, but which denies the internal complexity and indeterminacy of the term and constitutes itself through the exclusion of some part of the constituency that it simultaneously seeks to represent.[55]

Butler's argument is that the constructionist sex/gender divide still assumes a binary between male and female that are connected to biological sex, as gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. She argues that sex is itself a gendered concept, and therefore there is not a

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[50] Johnson, Elizabeth'The Maleness of Christ', in A. Carr and E.S. Fiorenza (eds), *The Special Nature of Women*? (London: SCM Press,1991), 92.
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York: Routledge, 1999),7.
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] *ibid*
[55] Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble,*181.

distinction between sex and gender after all. Instead of having a gender that is connected to sex, Butler argues that gender is something that is unconsciously performed by repetitive acts.

> The rules that govern intelligible identity, i.e., that enable and restrict the intelligible assertion of an "I," rules that are partially structured along matrices of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, operate through repetition.[56]

These rules are not limited to a social expectation to wear certain clothing or to do certain sports, but are all encompassing over how one moves and uses one's body. It could be argued that placing such a weight on societal norms in forming a person means Butler's theory does not give enough consideration to the role of sexed bodies as the way in which humans receive information about the world, through our senses, and then process this information, which would give an argument to male and female bodies operating differently. However, Butler argues precisely that these repeated acts are not natural but likens this performance to a parody of what is culturally expected of womenhood or manhood. The norms of society have the ability to humanise or dehumanise people and society ensures that a person's sex comes before an acknowledgement of their personhood, so the desires to perform these acts do not come from one's personhood, but from the desire to be considered and recognised as a body that matters.[57] So, to use Butler's perspective, to be one sex or another defines someone as a person in society's eyes, something that is seen in a societal interest to know what sex an unborn baby is, which in some parts of the world not only contributes to how much they will be regarded as a person when they are born, but whether or not that baby will be aborted before they are born. Our need for recognition means we perform our gender, and the continued repetition of this gender performance begins to look like ontology but is not. She uses this performative understanding to critique ontology, arguing:

> There is no ontology of gender on which we might construct a politics, for gender ontologies always operate within established political contexts as normative injunctions, determining what qualifies as intelligible sex, invoking and consolidating the reproductive constraints on sexuality, setting the prescriptive requirements whereby sexed or gendered bodies come into cultural intelligibility. Ontology is, thus, not a foundation, but a normative injunction that operates insidiously by installing itself into political discourse as its necessary ground.[58]

[56] Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble,*220.
[57] Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*, 220-224.
[58] Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*, 224.

It is however important to note that arguing gender is performative rather than innate to our human biology does not mean that it can be changed simply because an individual desires change. In a later work, Judith Butler argues that gender is a kind of doing within constraints; it is not possible to do one's gender alone, one is always doing gender with or for another. She suggests that this is because gender is linked to desire and recognition by society. Because society sometimes dehumanises people, its norms are about power. The wish to escape the norms and distance oneself from them assumes that one has an initial distance from the norms to be able to be critical of them and to survive without them.[59] This means that someone who does not perform their gender without a significant subgroup with different norms may be dehumanised and considered to have a body that fails to matter in relation to others.

In terms of discussing women in Baptist ministry Butler's thought offers two interesting areas of reflection: firstly, gender is performed for social recognition and no one of either gender can be a minister without social recognition. This paper will later show how there has been considerable concern about those women who minister 'like men', showing a concern that social expectations about how ministry is performed have clashed with the social norms of gender. Alliaume considers Butler's theory of performativity in relation to the ordination of women to the priesthood within Roman Catholicism. She argues that this performing of bodies is what it is to be a part of the Christian body:

> Just as being a "woman" is a continued citation of certain culturally intelligible norms of "womanhood," so being a Christian is a citation of certain culturally intelligible norms of "Christianity." Both citations are corporate, are manifested bodily, because the norms that are cited are communally constructed and upheld.[60]

In both the situations of church and gender performance of this identity is beyond conscious control as the effects signify more to the community than one can be aware. Alliaume shows how the Christian norms of Catholicism have made women's bodies fail to matter. Alliaume's interpretation of Butler into a church context, albeit a different denomination, gives an explanation as to why reclaiming the feminine has become so important for those women who have gone into ministry, as it is the process of reclaiming that these bodies now matter in the performance of Christianity. However she continues this understanding of performativity in her discussion of the person of Christ, who performed his gender in a way which challenged the

[59] Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*,(Oxon: Routledge,2004),16.
[60] Allioume, Kathryn Trimble, 'Disturbingly Catholic: Thinking the Inordinate Body' in Armour, E. T., and St. Ville, Susan. *Bodily Citation: Religion and Judith Butler.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006),104.

binary gendered (and other) norms of his society. In doing so, he behaves like someone in drag, who challenge the binary dualism of sex and gender by causing cognitive dissonance, laughter or unease; this cross-dressing parody provokes inquiry into the standards and norms it mocks.[61] As those who perform Christ, Allioume's thought is that female priests continue this parody which question binary norms. The implication of her thought is that whilst women in ministry may wish to reclaim the feminine to make their bodies matter, to perform Christ is to continue to challenge the very definitions and norms of binary gender.

Secondly, critiquing the norms of gender assumes that one has enough distance from it, or a subgroup with alternative norms, although society may continue to read performance through their gendered lens. Butler's thought offers the possibility that as different generations and ethnicities of women experience different norms, what they perform as their gender is varied. If in the last thirty five years women in Britain - and more specifically, Baptist churches - have experienced greater emancipation, or at least different expectations on how they will act, then this would mean that younger women's experience of what it is to be gendered, and their performance of that gender, will bring different norms and styles than that of older women who grew up with different expectations. Similarly women of different ethnicities and cultures will bring different experiences and performances of their gender. This not only offers a critique of a complementary ontology between men and women, it offers a potential explanation for why some women will react to this language differently, and why congregation members and others may continue to understand the performance of gender in ministry as signifying things which an individual minister does not intend to perform, such as being good at children, or more able at pastoral care. This suggests that younger female ministers may struggle with language that was heard as emancipatory by their foremothers. McLeod articulates this from her perspective of young voice in feminist theology, as she challenges that feminist theology has not caught up with the post-structuralist thought of Butler and others:

> I became uncomfortable with what I will call Second Wave attitudes…, by which I mean the maintaining of the gender binary of men and women but with the strategic privileging of the marginalized, i.e. women. This seemed to create a very 'us and them' mentality. Whilst I sympathized with the reason – and need for – anger I felt that this approach often led to a reinforcing of certain stereotypes surrounding both men and women. For instance, the notions that men are inherently more aggressive than women; that women are more peaceful and better communicators; and so forth. This seemed to me as constraining as ever, for attempting to promote a unified vision of 'women', however positive, creates another set of characteristics into which

[61] Allioume, Kathryn Trimble, 'Disturbingly Catholic: Thinking the Inordinate Body', 114.

> one must 'fit'. Not only this, but men as a group were often portrayed as lacking or flawed. [62]

The significant development of post-structuralist thought since second wave feminism typified by Butler has built into a younger generation of feminist theologians resisting the former labels of second wave feminism. The desire to reclaim a 'femininity' against the patriarchal male has been challenged as maintaining negative stereotypes of men and women that feel limiting.

From this initial consideration of feminist thought, it can be seen that second wave feminism brought an understanding that binary gender was something that was constructed by society. Since then feminist movements across the globe have been keen to emphasise the plurality of experience between women, and post-modern developments, especially the work of Butler, has had an enduring influence in cautioning the assumptions that feminists make that there is something ontological about sex, showing that even the understanding of biological sex is something that is gendered. Instead Butler offers the theory that ontology is something that is concluded from the repetition of certain norms in society, which assume a binary pattern of masculine-feminine in both sex and gender, and whilst these norms cannot be dispensed with simply, this shows that gender is something that is performed according to these norms. The implications of Butler's thought for church life is not only a critique of a theology of ontology, but an explanation both as to why there may be a desire to reclaim femininity as a personhood that matters within ministry, and that there needs to be significant distance from these norms in order to be able to challenge them. The suggestion offered here is that as women have experienced greater emancipation in the Baptist Union, this distancing has begun. To argue for a simple category of 'women' is something that therefore is no longer considered viable without continuing to define, and therefore limit, who women are, which is to perpetuate an oppression that feminism is seeking to undo.

The key questions that feminist thought has raised for dialogue with the complementarity present within Baptist Union texts is whether there is an understanding of binary gender as ontological, constructed or performed, whether there is a challenging of binary gendered norms over the reclaiming of 'femininity' and lastly whether there is an appreciation that women are different from one another. These issues will form the framework for examining how Baptists use complementarian arguments for women in ministry.

[62] McLeod, Naomi, et al. 'The Next Generation: Young Women on Feminism Roisin Winston, Zoe Carletide, Naomi McLeod and Bahar Mustafa' in *Feminist Theology* 20 (2012),262.

## Chapter 3:

## A Literature Review of Baptist Union Documents on Complementarity

The feminist review of gender offers three themes by which to analyse Baptist Union texts. Firstly it asks whether binary gender is understood as ontological, constructed or performed, secondly whether the reclaiming of femininity is prioritised over the challenging of binary gendered norms, and thirdly whether there is an appreciation of women as different from one another. By using these questions as a tool to review Baptist literature, this chapter will show that BUGB's language of complementarity resembles a second wave feminist focus on the need to reclaim feminine gifts and styles in ministry which will lead to the removal of hierarchy between men and women. The understanding of gender in Baptist texts is ontological: women's 'partnership' with men is understood as reflecting the *imago Dei*, and any the differences between the sexes is continued through the baptismal understanding of Galatians 3:28 and seen to be part of the covenant within the household codes. Conversely, any androgyny is considered to go against this divine ordering of the world. Thus the reclaiming of the feminine in ministry is essential, not simply for women, but for the patriarchal church to find redemption. This means that women ministering 'as men' is something that is treated with a continuous narrative of suspicion both because it hinders women and because it does not contribute to the redemption of the feminine within the church. There is some reflection as to what the feminine might mean, and an awareness that stereotypes of gender are limiting. There is within this an awareness of gender being socially constructed, but it is understood that a fallen patriarchal world has constructed a distortion of gender stereotypes, so finding a redeemed womanhood is something that is considered a kingdom call. Within Baptist texts there is a theology of two ontological and complementary genders which contain different styles and gifts and so need to work in partnership for the good of the church.

### Historical narration of the texts

Before reviewing the content of the texts, it is helpful to identify the chronology of the texts. Baptist Union texts about women in ministry fall broadly into two clusters. The first is a conversation that starts in the 1980s climaxing in a denominational listening process in the early 1990s. Then there is a later surge of texts surround the Blackley Declaration in 2007 with a significant number of representative texts produced by BUGB between 2006 and 2014. There are texts produced in the mid-late 1990s, which, although they are fewer in number, bring an interesting contrast in the dominant understanding of gender complementarity. This historical account will give a brief introduction in to the texts, to trace the themes present as they emerge

and to see if there is any difference between representative literature and that produced by formal authors.

1980-1989

In this time period there was only one document produced from the Baptist Union department of ministry entitled *Man and Woman in the Church,* authored by George Beasley Murray in 1983.[63] This paucity of representative literature is in stark contrast to the following decades. Within the formal literature there was a Fraternal article by Judy Reece, *Women in the Ministry – a personal view,* authored in 1980, but the key discussion happened later in the decade, with the Baptist Quarterly consideration of women in ministry in 1986. Issue 31, volume 7 and volume 8 of the Baptist Quarterly is dedicated to studying women in the life of Baptist churches, containing seven articles on different dimensions of women in ministry, seeking to create a contemporary record.[64] This time period also saw women in ministry meeting together and beginning a dialogue with the Baptist Union. These meetings began informally, with the write-up of what was discussed and the resulting impact of those meetings appearing in the next decade.

Literature during the 1980s about women in ministry contains a clear commitment to the undoing of a hierarchism that has prevented women from playing a full part in ordained Baptist ministry, with no discernible difference between the majority of formal authors and the representative literature. There are certain prominent themes within this time: women's role within the church is often discussed at the same time as discussing women's role within marriage and the practicalities of domestic life. This can be seen in the Representative literature published by the Baptist Union and it is also present in the 1986 discussions of Reece and Fiddes, as well as Lehman's research on why churches are reluctant to call women in ministry. Whilst for Beasley-Murray and Fiddes this is because of dealing with the problematic texts in the New Testament, for Reece this is because of the role of the minister's wife in ministry. Feminism is often treated warily for being 'too aggressive' and is critiqued for trying to reduce male and female differences, but there is an appreciation that the change in societal trends has led the church to have a conversation about the appropriate roles of men and women. Overwhelmingly the texts hold a position of soft complementarity, seeing men and women as equal but different. The differences between men and women are seen to be innate and often drawn from the language of creation,

[63] Beasley-Murray, G.R. *Man and Woman in the Church,*(London: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1983)
[64] Reece, J. 'Women in the Ministry – a personal view', in *The Fraternal,* 192, (1980)
*Baptist Quarterly,* 31.7-31.8, (1986)
One of these articles, by Briggs, considers the historical role of women in Baptist life and so has not been considered here.

although what these feminine characteristics are is for the most part left unexplored. Women are seen to minister differently to men, because of their innate qualities and spiritual gifts, as well as any life experiences that come from being female, and this difference is something that all authors except from McCarthy are keen to maintain. There is a hope that women's ministry will bring a tenderising, feminising effect on to men, rather than women becoming in anyway aggressive or 'token men' themselves, with some authors desiring a team collaborative ministry between male and female. Similarly there is a desire to raise our appreciation of the feminine, such as by including feminine language in hymnody and worship and developing female role models. The narrative of the 1980s is a desire for a complementary partnership between men and women that honours the differences between the sexes and will thus positively affect the male-dominated church.

1990-1999

This period of time involved a Baptist Union 'listening process' by the General Secretary David Coffey and Keith Jones, then head of ministry, to the experiences of women in ministry.[65] This means that as well as representative of those in denominational leadership, these articles give a greater insight into the views and experiences of women in ministry at this time. 1990 saw the Baptist Colleges respond to the Listening process with a *Statement of Intent*, in which they acknowledged the inadequacy of previous patterns of training for women in ministry and a commitment to the complementarity of men and women in ministry.[66] This was followed shortly a key piece of research by Dianne Tidball on women's experience of training for ministry. The early 1990s saw a succession of documents written by the Union about consulting women in ministry about their experiences, which revealed the difficulties women faced practically finding churches, domestically, especially breaking the mould of not having a minister's wife, and in the general facing of prejudice. Within the formal literature this listening process was also written up by Ruth Gouldbourne in the Baptist Minister's Journal, in which most of the account again surrounds the practical challenges surrounding women in ministry.

Interestingly after 1993 there are no representative documents on women in ministry in this decade. There are four more formal papers, one MTh study by Anthony Barker, two by Gouldbourne, her seminal Whitley Lecture on women in ministry *Reinventing the Wheel* and a

[65] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Report of Baptist Women in Ministry Consultation*, (1992)
It was significant socially as the Church of England made the decision to ordain women to the priesthood in 1994. The Baptist Union representative literature echoes this discussion of women in ministry in the early 1990s, with no representative literature produced after 1993.
[66] Baptist Union Colleges*, Statement of Intent*, 2nd April 1990

specific paper on whether women complement men in ministry, and one by Jenny Few as a reflection on the Women's Issues Working Group. Gouldbourne develops an alternative understanding of women in ministry to the complementarian view, stressing the construction of gender by society and the limitations of labelling. This leads her to argue that women are 'other' to men in ministry because of their experience of the margins, and that experience should not be denied by women but brought into their ministry and the church. Similarly she critiques ontology of gender and the language of complementarity, concluding that there is a need for the complementarity of the church in all its variety.[67] Few's work contains some awareness of the social constructs of gender as well; her thought on gender seems to vary from an initial citation that maleness and femaleness are not synonymous to biological sex, to arguing that the church will only have full ministry and representation of the *imago Dei* if there are both men and women in ministry.[68] Beyond the two 1990 documents there is no assertion that women should complement men in ministry until 1999 by Few. One possibility for this is that Gouldbourne's understanding of gender is different, and her leadership role in the women in ministry consultations means that this understanding permeated the representative Union discussions as well. Whatever the reason, it is noteworthy that in a time period that emphasised listening to the experience of women in ministry there is little complementarian language used to argue for their presence.

2000-2009

Throughout this decade a prolific amount of representative and formal texts were produced on women in ministry to address the slow progress made amongst local churches calling women ministers. In 2006 BUGB produced the booklet *Women, Baptists and Ordination* to emphasise the denominational affirmation of women's ministry.[69] Most significantly in the course of the discussion in this decade was the Blackley Declaration in 2007.[70] This was written by a group of charismatic evangelicals within the north of the Baptist Union called 'Mainstream North' as a challenge to the Baptist Union on the low numbers of women in ministry, arguing that sexism is a result of the Fall and that the Union needed to be more aware of the cultures of sexism. This document was profoundly influential and responsible for the denominational conversations that

[67] Gouldbourne, Ruth, 'Reinventing the Wheel; Women and Ministry in English Baptist Life' *The Whitley Lecture 1997-1998*, (Oxford: Whitley Publications, 1997)
[68] Few, Jenny 'Hats and Wi(w)gs; Personal Reflections on the women's Issues Working Group' in *Theology in Context*, (Oxford: Whitely Publications, 1999)
[69] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women, Baptists and Ordination,* (Chipping Norton: Nigel Lynn Publishing and Marketing Ltd, 2006
[70] Mainstream North, *The Blackley Declaration*, January 2007

followed. Substantial formal reflection on women in ministry was produced by Mainstream authors, as well as responses by the representative BUGB structures in conjunction with the BUGB Women's Justice Committee, in which both sets of documents regret the lack of women's gifts and talk about the need for female styles of leadership to acknowledged and used by the Union. This led to considerable discussion at Baptist Council in 2009-2010 with a briefing paper about the history and theology of women's ministry, which reaffirmed the Union's commitment to the ordination of women. This council document contains an overview of the majority of earlier representative and formal documents discussed here.[71] One document produced in this time, *Women and Preaching*, stands out as offering an appreciation of current gender theory and more considered reflection on how women may be different to men.[72]

2010-2014

The council discussion document is replicated to considerable degree in the Story of Women in Ministry Reader in 2011.[73] It becomes clear from the reader, with its additional inclusion of the talks given at Council, that a frequent part of the denominational conversation affirming women's ministry is that women bring complementary gifts or styles of leadership to that which has been exercised by men. Following from this two other representative documents were produced: the first was *The Leading Question?*, a consultation of women in leadership with the Women's Justice Group of BUGB and the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women, which recommends ways "the leadership styles of women can be more fully understood and affirmed within the life and structures of church denominations and ecumenical institutions".[74] The second was *The Lydia Question*, a bible study designed to work alongside *The Story of Women in Ministry*.[75] This document stands out amongst other Baptist Union documents as it never uses the language of partnership, complementarity, or mutuality; instead it encourages a popular audience to actively consider and challenge gender stereotypes. Within formal literature the language of complementarity continues to be used. Kate Coleman, a former president of BUGB, authored the *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Ministry*, a book to go alongside a course that is run around the Union.

[71] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *A report to Baptist Union Council regarding the women in leadership among the churches of the Baptist Union of Great Britain*,2009.
[72] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women and Preaching*, date unknown (before 2010)
[73] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women in Ministry; a reader exploring the story of women in leadership and ministry within the Baptist Union of Great Britain,(*Didcot: BUGB, 2011)
[74] Women in Leadership Consultation, *The Leading Question? Women in leadership in churches and ecumenical organisations*, (Suffolk: Inspired Services Publishing Limited, 2013),2.
[75] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *The Lydia Question; a fresh look at God's calling,* 2014 [http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/399757/The_Lydia_Question.aspx]

[76]It is strongly binary in its understanding of women in ministry, arguing that women are called in to leadership because they are women. Another key work is that by the Tidballs, *The Message of Women; Creation, Grace and Gender,* which explores scripture with a view to affirming women, again sees gender as ontological, although interestingly cautions against a current understanding of ordination altogether.[77] Latterly the Baptist Quarterly revisited women's ministry with three articles, two of which were historical examinations, but a third by Paul Goodliff, the former head of ministry, reviews the progress and difficulties surrounding the acceptance of women in ministry, looking especially at a Baptist hermeneutic within that conversation and which also comments on male and female styles of leadership.[78]

## Gender as ontological

The first question for this review of Baptist literature on women in ministry is how binary gender is to be expressed — as either ontological, constructed or performed. This section will show that Baptist Union literature constructs a dominant narrative that there are two complementary and divinely created genders essential to biological sex and that these are held as irrefutable norms. Ontological gender is understood to be something that is revealed through scripture, both in the creation narratives and in the New Testament understanding of gender within the church, especially Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 11. The Baptist argument is essentially: biology is created by God and in God's image, therefore gender is divinely ratified. This argument is articulated in three formulations: the first is that women and men are created as complementary partners, the second is that man and woman together reflect the *imago Dei*, the third is that these distinctions, although non- hierarchical, are or ought to be maintained in the church.

The first formulation is typified by Pat Took, who considers that man and woman were created to be different and live in mutuality, and looks to the Fall as the source of domination and misogyny. Women were created to be "the companions and colleagues of men… Someone who was essentially the same but who was also interestingly different: bringing further resources, fresh intelligence, new ways of seeing something, a deeper companionship."[79] Her argument is that in their ontology women are there to exist alongside men, and this companionship included bringing 'further', that is, different resources, intelligence and ways of perceiving the world. She elaborates that man and woman were made for each other to image God together and with only

[76] Coleman, Kate, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership*, (Birmingham: Next Leadership, 2010)
[77] Tidball, Derek and Dianne, *The Message of Women; Creation, Grace and Gender*, (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012)
[78] Goodliff, Paul, 'Women's ministry; an Exploration at a Historic Moment', in *Baptist Quarterly 45.8*, (2014)
[79] Took, Pat 'In His Image', in *The Baptist Ministers' Journal*, 300, (2008), 3.

one gender that image is lost. She goes on to examine the many ways gender is affects our identity, from the relationships we have grown up in to the culture and history that we have, arguing that men have been unable to govern without women and women without men: "if either man or woman were to try this alone they would be radically disabled by the loss of their proper colleague in the enterprise".[80] This "original partnership" is essential for creating life and is likewise essential to "all aspects of human endeavour, including the church".[81] [82] Took highlights the importance of mutual creativity and male and female "complementing one another".[83] She concludes with the terms mutuality and complementarity to make the case to men that "you need us… In the body of Christ you urgently need us". [84]

Took's argument that a complimentary relationship based on gender, persists in numerous texts about women in ministry. A brief snapshot of the continued use of the creation narrative justifies the view that complementarity was divinely intended. Eakins, for example, maintains that people are not made gender neutral. God created us with gender so it is "important that men are men and women are women".[85] Elsewhere, in an early text Beasley-Murray considers Jesus' examination of creation passages and concludes "the partnership between man and woman exists apart from marriage".[86] For Phillips, complementarity becomes a solution to patriarchal oppression; She develops her argument that creation is intentionally diverse and that "men and women generally but not exclusively display different characteristics and abilities intended to be utilised in complementarity and equality".[87] This finds a parallel in O'Brien's thought that in creation men and woman "are entirely complementary", which is means they rule together with no hint of inequality or subordination.[88] O'Brien sees a soft complementarity as the opposite to hierarchy, and that this equality is God's intention. The Tidballs argue the two genders were created to be different by God as no individual or one gender was created to be self-sufficient and "through relationship each can become a more complete person".[89] Looking at creation they

[80] Took, 'In His Image', 6.
[81] *ibid*
[82] *ibid*
[83] Took, 'In His Image',8.
[84] Took, 'In His Image',10.
[85] Eakins, A. 'That joke isn't funny anymore', in, *Talk Magazine*, 2008, 2.
[86] Beasley-Murray, G.R. *Man and Woman in the Church,* (London: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1983),3.
[87] Phillips, Anne, 'Who is the problem? Reflecting on leadership and gender in English church and society', *Discussion Paper for the Women's Issues Committee*, 2002, 2.
[88] O'Brien,V, *Men and Women in Ministry*, Spoken Bible Study at Baptist Assembly, 2008,2.
[89] Tidball, Derek and Dianne, *The Message of Women; Creation, Grace and Gender*, (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012)**,**35.

argue "Eve is going to be the counterpart, complement, companion and partner to Adam".[90] This persistent language of complementarity as designed by God is a recurrent theme in Baptist texts as the answer to patriarchy and hierarchism.

The second formulation, that men and women together reflect the image of God is argued by several Baptist Union authors, in contradistinction to Butler and other post-modern/post-structuralist feminists. They argue that distinctions between the genders do not need to be erased in order to claim equality, rather the opposite is true; soft complementary is seen as designed by God and the recovery of this will see the undoing of patriarchy. Ibbotson, referring to the *imago Dei*, maintains the differences between the male and female and argues that the existence of otherness and its embrace is not an obliteration of difference. A binary understanding of male and female remains even if that difference must not be rendered in terms of authority and hierarchy. Instead the mutuality of otherness is described as beneficial and fruitful.[91] Ibbotson's position is that gender is re-ordered from divisions that are hierarchical to egalitarian. Few, similarly, considering the legacy of Eve and the damage done to women, suggests instead male and female "in complementarity reflect the image of the deity".[92] This egalitarianism is connected with reclaiming the femininity that is present within God. The church will only have full ministry and representation of the *imago Dei* if there are both men and women in ministry.[93] Thus, as the second formulation becomes the third, the difference and otherness of women is something to be lauded as God-given, and the argument begins to emerge that Baptists should ordain women because of their gender, as this will reclaim the intended image of God.

And so, to the final part of the Baptist narrative, that having established complementarity as divinely intended, ministry ought to reflect this theology. The reclaiming of women in ministry is inextricably linked to reflecting the feminine present in God. Responding to the idea that a Father God necessitates male leadership *Women, Baptists and Ordination* offers, "the image of God is seen most clearly in the complementary natures of female as well as male".[94] In this brief discussion of the *imago Dei*, it considers that scripture gives us images of God "that many would

[90] Tidball, Derek and Dianne, *The Message of Women*,37
[91] Sean Winter, 'God's inclusive story', *Talk Magazine,* 2007. [www.mainstream-uk.com/godsinclusive.pdf] 7.
[92] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women in Ministry; a reader exploring the story of women in leadership and ministry within the Baptist Union of Great Britain*,(Didcot: BUGB, 2011*)* 36.
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women, Baptists and Ordination,* (Chipping Norton: Nigel Lynn Publishing and Marketing Ltd, 2006)**,** 28.

acknowledge are more female than male."[95] It does not clarify what would make an image of God male or female, rather it assumes this is apparent and continues the theme that maleness and femaleness in God are split into the two sexes, who combine to make the image of God. White argues that there is a need for women ministers in order to present a full picture of God, which they would do by bringing "intuition, nurturing nature, and ability to empathise".[96] Interestingly he moves from this to encourage married couples to minister together, suggesting men should encourage their wives into ministry, and creating and additional heteronormative creation ordinance to govern ministry.[97] However, White's view of masculinity and femininity is not held by all authors. Woodman cautions that as long as there is no equality of opportunity then social stereotypes will prevent the discovery of finding "the real distinctiveness between male and female that reflects the distinction in God".[98] He, like others, argues for an ontological and 'distinctive' male and female that together reflect the *imago Dei*, but challenges that the social stereotypes of this are often inaccurate. Throughout Baptist literature, seeing gender as being in the image of God leads to the thought that there is something distinctive about male and female that should not only be maintained but encouraged to develop in ministry, although the real distinctiveness is not always agreed upon.

Although Galatians 3:28 might offer an alternative understanding understanding of male and female, that in Christ there is "no longer male and female", the maintenance of an ontological male and female in complementary partnership continue in Baptists' treatment of the New Testament, and especially the aforementioned text.[99] Authors again maintain the distinctions between male and female as part of equality. Beasley-Murray offers an ontological view of gender as he considers Jesus' treatment of men and women in the coming Kingdom of God. He argues that man and woman will no longer maintain the physical relations but that does not mean that there will be no such thing as man and woman and, if this is an eschatological goal, than this should be what we strive for in our existence: "man and woman in genuine partnership in the service and love of Christ".[100] Referring to Galatians 3:28 he emphasises that it is the divisions not the distinctions between male and female that disappear. In his treatment of the household codes in the epistles Beasley-Murray is keen to resist any understanding that these

[95] *Ibid.*
[96] White,Rob, 'Mr. and Mrs', in *Talk Magazine*, (2007), [www.mainstream-uk.com/mrandmrs.pdf]
[97] *Ibid.*
[98] Simon Woodman, 'A Biblical Basis for Affirming Women in Ministry – Part 2', in *The Baptist Ministers' Journal*, Vol. 297, January 2007, 13.
[99] Galatians 3:28, *New Revised Standard Version Bible,* 1989
[100] Beasley-Murray, *Man and Woman in the Church,* 5.

distinctions between male and female involve male dominance and female submission, but he concludes "the distinctions between them are no longer divisive but complementary. Their partnership in the kingdom of God is likewise an equality of service which is complementary".[101] Fiddes also looks to the household codes to draw out his understanding of male-female relationship, arguing that this must be set in the context of relationships within God and between God and the world, "when we place the sets of relationships (God-Christ, Christ-Humanity, Christ-Church, Man-Woman) side by side, it becomes clear that the basic feature of all of them is difference of function between the partners".[102] Fiddes constructs a strong understanding of complementarity, where it is noteworthy that women are listed in the binary pairs that include humanity and the church, rather than God. He argues that each partner has their own contribution to the relationship which cannot be confused with the other, "this suggests that in the male-female covenant, there is also a particular contribution made by each sex which cannot be replaced by the other".[103] He argues strongly that the question surrounding male-female relationship is one of hierarchy rather than difference, "the difference must not be obliterated in belief about fundamental equality in Christ; the 'otherness' of male to female… must be respected and allowed for as a factor that enriches the relationship". He observes husbands and wives, discussing the mutuality and interdependence of male and female, whilst emphasising the need for both to be subject to the other. He suggests that a doctrine of perichoresis, the interpenetration of the different persons of the Trinity, combined with the gender mix in both a male and female genome suggest that there could be a blend of male-female characteristics in both men and women. However, he is quick to caution against any view of androgyny in the creation accounts, suggesting Paul may have been writing 1 Corinthians 11 to counter gnostic groups that were arguing for this asexualism.[104] As before, the maintenance of gender distinctions is again seen as essential to the church.

Elsewhere, Woodman looks to Galatians and argues that it is not appropriate to "distinguish one person from another using divisions based on race, class or gender".[105] This suggests the removal of gender as a definer in ministry, yet in his presentation to council on the difficult Bible passages for women in ministry, he draws the analogy between man and woman, Christ and humanity and

[101] Beasley-Murray, *Man and Woman in the Church,* 13.
[102] Fiddes, Paul, 'Woman's Head is Man': a doctrinal reflection upon a Pauline text', *in Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 31.8, (London: 1986),372.
[103] Fiddes Paul, 'Woman's Head is Man': a doctrinal reflection upon a Pauline text', 372.
[104] *Ibid.*
[105] Woodman, S, 'A Biblical Basis for Affirming Women in Ministry- part 1', in *The Baptist Ministers' Journal*, Vol 296, October 2006, 8.

God and Christ in 1 Corinthians 11, which he suggests shows us something of how man and woman should relate to each other. He argues, "the relationship is not one of subordination, but is rather a relationship of interdependence and unity".[106] The language of interdependence continues to advocate complementarity between male and female. However the difficulties of this argument later emerge as he comments, "Paul welcomes the freedom of women to minister in his churches except where it exercised in such a way as to compromise the church's unity and witness".[107] Woodman's interpretation of the scriptural passages used to argue against women in ministry is that men and women require each other, and that women can minister, but their ministry is still provisional on other social norms. Male ministry assumes neutrality, whereas women's ministry may only complement when appropriate. Similarly Winter looks at Galatians, arguing that male and female is a deliberate allusion to the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1:27 and that Paul does not think that gender differences are erased through baptism, again stating "Christians are not androgynous".[108] Instead he argues that baptism obliterates the dominance of one gender over another. This theme continues with Ibbotson, who shows that baptism as a symbolic rite that is inclusive of women would have been remarkable in the Corinthian society where symbolic rites would have divided and differentiated the genders. Thus baptism is a re-ordering of gender, but the re-ordering of divisions of hierarchy not over the removal of binary norms.[109] The Tidballs also state that Paul was concerned that the distinctions between men and women and marriage were still respected.[110] Again, they conclude that "essential gender distinction inherent in the creation of male and female" should be respected and the distinction was that of difference not hierarchy.[111] They continue, "men should not seek to behave or dress like women and women have no need to imitate men to exercise their gifts in the church".[112] Although they argue for different behaviour and dress for men and women, this gender distinction pertains to character and personality rather than role. They continue that the distinctiveness of each gender completes what is lacking in the other, "God's creation design was that men and women should complement each other as equals".[113] When they think through the implications of this for women's ministry, they argue that the question is not whether the New Testament thinks women

[106] Woodman, Simon, *Presentation to Baptist Union Council on the difficult passages*, 2009, 2.
[107] Woodman, Simon, *Presentation to Baptist Union Council on the difficult passages*,5.
[108] Sean Winter, 'God's inclusive story' in *Talk Magazine*, 2007, 2.
[109] Sean Winter, 'God's inclusive story', 7.
[110] Derek and Dianne Tidball, *The Message of Women*,216
[111] Derek and Dianne Tidball, *The Message of Women*,222
[112] *Ibid.*
[113] Derek and Dianne Tidball, *The Message of Women*,281

should be ordained, but whether it thinks anyone should be ordained in the current understanding of ordination.

Overwhelmingly, Baptist authors in favour of women in ministry, identify gender difference as an important part of creation and the church, and base their arguments for women in ministry on these clear gender distinctions. Their treatment of both the creation narratives and key parts of the New Testament form the argument that men and women are complementary partners, and this ought to be reflected in their ministry to the church.

Before moving to consider what this reclamation of femininity might look like, it is first worth considering whether there is an alternative rendering of gender considered possible by Baptists. In something of a minority report, Ruth Gouldbourne offers a lone voice, questioning whether distinctions are broken down in Christ. She comments there is a need to take seriously both the creation language, male and female God created them, and the baptismal affirmation that there is no longer male and female. This is an alternative reading of the Genesis passage, which otherwise has been used in Baptist texts to justify the difference between male and female as essential for together making the *imago Dei*. Here it is used simply to state their equality in being created. She argues, "the *distinctions* which have been used by the world to discriminate … have no place in the life of the Christian church. Men and women exist before God in the same way – created, redeemed and baptized."[114] Galatians has already been used by other Baptists to argue against any hierarchism in gender, but Gouldbourne also suggests that it undoes any distinction. Thus in both creation and baptism men and women are ontologically the same. Aside from Gouldbourne, gender is something that is understood by Baptists to be that is ontological, because there is male and female gender present in God and this is imaged in the creation of the sexes. Man and woman are therefore a complementary partnership whose diversity would supplement each other and these distinctions are maintained after baptism and into the church and the coming kingdom of God. Having considered in the second chapter feminist critiques of ontological gender, this begs the question about whether it is possible to achieve gender equality in ministry whilst also trying to maintain gendered norms?

## Reclaiming femininity

Baptist literature of the last thirty-five years echoes second wave feminism, containing a lot of discussion about the reclamation of feminine styles of ministering, and significantly, the gifts

[114] Gouldbourne,R, 'Reinventing the Wheel; Women and Ministry in English Baptist Life', *The Whitley Lecture 1997-1998*, (Oxford: Whitley Publications, 1997), 33.

which are given to women, which concurs with the above discussion that these are not simply styles that are the product of socialisation, but part of gender designed by God. These documents are critical of a patriarchal structure within the Union and this masculine style of leadership, seeing femininity as the corrective of this, restoring an intended partnership, and thus women who minister in a masculine way as wrong.

The literature of BUGB contains within it a desire to reclaim femininity as a solution to the patriarchal structures and styles that have been present within the denomination. This is partly because what is viewed as femininity is seen to be something that is under attack. Sherman's wrote in response to press in the Baptist Times that the church was a feminised environment and this feminisation is a main contributory factor in the decline of the church. Here church is being criticised for its femininity and Sherman's concern is that women in ministry will continue to be dismissed. Similarly, Edmond's research tells this story of a college interview:

> I was asked whether I would use my feminine charm to manipulate deacons meetings… We spent most of the discussion which was supposed to be about my call, discussing whether I thought I would or should get married and what would happen to my children if I did… The people at the interview made me feel that it really should be my husband rather than me being interviewed.[115]

If femininity is seen to be something that is negative, then it makes sense that a response to that within Union literature has been to reclaim it as something positive.

Whether or not this is a response to a perceived criticism of femininity within ministry, there is an irrefutable theme that women are different to men and that this permeates their ministry both because of their gifts and styles. This femininity is often not explained, yet there is seen to be a distinctive contribution made by women. Examples of this include when the Baptist Colleges committed themselves "to encourage women… and actively to affirm the particular gifts and insights that they bring."[116] This was seen to be something structural as well, as they committed "to encourage the development of patterns of ministry in which the complementarity of gifts might be expressed."[117] Likewise the Baptist Union Regional Team Leaders agreed with the Blackley Declaration's concern at the lack of women in ministry, saying "this represents a great loss of gifting and experience to the churches". [118] Recently the Women in Leadership

[115] *Ibid.*
[116] Baptist Union Colleges*, Statement of Intent*, 2nd April 1990
[117] *ibid*
[118] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Statement by the Regional Team Leaders regarding Women and Men in Leadership,* May 2008.

Consultation also produced recommendations on ways "the leadership styles of women can be more fully understood and affirmed within the life and structures of church denominations and ecumenical institutions".[119] The gifts and styles of leadership offered by a minister are seen to be observable and connected to their sex, as the Tidballs comment "there are obvious distinctions between men and women, not least biologically".[120] The women in leadership consultation consider the symbolic difference of female biology, commenting "women's bodies, their experiences and their ways of knowing are different from men".[121]

This biological sex is conflated with certain gifts and styles without any consideration that this may further a stereotype. In Dianne Tidball's research, which showed that in 1990 over 80% of respondents felt there was a difference between the way women minister and the way men minister, "women ministers were seen as being more gentle, sympathetic, intuitive, democratic and pastorally adept; less authoritative, dictatorial and competitive, and better with people and at counselling."[122] Similarly and more recently, Kate Coleman, a former President of BUGB, has written a course to help women in ministry and other leadership roles in which her premise is that "there is increasing recognition that men and women bring different gifts to leadership".[123] She claims there is no dispute that there are differences between men and women. Whereas men have been developing their leadership styles, women are only just beginning to discover what their unique issues and problems might be. Again a feminine style is seen as consensual, relational, caring, inclusive, multi-tasking, open and transparent and she argues that whether this is femininity is derived from genes or society does not matter.[124] She goes as far as to state "God calls us because we are women and because we have something distinctive and valuable to contribute".[125] This feminine style is echoed by Phillips who describes men as naturally competitive and women as naturally collaborative.[126] Elsewhere she argues in line with Coleman that the gift of women's ministries "which bring welcome change and rich blessing".[127] Similarly the Baptist Union document *Women, Baptists and Ordination* argues, "Women tend to be more aware of their emotional strengths and weaknesses and may be more likely to seek the support they need. Women may be better at building a team approach to the work. Intellectually, women

[119] Women in Leadership Consultation, *The Leading Question*,2.
[120] Tidball, Derek and Dianne *The Message of Women;*,35
[121] Women in Leadership Consultation, *The Leading Question?*,9.
[122] Tidball, Dianne, 'Walking a tightrope: women in training for Baptist ministry', *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 33.8, (October 1990), 391.
[123] Coleman, Kate, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership*, (Birmingham: Next Leadership, 2010), 23.
[124] Coleman, Kate, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership*, 23
[125] Coleman, Kate, *7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership*, 65.
[126] Phillips, 'Who is the problem?, 2.
[127] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women in Ministry,* 71.

are just as able as men".[128] Elsewhere *The Lydia Question* mentions in one story that "women very often preach differently from men, in completely fresh styles".[129]

Other authors argue that there is something distinctively feminine offered by women in ministry, but it should be free to be discovered by each woman. Reece's understanding of women in ministry resists the idea that women are special, hoping for a situation where ministers happen to be women rather than defined by it, however within the same sentence she argues that "because we are women, [we] may bring different gifts and emphases to the Ministry".[130] She goes on to argue "Women are not the same as men and we do not wish to be the same, but rather we all need to accept that our femininity does give us a different function, and therefore a different ministry".[131] She qualifies this, emphasising that any functionality of women must not be from being given a role but as a result of living out their own experiences, backgrounds and interests and that caring must be the key characteristic of everybody's ministry, be they male or female. She attempts to argue for the individuality of every minister, whilst repeatedly coming back to arguments for broad differences for women in ministry, concluding, "Women and men do differ in their viewpoints and I do feel that these differences need to be utilised and not alienated".[132]

Fiddes offers the greatest nuance amongst the discussions of female styles and gender difference in his 1986 article, reflecting on how this should be understood:

> Christian theology may expect to find some 'gender differences' in human existence, or distinct characteristics of personality and approach to life that can be called 'male' and 'female', beyond the basic biological differences. Theologians ought, however, to be open and questioning in discovering *what* these qualities are, and *how* they are to be connected with the particular functions of men and women in personal and social spheres.[133]

He continues with this position to critique radical feminists who believe the only difference between men and women are biological and any stereotypes have been created in order to subordinate women. He does this using Elaine Storkey's argument, suggesting there is a 'double-take', where gender differences are in principle denied, but at the same time a woman centred culture is recommended in which distinctive qualities can flourish. Fiddes commits to this complex understanding of gender-difference and gender-sharing, utilising Reuther's

[128] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women, Baptists and Ordination,* 28.
[129] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *The Lydia Question; a fresh look at God's calling,* 2014 [http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/399757/The_Lydia_Question.aspx]
[130] Reece, J. 'Women in the Ministry – a personal view', in *The Fraternal,* No192 (1980), 10
[131] Reece, J. 'Women in the Ministry – a personal view', 11.
[132] Reece, J. 'Women in the Ministry – a personal view', 15.
[133] Paul Fiddes 'Woman's Head is Man': a doctrinal reflection upon a Pauline text', 379.

understanding of a feminine way, suggesting that the differences can be felt easier than they can be defined:

> We might perhaps think of a range of characteristics in different proportions in men and women, and also a blend of different ways of integrating these elements. Distinctive male and female functions will lie somewhere, mysteriously, in the midst of these factors.[134]

Fiddes argues that this alerts us to the complexity of expressing what gender differences are, suggesting instead that there is a spectrum of gender available to both men and women: "the task of women's movements might then be to get men to recognise and employ their feminine aspects that have lain dormant".[135] Similarly Few suggests that maleness and femaleness do not necessarily mean man and woman, citing Joan Puls "the feminine spirit, which is not synonymous with the female person, has a certain… attentiveness to the flow of time and the harvesting of life's fruits…the feminine spirit waits in readiness …to humanise the daily affairs of life".[136]

This idea that women's difference will bring something to ministry that will benefit men and a patriarchal society permeates many of the texts. For example, Dex argues that women have a mission to bring tenderness and other humanising elements to men.[137] In the recent *Story of Women in Ministry* reader, the Baptist Union cite Took, who argues that men need women, because of the previous definition of ministry in terms of status and success instead of collaboration and mutuality. The discussion draws from Took that "in other words, ministry has been defined in male terms, something which not only inherently excludes women, but also diminishes those men who find themselves drawn into such unbalanced expressions of leadership".[138]

The reclamation of feminine styles is thus seen to be needed because a male, patriarchal structure has been seen to dominate in all areas of ministry and Union life. Few comments on her experience of the Women's Issues Working Group, "we have been taught that maleness is the norm, and that woman is other, and different. Ordained men are ministers, whereas ordained women are women ministers".[139] Philips comments that men have constructed a competitive structure that defines every aspect of private and public life, including gender, on a dialogical

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[134] Fiddes 'Woman's Head is Man': a doctrinal reflection upon a Pauline text', 381.
[135] Fiddes 'Woman's Head is Man': a doctrinal reflection upon a Pauline text', 380.
[136] Few, Jenny 'Hats and Wi(w)gs; Personal Reflections on the women's Issues Working Group' in *Theology in Context*, (Oxford: Whitely Publications, 1999),,11.
[137] Dex, Shirley 'The church's response to feminism', 323.
[138] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *A report to Baptist Union Council regarding the women in leadership among the churches of the Baptist Union of Great Britain*,2009,18.
[139] Few, 'Hats and Wi(w)gs; Personal Reflections on the women's Issues Working Group', 12.

basis that favours men and is negative for women.[140] Jarman concurs that this is true for ministry, "issues are orientated to male ways of discussing it so it is difficult for women to fit in naturally; and in a male-dominated system women have to out-do men at their own game".[141] Here she argues that ministry and church structures are patriarchal, but she does this by arguing that there are things men and women do 'naturally', such as debate, revealing a perspective of gender that is essential to one's sex. She repeats this argument elsewhere, arguing "women are less likely to be appointed than men since their gifts and style of leadership are to some extent different from those traditionally expected in such roles."[142] She argues women do not have role models and find that they lose their own identity because they are trying to conform to a male stereotype: "women ministerial students experience problems sorting out their own self image as a minister if the role for which they are being prepared assumes a male figure".[143] This theme is repeated in Dianne Tidball's research in 1990 into the experience of women training for Baptist ministry, which she described as the process of walking a tightrope "with a constant danger of falling one way because of opposition and prejudice, or the other because they are being moulded by masculine models of ministry which do not fit their gifts, character and perspective."[144] This is again echoed in other documents, which when naming the issues facing women in ministry the meeting included "male styles – 'senior minister'".[145]

These styles are significant not just at a local church level, but at a denominational one. In a review of Baptist Assembly a significant theme, given its own subheading, was that of "men in suits", was the concern that there was a male style of leadership about power dressing, authority, business-like dynamic that dominated.[146] The leadership of the wider Union is understood as following in a male tradition of authoritarian structures according to the Women's Issues Working Group under Few and repeated in the London Baptist Association discussion of women in ministry, where women reflected that they did not take on Union roles because of a sense that

[140] Phillips, 'Who is the problem? Reflecting on leadership and gender in English church and society', 2.
[141] Jarman, Margaret, 'Attitudes to women in Baptist churches in the mid 1980s', in *Baptist Quarterly,* vol. 31.7, (London: 1986), 326.
[142] Jarman, 'Attitudes to women in Baptist churches in the mid 1980s', 327.
[143] Jarman, 'Attitudes to women in Baptist churches in the mid 1980s', 328.
[144] Tidball, 'Walking a tightrope: women in training for Baptist ministry', *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 33.8, (October 1990),388.
[145] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Briefing Paper for the BUGB Faith and Unity Executive on the meeting on 31st July 2008, at IMC, Birmingham, of representatives of the BUGB Women's Jusitce group, the Regional Associations, the Baptist Colleges, the BUGB staff, and Mainstream (North) on the subject of Women in Leadership in the BUGB* 3.
[146] Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Women's Justice Committee, *Reflecting on the Baptist Assembly*,2008, 3.

the politics were aggressive and therefore not them.[147] [148] Throughout the documents there is a pervasive view that in the Baptist Union "male patterns of power and authority remain normative".[149] Paul Goodliff, then head of the Ministries Team, reviewed the progress and difficulties surrounding the acceptance of women in ministry, in which he argues that the masculine culture of the Baptist Union makes women's contributions more difficult; "there is a sense in which women's contributions have to be cashed out in masculine currency, to the serious diminishment of both women and men, and their mutual service of Christ".[150] This masculine culture is not explored beyond a general acceptance of the influence of a patriarchy; again there is a pervasive norm that there is a man's way and a woman's way of working. The implication is that allowing women to work in a feminine currency would benefit men and women, because of their interconnected call in Christ.

In Gouldbourne's history of the women in ministry consultations that happened over five years, she explains the lack of minute keeping of these meeting as an example of the way women in Baptist ministry view themselves:

> We are not a body separate from our brother in ministry, so we do not want to set ourselves up in a form of organisation that suggests we are. On the other hand, we do not always fit the categories that have evolved around an overwhelmingly male ministry, and there are times when it is life-giving to be reassured that our oddities are not something peculiar to an individual, but have to do with the structures and forms within which we have been called to serve.[151]

Here Gouldbourne situates the struggles women in ministry have as one of existing within a societal structure rather than as a difference that is bound up in being a woman. Most of the article is a history of what the meetings accomplished in practical terms, but towards the end she reflects "the point we are most often dealing with is the wish to be seen in the same ministry, and given the same opportunities and responsibilities".[152]

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[147] Few, 'Hats and Wi(w)gs; Personal Reflections on the women's Issues Working Group',15-16.
[148] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *London Baptist Association Discussion of Women in Ministry*, 19th May 2010, 4.
[149] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *A report to Baptist Union Council regarding the women in leadership among the churches of the Baptist Union of Great Britain*, 2009, 1.
[150] Goodliff, 'Women's ministry; an exploration at an epic moment', in *Baptist Quarterly*, vol 45.8, October 2014
[151] Gouldbourne, Ruth, 'Identity and Pain: Women's Consultations ,1987-92' *Baptist Minister's Journal*, vol. 243. (July 1993), 8.
[152] Gouldbourne, Ruth, 'Identity and Pain: Women's Consultations ,1987-92', 10.

This dominant male style means that the difficulty facing women is whether doing leadership in their own way is to act out of "a woman's strong feminine side or her shadow… and conform to a male paradigm".[153] For many authors, the patriarchal structures mean this male style is flawed, and there is something about redeemed womanhood that needs to be discovered but the solution will not be about 'aggressive' sharing in masculinity.[154] Anne Phillips comments that the pain of some women in ministry has led to "the uniform modelling of male leadership styles".[155] Instead the solution is to find a true womanhood that is not determined by men, which means being not degraded and objectified through popular culture, especially advertising.[156] Significantly this true womanhood, as Dex expresses it, "will be different from an approach where women seek to become (token) men".[157] There are therefore a number of negative comments about women who were perceived as trying to be masculine. Tidball's study shows the desire not only to reclaim femininity, but that this spills into a criticism of women who were seen to reject this femininity: "women trying hard to be men- to be noticed".[158] This is echoed by a later BUGB briefing paper:

> There is a need to deconstruct the traditional patriarchal styles of the delivery of learning. For example, the Women Tutors from the different colleges deliberately ran a recent Joint Colleges Conference in a more collaborative manner, breaking with years of unquestioned tradition.[159]

Similarly a report to Baptist Council was written to address the problem that in the Baptist Union "male patterns of power and authority remain normative".[160] Written for Baptist Council, it is aware that "Even the 'debating chamber' forum of Baptist Union Council is one which inherently fosters competitive masculine discourse".[161] From the outset the paper assumes there is a male style of leadership, and the problems this creates for those who wish to see collaborative, relational discourse. It does not assume that this is only women, but leads from this to a comment that "women think in terms of people not profits, creation not destruction".[162]

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[153] Women in Leadership Consultation, *The Leading Question?*,15.
[154] Dex, Shirley 'The church's response to feminism', in *Baptist Quarterly,* vol. 31.7, (London: 1986), 323.
[155] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women in Ministry,* 68.
[156] Dex, 'The church's response to feminism', 323.
[157] Dex, 'The church's response to feminism', 323.
[158] Tidball, 'Walking a tightrope: women in training for Baptist ministry', 391.
[159] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Briefing Paper for the BUGB Faith and Unity Executive on the meeting on 31st July 2008,* 4.
[160] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *A report to Baptist Union Council regarding the women in leadership among the churches of the Baptist Union of Great Britain*, 2009, 1.
[161] I*bid.*
[162] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *A report to Baptist Union Council regarding the women in leadership among the churches of the Baptist Union of Great Britain*, 2.

Simon Woodman argues because male models of leadership dominate ministry we are unable to gain from the complementary richness that women bring because they will face the expectation that they have to become honorary men. Gender equality means "women would be called to ministry as women and free to minister as women".[163] This need for women to be women in ministry is essential to the undoing of patriarchy, as the church will only be fully able and staffed when every church has a male and female minister.[164] This also finds articulation by White, who states that the church by presenting a masculine God have presented a lopsided one; he continues that women, who have the ability to look deeper than the surface and are very forgiving, have been hurt by male leadership which is "unthinking, unfeeling and boorish. The male ego can be a brutish thing – unbending and irrational when aroused".[165] Instead he argues that there is a need for women ministers in order to present a full picture of God, which they would do by bringing "intuition, nurturing nature, and ability to empathise".[166] Rand offers a variation on this theme, arguing that the real discussion should not be about whether women can be in sole ministry in the same way as men, but how we develop shared leadership of men and women together. He argues that this complementary partnership in leading churches is the more significant issue. Here the alternative to sole male ministry where women are marginalised is not sole female ministry, but shared ministry.[167] Shared ministry is seen as a goal of many authors, such as in the BUGB *Story of Women in Ministry* where co-ministries and co-principalships are held up as an example.[168]

**Challenging binary gendered norms**

This desire to reclaim an ontological femininity in ministry is not viewed as mutually exclusive of a social construction of gender, rather it is seen as reclaiming a femininity that has been distorted by the Fall. Thus there is a challenge of some gender stereotypes, but little challenge to the concept of binary gender. This understanding of social constructions of gender is a minority theme that is present throughout the texts. Dex begins by considering the societal influence of feminism on the church, commenting "since it is often the younger, highly educated women within the church who are advocating and pressing for changes we have to consider whether they have grown up in an environment which takes-for-granted many of the claims of feminism."[169]

[163] Simon Woodman, 'A Biblical Basis for Affirming Women in Ministry – Part 2', 13-14.
[164] Few, 'Hats and Wi(w)gs; Personal Reflections on the women's Issues Working Group',15-16.
[165] White, 'Mr. and Mrs', in *Talk Magazine*, 2007.
[166] *Ibid.*
[167] Rand, Stephen 'Can anyone here play the piano better than my wife?', in *Talk Magazine*, 2007, 2.
[168] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women in Ministry,* 68.
[169] Dex, 'The church's response to feminism', 320.

Juliet Kilpin sees socialisation as the explanation behind why more women than men take up urban ministries; she wonders if men are socially conditioned to be more worried about money, or whether the business style of suburban churches means that women do not fit so easily. Her understanding of gender seems to be one that is socially constructed. [170]

This social construction is seen to be part of the reason women minister differently for a couple of authors. Gouldbourne, who consistently offers a view of gender that questions ontology, suggests women's experience of being on the outside of social norms in the Union enables them to ask questions about the nature of ministry, leading her to state "I believe that is vitally important that women find their way of ministering that is appropriate and is not necessarily the same as the pre-existing male model".[171] Similarly, in a recent publication, the Women in Leadership Consultation comments that women are socialised to be certain ways that vary across cultures and this leads to gender differences in ministry: "gender differences are evident in the way women and men define and use power, how they approach leadership, how they solve problems, relate to one another in groups and learn new skills".[172] This is understood as partly due to the context that places the male as symbolically nearer God, rational, and priestly, female then becomes the binary opposite, or the other, which all leads the women to develop a different sense of self to that of men. The document gives the example of women's identity being founded primarily in nurturance and care.[173] This minority theme would still fall under Butler's critique of seeing gender as a binary pair, but it does suggest that there is potential to understand gender as performative in women's ministry.

As well as gender as a social construct, there is also an occasional awareness that binary gender norms need to be disputed. Again, Gouldbourne specifically addresses the concept of complementarity between male and female offering some challenges in using this language. Her first challenge is to look at this in terms of our understanding of the church as the body of Christ: that complementarity goes beyond that of male and female, because, as the body of Christ, "we all need each other, in all our variety, not simply in the differences between male and female".[174] She also suggests that complementarity is a problem when applied to Christ as this results in the scandal of particularity; if Christ has not taken on the fullness of humanity, then how can women be redeemed by him? Her next challenge is that language about this role of women perpetuates a

[170] Kilpin, Juliet, *Tough questions for all our churches*, 2008, [www.mainstream-uk.com/toughquestions.pdf]
[171] Edmonds, *Women in Ministry- Settlement Survey*, Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1992.
[172] Women in Leadership Consultation, *The Leading Question?,*6.
[173] Women in Leadership Consultation, *The Leading Question?*,12.
[174] *Ibid.*

cultural stereotype which is unhelpful for all who minister "it carries two assumptions with it: that men cannot care and women can do nothing else".[175] Lastly, she looks at the research of Leslie Francis on Eyseneck personality analysis research on Anglican clergy, which discovered that compared to the general population the gender expectations were reversed, with female ordinands recording a more characteristically masculine profile and the male ordinands recording a characteristically feminine profile, which suggests, amongst other things, that male ministers are good at caring and that female ministers may be less good at this. Her ultimate conclusion however is to return to the idea that complementarity is of the whole church in all its variety: "of one thing I am sure: when God calls us to the service of the church in ministry it is as individuals, uniquely gifted and with the weaknesses that are ours as well. We are not called in categories, nor can we serve in such".[176]

Another article which stands out in its understanding of current gender theory is the BUGB paper *Women and Preaching*, which discusses how women are different from men, engaging with Graham's criticism that the church has not engaged with gender theory. It outlines different ways gender difference may be understood, under the headings "in our being?", "in our bodies?", "in our bones?" and "in our breath?".[177] Under the first heading it suggests gender could be ontological and part of the ordering of creation, essential to the experience of having a female body, or bound up in our identity because of the combination of women's embodied differences and experience of power relationships.[178] It then narrates that bodies can be seen as an icon or symbol, that bodies mediate the world to us, and that in western culture the binary system means that female bodies are understood in binary opposition to men.[179] It then considers anthropological suggestions that women are a muted group to the male dominant group, and thus they are 'bi-lingual', speaking the language of the dominant group, but possibly not finding expression of all their experience through this. Alongside this it questions how history has been written at the exclusion of women and whether a feminisation of culture means women's skills and aptitudes are more able to cope with a postmodern environment.[180] Lastly it talks about whether women use different language to men, it notes Judith Butler and whether gender is a performance, and finally whether the spirit sighs deep within out speaking a longing to deep for

[175] *Ibid.*
[176] *Ibid.*
[177] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women and Preaching*, date unknown (before 2010), 1-2.
[178] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women and Preaching*, 1.
[179] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women and Preaching*, 1.
[180] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women and Preaching*, 1-2.

words, so speaking as a women can be an act of yearning and desire.[181] This stands out as the document in Baptist Union representative literature that most engages with how gender has been understood. However, it simply lists options for gender difference, and does not discuss the relative merits of these, suggesting them in order to explain that gender difference is a reality, rather than to critique binary norms. The understanding of the article is that women preach differently, and this lists reasons making the case for the ways that might happen.

**Diversity amongst women**

As well as Gouldbourne's above argument for wider complementarity, there is some acknowledgement that women are different from one another, although this is a minority theme amongst a prevalent desire to reclaim an ontological feminine. Woodman starts his argument by clarifying that his position is that gender should not be a determining factor in deciding ministry; it should not be a bar to ministry and nor does it qualify you.[182] Similarly, Rob Ellis comments that gender "never seemed to me to be the most decisive mark of the quality or authenticity of ministry".[183] The recent document *The Lydia Question* offers more consideration of gender stereotypes, arguing that they have negative consequences on the relationship between men and women.[184] They are seen to be diminishing of both men and women as they limit what people can do or the ways they can do things.[185] This is not true of all documents, but there is an understanding amongst some authors that women are not a singular entity. However even when other differences between women are acknowledged, it is heard within a culture that assumes that there is something ontologically feminine that is true of all women, and therefore true of all women in ministry.

The literature review has conclusively shown that present within Baptist Union literature is a soft complementarian position that sees men and women as bringing different spiritual gifts and leadership styles to ministry. Because gender is ontological, it is only when both men and women work together in ministry will the *imago Dei* be fully expressed within the church. Galatians 3:28, whilst important for breaking down hierarchism, does not undo the differences between men and women. Instead the solution to patriarchy is to reclaim femininity in ministry. This idea that men and women are different is often used uncritically, with a few notable exceptions, such as Fiddes and Gouldbourne, showing that this presumed femininity is a norm which permeates Baptist

[181] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women and Preaching*, 2.
[182] Woodman, *A Biblical Basis for Affirming Women in Ministry- part 1*, 8.
[183] Rob Ellis, as cited in, Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Women in Ministry,* 66.
[184] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *The Lydia Question,*26.
[185] Baptist Union of Great Britain, *The Lydia Question,*29.

culture and thus does not need elaborating or explaining. Furthermore the solution to male-dominated ministry is not simply parity of numbers, but partnership between men and women. The improvement on having men in leadership is not to have women in leadership, but to have men and women in shared, collaborative leadership. This coincides with frequent discussion of the problem that women might minister as men and not be free to minister as women, which is seen to be both detrimental to women in ministry and to the church, whose redemption from patriarchy will come with the use of women's collaborative leadership styles. Having proved that this soft complementarity has a significant role in the argument Baptists are putting forward for women in ministry, it is important to bring feminism and Baptist theology together to discuss whether this should be the case.

## Chapter 4

## Bringing together a dialogue: Should the Baptist Union use of complementarian arguments for women in ministry?

Soft complementarity has been a framework of gender upon which British Baptists have hung their theology of women's ordination. This is an understanding of gender which has been influenced by feminism, but which has not kept abreast with the developments of feminist gender theory which cautions that our understanding of biology is itself gendered in a binary framework, and that insisting upon an ontological femininity risks allowing a dominant group's narrative to define what it means to be female, and thus fully human.

Baptist literature arguing for women in ministry shares an ideology with feminism that wishes to see equality between the sexes. However, central to the Baptist argument for women in ministry is the belief that genders are created intentionally different so that they may bring a variety of gifts and styles into ministry. Although ontological gender and maintenance of binary gendered norms is something that has been challenged by Butler's understanding of gender as something that is performed, for Baptists these binary gender norms are shown to be divinely ratified: gender is present in God, and thus is present in the two sexes as *imago Dei*. For God to be imaged in the church, both genders should therefore minister together. This presents two questions: firstly, does the Baptist reclaiming femininity lead to the emancipation of women? Secondly, is this theological position of ontological and complementary male and female is something that Baptists should alter in order to agree with feminism?

The narrative present in the Baptist Union literature, where women bring collaborative leadership and non-competitiveness as a corrective to hierarchical male structures of ministry, echoes a second wave feminist desire to claim this otherness or difference. However, it is worth reflecting that in this conversation men's ministry remains normative and dominant whereas women offer the difference or otherness. To argue that women bring complementary gifts and styles to that of men is to continue to define them in relation to a patriarchal male norm, thereby not reaching the egalitarianism hoped for. As de Beauvoir explains in her seminal work, *The Second Sex*, "She determines and differentiates herself in relation to men and he does not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute. She is the Other".[186] Storkey critiques radical second-wave feminists for trying to hold both the otherness of women alongside challenging gender stereotypes:

> Surely there is a kind of double-take here? If we have abandoned the 'natural' and the stereotypes of manliness and femininity, then where do we get these particularly womanlike qualities from? We cannot both dismiss gentleness, sensitivity and warmth as just socially-constructed stereotypes when attacking patriarchy, but recall them when wanting to construct a woman-centered alternative.[187]

Whilst Storkey would concur with Baptist authors that there is something different in men and women, her point also can be used to question such complementarity; if these stereotypes have limited women and men, then should they be how the Baptist Union discusses men and women in ministry? Even where these categorizations are implied as positive, such as the collaborative styles of women being salvific for the male-dominated church, there should be caution as to why these ideals have been used; de Beauvoir shows that these myths created about women serve to make them behave in certain ways: "to identify Women with Altruism is to guarantee man absolute rights to her devotion; it is to impose on woman a categorical must-be".[188] If women are constantly referred to as bringing collaboration for the good of a male-dominated church, then this begs the question of whether women being collaborative has suited a patriarchal society and allowed men to stay in their positions of leadership? As well as this, these feminine styles of leadership are seen to be redeeming of male structures, they are still working for the success of a patriarchal institution. If women operate 'like men' then they are not only still being compared to men, but they are being critiqued for failing to help the male-dominated church and they are being critiqued for using power as men would do.

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[186] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*,16.
[187] Storkey,E. *What's Right With Feminism?* (London: SPCK,1985),104.
[188] de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,*284.

A complementarian position therefore contains an unconscious sexism, where women offer space which is designated as 'feminine' only because a patriarchal society gives a special role to them, not because it is autonomously derived. As Graham continues, "it is assembled from all the elements not appropriated by masculinity, or patriarchy's selection of the roles and characteristics of the dominant group".[189] One could challenge Graham that men have selected a group of roles and characteristics based on their created strengths and held those roles as valuable to the denigration of the roles and characteristics of women; patriarchy has simply prevented women from exercising their complementary strengths, or giving them social value when they do, not the selection of what is considered male or female. However De Beauvoir comments that the myth of feminine is always observed as more important than the reality of women's behavior, "If the definition given is contradicted by the behaviour of real flesh-and blood women, it is women who are wrong; it is not said that Femininity is not an entity but that women are not feminine".[190] For the Baptist Union the myth of femininity is seen to hold true; women are critiqued for ministering in ways that are not feminine, rather than being seen as a catalyst to reconsider the categories of what male and female leadership might look like.

Reuther questions whether complementarity could ever be a position that has neutral values, because one dominant partner is still speaking on behalf on a silenced and essentially objectified group and because the history of complementarity draws on a patriarchal history. Complementarity is based on a Thomistic understanding of Natural Law, which was founded on the false biology of Aristotle that women were misbegotten males, thus seeing women as fundamentally unequal in nature.[191] Whilst the inferiority of women is no longer entertained, the theological anthropology present in the argument of complementarity remains the same, as women are still created as a helpmeet to men rather than as an end in themselves.[192] If one follows the thought of Graham, de Beauvoir and Reuther, then the complementary ministry that women bring is culturally defined and remains an optional extra to the ministry of men, which contains the normative and societally approved of gifts and strengths. If the Baptist Union hold to an understanding that there is an ontological difference between men and women in ministry then this gives credence to churches who do not wish to settle a woman because they feel they really need a man.

[189] Graham, *Making the Difference,* 46.
[190] de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,*283.
[191] Reuther, R.R. 'Women's difference and equal rights in the Church' in A. Carr and E.S. Fiorenza (eds), *The Special Nature of Women*? (London: SCM Press,1991)
[192] Graham, *Making the Difference,* 47.

Even if women have different styles of leadership, these have been defined by a patriarchal culture and must be treated warily as potentially limiting the fullness of what women may be called to be. Though a change of culture means that these learned behavioural styles are increasingly seen as positive additions to the Baptist structures, it is important that this is not the basis for arguing that women should be in ministry. Women should be in ministry simply because God calls them to be there. An understanding of women's ordination that argues that we need women for the styles they bring is to assume that God calls us based on the competencies we have. The Baptist theologian John Colwell takes argues that it is not human competency that qualifies or constitutes an ordained Christian minister. Any competencies a minister might have are no more than means through which God may choose to be present and act through the Spirit. "To be ordained implies a change of being and not merely a change of function."[193] As Selby argues, "to root a persons vocation in her biology is in itself an act of oppression, and to declare her vocation a high one is not so much a consolation prize as simply a way of compounding the offence".[194] He states that to equate women's pastoral abilities with their biology is a 'myth of origins' and to be so reductionist is to merely engage a "sophisticated form of palmistry".[195] Instead he proposes that any distinctiveness women bring has developed strategically rather than ontologically, because of the dynamics of sexism and exclusion. He does not argue that women are not different to men, however it would be interesting to see if this argument could be developed to that point. If a current generation of women are less oppressed than their foremothers, could it be that the strategic differences begin to diminish? This would tie in with a performative understanding of gender, that as women find greater emancipation both within and beyond the church, their experience of leadership styles, amongst other patterns, no longer fit such a binary definition of male and female.

Trying to reclaim femininity in order to argue that women offer something complementary to men in ministry does not result in the emancipation of women, because it still defines women against men rather than allowing them to be themselves. Femininity is a product of a society that has limited women, and to use this category is to perpetuate those limitations. The frequent critique of women who minister like men is proof that when women are criticised if they minister in ways that are perceived not be feminine, instead of being free to minister as they want to.

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[193] Colwell, John E. *Promise and Presence: an exploration of sacramental theology,*(Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005),220.

[194] Selby, P. 'They make such good pastors' in R Holloway (ed), *Who needs feminism?* (London: SPCK, 1991), 126

[195] *Ibid.*

Reclaiming femininity has been linked to a Baptist desire to preserve ontological gender because of a belief that this reflects the *imago Dei*. This leads to the second question: should Baptists change their theology of ontological gender for the emancipation of women? One possibility is that the belief in humanity as a reflection of the *imago Dei* does not require an ontological view of gender. Kamitsuka offers two correctives to this ontological view of male and female. Her first point is that male and female in the image of God is often used without the following comment that humankind therefore must be fruitful and multiply, which implies that having sex and children is central to this imaging of God.[196] This critique partially applies to the Baptist discussions, as this requirement would render co-ministries under the disciplinary procedures for conduct unbecoming to Baptist ministers, although the centrality of a heterosexual relationship is present in authors such as White, who argues for ordained husband and wife teams. Secondly, Kamitsuka's constructs a theology of the *imago Dei* from the perspective of performativity. She looks to Butler's theory that performativity creates the self. In society this means the value of our personhood is dependent on our performance of society's norms, especially of binary gender norms. Instead, to see the self as constituted performatively in the *imago Dei* is to hold the possibility of performing God's image as we interact with sex, sexuality, gender, race, class etc.:

> If the self is constituted in the context of multiple performative acts in relation to cultural discourses, then the image of God would be the graced possibility for godly performativity in every discursive relation. To say that our humanity is created in God's image means that our performativity has the possibility of being "an icon of who God is." [197]

This means there is no one way of being in the image of God as a woman or man, rather there will be numerous different performances depending on what it means to interact with the norms of any given society. Knowing that we are in the image of God gives the possibility of an alternative view of personhood that allows individuals to perform or subvert societal norms as appropriate. This gives holds together a feminist desire to remove limiting labels and stereotypes, whilst preserving the doctrine that humans are made in the image of God:

> What would it mean concretely and overtly for the believer to perform the image of God? The answer to that question will necessarily differ widely. Each individual would negotiate her particular way of performing God's image as it is construed by the religious community with which she associates (and there may be widely divergent interpretations of it). That is,

[196] Kamitsuka, Margaret D., *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007),79.
[197] Kamitsuka, Margaret D., *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference*,79.

> each community's construal of the *imago dei* becomes a discursive regime that functions as a convention for religious conformity to God's will. As the believer cooperates with or resists aspects of these community-specific discursive conventions, they become constitutive of her religious selfhood, so that she is performatively constituted in part by relations of power (and grace, the theologian will want to add) with the discourse of creation in the image of God. The believer performs her faithful religious identity while also discursively negotiating her various subject positions as, for example, a woman, a caucasian, a mother, a factory worker, an immigrant, an artist, and so on. The discourse of religious faithfulness to the *imago dei* would need to intersect with discourses of sex, race, family, labor, national origin, and such, so that the believer could endeavor to embody godliness in all aspects of her life.[198]

This means that for Baptist women in ministry there is no singular ontological femininity that needs to be reclaimed, rather there is an invitation to perform God's image as they interact with societal norms about sex and gender. This will be different for every woman. Part of being baptised into Christ is to be freed from being defined by the binary norms of male and female and to be able to interact with those labels, discerning how ministry and the *imago Dei* should be performed in each life.

As this will be different depending on the societal norms present for each woman, this also explains that some women will find the language of reclaiming femininity helpful and godly, whilst for other women this will be seen as language that limits. This performative understanding of personhood allows for differences to emerge across generations. Practices and language that have allowed women to perform the *imago Dei* in their ministry before now have had to deal with more oppressive binary norms. For women who have been formed in a Baptist Union that has seen greater emancipation of women and socialised in a culture which expects different things of men and women in the workplace, their starting point for interacting with these norms would be different.

This is one suggestion of how to reconsider a theological view that has rendered women homogenous and 'other' to men. This does not have to be the only approach, but this correlational dialogue between feminism and Baptist arguments for women in ministry has shown that the theology and language that has been used to argue for women's equality should now be recognised as limiting. As social norms change this language of femininity will continue to creak, creating a tension between women in ministry and the Union which seeks to ordain them.

[198] Kamitsuka, Margaret D., *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference,*80.

## Chapter 6

## Conclusion

This dissertation has done two things: firstly, it has demonstrated that complementarity is the theology the Baptist Union uses to argue for women in ministry and secondly, it has shown that a theology which has sought equality actually conflicts with recent developments in feminism. It is a significant discovery that both Baptist representative and formal texts, especially in the 1980s and from 2000, develop a view that women's ontological difference to men means they should be ordained in order to bring the fullness of the *imago Dei* into the church, as it allows Baptists to now consider whether this is the theological underpinning of women's ministry they want to keep. This dissertation has cautioned from a feminist perspective that the desire to reclaim femininity and maintain gender distinctions that follows from this argument is something that limits women instead of emancipating them. However, it is not only from a feminist perspective that this view should be considered. Having discovered the prominence of this narrative in arguing for ministry, further work should be done by Baptist authors on whether this is something that fits ecclesiologically. Should Baptists be looking to see the *imago Dei* represented at a clerical level at all, or would a Baptist route be to consider the complementarity of all believers in the church meeting?

This essay was a mutual critical dialogue, which has seen feminism critique Baptist arguments without offering much the other way. It is this Baptist ecclesiology which could change that. Baptist discernment and authority is intentionally 'ground-up', allowing for a sharing of authority in a local church meeting where all voices are heard and weighed equally, with a recognition that the Holy Spirit often chooses to speak through those considered the weakest by the world. This Baptist attention to multiple voices is a radical means of church governance that commits to hearing people in their diversity. Baptists could, and should, model this egalitarian dialogue for the world.

Living out being a woman in ministry is different for each woman in ministry and the diversity of women needs to be considered not only for gender inclusivity, but also for the denomination's inclusivity of ethnicity, class, generation and sexuality. Another way forward for Baptists would be to gather information on the 'intersectionality' of these categories, to discover if our language about women means only a certain dominant group of women who fit this language of femininity are ministering within the Union. Changing the question from what it means for women to minister to what it means to minister in all of diversity would acknowledge ministerial multiplicity, and could start to take down patriarchy and hegemony.

Bringing performativity in to conversation with a Baptist desire to see equality challenges Baptists on whether a view of gender difference as ontological continues to be appropriate theology to argue for women in ministry. Men are not called to ministry because they are men, some men are called to ministry because God invites them to be there. In the same way, women are not called to be in ministry because they are women, some women are called to ministers because God invites them to be there. The Baptist Union has struggled to see the ministry of women affirmed, but this feminist discussion of Baptist Union texts has suggested that part of the problem may be the continued emphasis on male and female as binary pairs. Baptists need to be particularly cautious in their language of femininity, appreciating that the diversity of women's experiences, styles and gifts means that it is impossible to define them without some women finding themselves excluded. It is also worth reconsidering what counts as feminine, as women are not all collaborative and pastoral, but some men are.

Ultimately this was a personal question: what did it mean for me to be both a woman and a minister? Did I bring gifts and styles that were complementary to my male colleagues? This study has led me to conclude that asking this question was itself a sign of suppression. If we did not have a Union narrative that women are a certain way in ministry would this encourage more women to explore the vocation that God has called them to, and, more significantly, would it free churches from the belief that the ministry of women looks a certain way? It has also made me realise my emancipation: if I am far away from these norms to be questioning them, this suggests that there is increasing freedom for the next generation of women in ministry.

Baptist theology has suggested that women are equal but different to men in ministry, and that these complementary gifts and styles are the reason we need women in ministry, as this will reflect the full image of God. This was a language I was expecting to be present in Baptist Union literature, but I have found myself surprised by how prevalent this theology is for women in ministry. I have also found myself unfulfilled by it. I am not a minister because I am a woman. I am a minister because God has called me to be a minister. However, I am also not free to minister without acknowledging being a woman, as others within my church and society hold it as important. Discovering performativity has been liberating; the social importance of my femininity matters and cannot simply be turned off, yet as a Christian minister, being *imago Dei* matters more. Seeking to perform the image of God as I interact with the binary norms of sex and gender, as well as the discourses of being white, middle class, British born, is now something that can be done with greater intention. If redemption in Christ gives us an alternative framework to view the world, then perhaps grace will enable me to be distanced enough from some of the social norms I

perform to question how that should be done. This has been a work that has allowed me to move from privacy to the prophetic hope that there is no longer male or female in Christ.

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