A Missiologist's Contemplation on the Social Organization of the Trinity: The Trinity as a Model for Life Together

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The social organization of Trinitarian relationships is one of the biblical arguments used to legitimize church hierarchies and political powers just as it is employed by others to recommend egalitarianism and independence. I will argue, from an anthropological perspective, that hierarchy and egalitarianism are intrinsically human constructs that cannot be projected onto the Trinity. In order to accomplish this goal, I will briefly describe the theological debate, followed by an exploration of anthropological theories of social organization. Finally I will propose a few suggestions as to what the Trinitarian relationships can teach us in regard to how we live life together.

Introduction

Patterns of power—how families, churches, or missions organizations structure life-together—provide a mirror that reflects theological understanding in the praxis of daily living. Social life-together is witness to the transforming faith of the community. However, dealing with patterns of power creates challenges for every group in every culture, whether they take the structural form of hierarchy or egalitarianism. Who, for example, has the right to decide the vision of the group, who determines how resources are distributed, and who defines biblical truth? Is it the pastor? The elders? The whole community of faith?

Culture, theology, and tradition combine to legitimize what is accepted as the "right" way. Although strongly influenced by expediency, the task, the persons and resources available, relational patterns and traditions deeply embedded in culture become social norms that are subconscious but tenacious guidelines. Communities of faith legitimize their structures theologically, with assigned "biblical" roles given to men and women, to pastors, elders and

deacons. Amazingly, however, even free churches, using identical vocabulary (pastor, elder, deacon) and often the same biblical texts, live out very different social organizations depending on cultural bias. For example, Korea may adopt a hierarchical church structure and feel that the pastor is to be highly respected and obeyed, insulated from laity criticism, whereas a Norwegian framework of egalitarianism may insist that the pastor is just "one of us" who is followed only when it appears advantageous or convenient to church members. Likewise, missionary church planters introduce their culture biases into their "indigenous" ecclesiologies so that democratic church structures instigated by missionary church planters often clash with more hierarchical local leadership values. Seemingly, culture, tradition, and theology intermingle almost subconsciously to form a model of relationships that is deemed correct.

On what basis do we form our visions of church relationships? The social organization of the Trinity is often used to legitimize church hierarchies and political powers, just as it is employed by others to demand egalitarianism and stubborn independence. In the embattled arena of women in ministry, both complementarianism and egalitarianism find biblical legitimization in the relationship of the Father and the Son. Miroslav Volf, in *After Our Likeness* (Volf 1998),[i] demonstrates how church structures are created with reference to the multi-faceted view of the Trinity.

This paper will reflect, from an anthropological perspective, on the difficulty of understanding the relationships of the Trinitarian persons in terms such as hierarchy, egalitarian, subordination, and equality. I will argue that, although the Trinity may be a model for church and family relationships, hierarchy and egalitarianism are intrinsically human constructs that cannot be projected onto the Godhead and therefore it is inappropriate to legitimize human cultural biases accordingly. In order to accomplish this goal, I will briefly describe the theological debate, followed by an exploration of the human necessity of social organization, and finally propose a few suggestions as to what the trinitarian relationship can teach us in regard to how we live life together.

The Conflict: Subordination vs. Equality

The conflict regarding the Father and Son relationship focuses on whether or not the economic relationship, seen in Christ's statements of dependence on the Father (such as John 5:19, 30; 6:38), defines the immanent and eternal relationship of Father and Son.

Not a modern topic, this has been argued by great theologians of the past. For example, at the far extreme, Arius came to think of Jesus as "the incarnation not of God but of a great creature of God—the Logos, who had a beginning in time and remained forever subordinate to the Father not only in terms of his role but also in terms of his very being" (Olson 1999:142). The Arian view was debunked by Alexander, Bishop of Alexander and later his successor, Athanasius, and condemned by the church at the Council of Nicea in 325 (Erickson 1985:695) as denying the deity of Christ and thereby annulling the possibility of salvation through his death on the cross. Origen also danced a tightrope between believing that "the Logos was both God's eternal emanation…sharing eternally in his glorious nature" and affirming the subordination of a somehow lesser Son to the Father (Olson 1999:143).

Biblical texts do not simply resolve the issue. The description of the relationship of Jesus to the Father in the Gospel of John, for example, is dialectic: theologians have struggled with seemingly conflicting statements of subordination and exaltation resulting in a variety of theories of Christ's own self understanding from the early church till present day. The differences in the representation of Christ—either as equal to God and highly exalted, or subordinate to God the Father—has caused theologians to view the Gospel of John as "a patchwork of various sources or a stratigraphic record of shifting Christologies" with the assumption that the "various christological emphases are irreconcilable" (Hurtado 2003:393) Larry Hurtado relies on Paul Anderson's study of John 6 to challenge this irreconcilability. "In John, subordinationist and egalitarian Christological motifs are both central component parts to John's pervasive *agency Christology,*" and are "two sides of the same coin" (Anderson 1996:260-261).

Indeed, a reading of the Gospel of John reveals a relationship between the Father and the Son incarnate that cannot be easily classified along the lines of egalitarian or hierarchy. Jesus in his incarnation comfortably wore the life of submission even as he claimed for himself to be God in the very essence, a role that he never used to dominate or have power over others. The continual crossing between themes and sayings of dependency/subordination and those of equality/exaltation creates a fertile ground for studies of the essence of the Trinity.

Because hierarchy and egalitarianism are on two opposite ends of a human social dynamic spectrum, this seeming contradiction in the Biblical depiction of the Father-Son relationship becomes the foundation for much conundrum.

Recent scholars such as Gilbert Bilezikian, Kevin Giles, Jürgen Moltmann and Miroslav Volf argue that the eternal relationship is one of equality, mutuality and reciprocity. To them the concept of the *eternal* subordination of the Son to the Father to be "a potentially destructive redefinition of the doctrine of the Trinity" (Bilezikian 1997:57-58). As Beilezikian emphatically states:

> Because there was no order of subordination within the Trinity prior to the
> Second Person's incarnation, there will remain no such thing after its completion.
> If we must talk of subordination it is only a functional or economic subordination
> that pertains exclusively to Christ's role in relation to human history. Christ's
> *kenösis* affected neither his essence nor his status in eternity (1997:60).

On the other hand, scholars such as J. Scott Horrell, and Wayne Grudem argue that "the revelation of the economic Trinity historically perceived as hierarchical in fact reflects ultimate ordered relationship in the immanent Trinity" (Horrell 2004:409); therefore, the biblical evidence points to an eternal hierarchical social order. Grudem states that "the Son was subject to the Father before the incarnation was still subject to the authority of the Father after the ascension, and will be so forever" (2005:406-407). "The Christian church throughout history has affirmed both the sub-ordination of the Son to the Father with respect to their roles, and the equality of the Son with the Father with respect to their being" (2005: 415). "[T]he very nature of the trinitarian God shows that equality in personhood and value and abilities can exist along with being subject to the authority of another" (2005:423).

Beyond the merely academic argument about the Trinity, Wayne Grudem, a subordinationist (1994), and Kevin Giles, an egalitarian (2006) have closely aligned their perceptions of the Trinity with views on the subordination of the wife to husband and women in ministry.[ii]

Grudem connects his trinitarian understanding with gender relationships by stating, "Just as God the Father has authority over the Son, though the two are equal in deity, so in a marriage, the husband has authority over the wife, though they are equal in personhood (1994:459-460).

Giles, however, argues that to make Jesus eternally subordinate to the Father makes him a lesser God:

> They (contemporary evangelicals who argue for the eternal subordination of the Son) have mistakenly concluded that relations within the Trinity are ordered hierarchically, and on this premise they have sought to justify the hierarchical ordering of male-female relations. (2004:352)

The short line between trinitarian theology and the practical application in the social organization of the church became apparent in the blog exchanges that have arisen from the recently popular book, *The Shack* (Young 2007).[iii] The book portrays the Trinity as an egalitarian relationship, not a hierarchy:

> …we have no concept of final authority among us, only unity. We are in a *circle* of relationship, not a chain of command or a 'great chain of being' as your ancestors termed it. What you're seeing here is a relationship without any overlay of power. We don't need power over the other because we are always looking out for the best. Hierarchy would make no sense among us. Actually, this is your problem, not ours. (Young 2007:122)

Mark Driscoll, the lead pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle responded via YouTube to *The Shack,* and is an example of the application of hierarchical trinitarian doctrine to husband-wife, pastor-laity, government-citizen relationships. He argues that the Trinity must be a hierarchical relationship because "from that we get our church doctrine that children are supposed to honor their mother and father, that wives are not lesser than their husbands, but that they are to respect their husbands, that Christians are not less than the pastors but Christians are to listen to spiritual leadership" (Driscoll 2008). While using the terms "deference" and "honor"[iv] to communicate the subordination of the wife to her husband, Driscoll uses hand motions that appear to demonstrate that the relationship is a chain of command, taking Young's bait and betraying his own hierarchical underpinnings.

Such clear indications of the influence of the varied doctrines of the Trinity on ecclesiological relationships make it obvious that much is said about egalitarianism and

hierarchy without a full comprehension of the meaning of either concept. A wrongful application of these sociological dimensions to the eternal Godhead diminishes the price paid at the cross; for Christ clothed himself in these human, social dimensions in the incarnation and radically disrupted the holy trinitarian relationship.

Social Organization: Basic Human Necessity

From an anthropological perspective, communities and civilizations organize themselves in such a way to distribute resources, defend the use of power, bestow rights and privileges on certain persons or groups and ideally, to protect the community from chaos and anarchy. This social organization is a basic human necessity described by a cultural dimension, the two extremes being hierarchy and egalitarianism. Power functions within social organization as the right to define truth, distribute resources, legitimize action (Giddens 1984), and determine rights and privileges. Social control is a necessity of human existence because of such fallen characteristics of humanity[v] as:

- plurality of truth

- multiple competing interest groups

- conflicting goals

- limited resources

- the reality of inequality[vi]

- the need for self-protection through compiling of resources against chaos and social anarchy.

Mary Douglas (1978) defines the hierarchy-egalitarian dimension (which she calls Grid) as control imposed through varying degrees of "institutionalized classifications." High Grid is a social context where strict roles and rules exist that inform the individual how to act and with whom one may interact, and is often diagrammed as a pyramid. As one moves down the Grid dimension to egalitarianism, the insulation between the privileged and the not-so-privileged

begins to break down and the roles and rules become a point of negotiation, competition, conflict and control, like children playing "king on the mountain". At the far extreme, rather than ascribed roles and rules, each person must define and create their own through competitive exchanges and individualized power contracts. Sometimes so-called egalitarian structures result in great differentiation of status, with the "Big Man" at the top and a "Rubbish Man" at the bottom, or it can be a network of people struggling to make decisions without appearing to manipulate others.

Thompson, et al., building on Mary Douglas's theory, claim that of the five different typologies of social organizations described by Douglas, social control is the central issue.

> Modes of social control are *the focal point* of grid-group analysis. Individual choice, this mode of analysis contends, may be constricted either through requiring that a person be bound by group decisions or by demanding that individuals follow the rules accompanying their station in life.

> Social control is a form of power. In the grid-group framework individuals are manipulated and try to manipulate others. It is the form of power—who is or is not entitled to exercise power over others—that differs (Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky 1990:6) (emphasis mine).

Likewise, sociologist, Gert Hofstede, (2001:82) claims that unequal distribution of power is a fundamental part of every social organization, whether egalitarian or hierarchy. He describes this culturally determined universal problem as Power Distance: "the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede 2007).

Hofstede states that the meaning of power is intertwined with the ability to influence or control another person: the difference between the amount of influence that the superior has over the subordinate and, vice versa, that the subordinate has over the superior, in a relationship. According to Hofstede, those who have power strive to increase the power distance between superior and inferior, while those who have less power strive to decrease the power distance.

It logically follows that if one is subordinate, another is superior. Although the nature of relationship and the mode of action differ from culture to culture, a person is deemed to be the superior on the following basis:

- superiority due to *fundamental nature of being*—existential inequality. On this assumption, hierarchies can be based on race, aristocracies (one family has better blood line) and gender.

- superiority due to superior skills, education, charisma, or personal gifts.

- superiority due to an accumulation or inheritance of power in the form of resources, information, social capital, and cultural legitimization[vii]—a superior retains superiority only if there is a socialization process which legitimizes the regime, unless it is enforced with military and/or political power.

- in an egalitarian context, superiority rests on the person/persons who is most capable of living out and expressing the community ideal, is most skilled at manipulating the social network, or who has the charisma (again social capital) to be naturally followed.

- in an individualistic culture, it is the one who risks and wins, who has skills enough to become the "big man" and therefore is worthy and/or profitable to be followed.

In a high Power Distance society, the subordinate then, in every case, is one who would possess the opposite qualifying factors: of lesser essence, lacking in skills and education, lacking in power and resources, incapable of expressing the community ideal, and taking no risks, they win little. In Hofstede's theory, those who are subordinates often see the value of having a great leader who is capable where they are weak, so that the whole society gains by the presence of such a leader. A leader who fails to live up to the ideal of the people creates conditions for revolution enabling another person to become the next superior—such as a chief, president or king.

Social control as defined by Douglas, Hostede and others, is a necessity to prevent anarchy and chaos due to the state of fallenness that occurred after the primordial humans decided to "do it my way". Miroslav Volf reminds us that although human beings were created

with the capacity to live in communion with one another, God, and nature, the fundamental twisted-ness that resulted from primal rebellion destroyed the harmony that existed at the time of creation (Volf 1998).

History tells us that hierarchies have a propensity for massive harm because they harness the power of many and centralize it in the hands of a few.[viii] However, atomized power in the hands of egalitarians lacks the capacity or moral authority to convince a large number of people to do good, even as it allows individuals the "freedom" to disengage from responsibility for others. In short, hierarchy and egalitarianism, both fallen human institutions concerned with power keeping and self-promotion, are found lacking and waiting to be redeemed. In light of the definitions of egalitarianism and hierarchy as described from a sociological point of view, one must ask if it is theologically possible to ascribe either one of these social dimensions to the trinitarian relationship.

Application of Hierarchy and Egalitarianism to the Trinity?

Although the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit remains a mystery that can only be roughly defined in our earthly vocabulary, if we seek to examine this relationship on the basis of anthropological theory, we discover that the Trinity does not correspond to the fallen characteristics of humankind that make social control necessary. The trinitarian relationship exists on a totally above-human plane:

1. Truth is singular: The members of the Trinity share and embody a unique basis of what is right and true, a "grand narrative," if you please. In fact the Godhead is the author of and main actor(s) in this narrative, and the truth corresponds to both the character and the actions of God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. This truth is not only propositional truth, but relational faithfulness that is in total congruence to the Triune God's character of self-giving. This integrity of character is fully operative in all members of the Trinity. With the proposition "God is love" comes also embodiment of God's love—the Messiah, Immanuel on the cross. Thus in the redemption story, Jesus can say: "I am the way the truth and the life…if you have seen me you have seen the Father" for "in Christ the Logos, men can see God in his genuine actuality and reality. If men can see God's *reality* anywhere, it is in Christ" (Thiselton 1971:890). "If God is

the truth in that he corresponds entirely to himself, then his revelation can only be true if he entirely corresponds to himself in that revelation" (Moltmann 1981:53). If truth that is shared and embodied by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is wholly and eternally consistent and the same, there is no conflict and no one must be the keeper of the truth for the others.

2. Multiple competing interest groups and conflicting goals are foreign to the persons of the Trinity. Father and Son share a mutual and completely unified goal; that is, the love and redemption of the world, just as they shared in creation and will together bring about the restoration of the Kingdom of God. Thiselton, in referring to 1 Cor 15:28 states: "the purposes of God and of *Christ* remain *one*, and that any differentiation occurs within the framework of a source, mediate cause, agency, means, and goal which *do not compete* but belong to what Paul and other NT writers (not least John) express as a shared purpose" (Thiselton 2000:1237) (his emphasis). Each person of the Trinity plays his appropriate role to accomplish that goal with the same philosophy of action; self-giving and self-sacrifice (Jn 3:16,17). There was perfect unity of goal and action.

> "Inseparable operations" is one of the fundamental elements of the Nicene faith. Orthodoxy affirms that each divine person has works that are distinctly their own. Their works are not identical, yet they work inseparably. No one divine person does anything apart from the other two, and the divine three have one will, always working as one (Giles 2006:58).

3. There is no shortage of resources, for each member of the Trinity is all-powerful. As narrated in John's gospel both Father and Son have the power of life and the power of judgment (Jn 5:17-27). "My Father is also at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working," that is, to grant life and to judge, two activities which God himself did on the Sabbath (Brown 1966:217). A sign of the equality of the Father and the Son is the fact that they both have power over life and judgment, the capacity to do the same things in these enormously central themes (Brown 1966:219). There is a complete correspondence of power or capacity to act.

4. Within the Trinity, there is no need to compete, compile or protect possessions, power or even honor and prestige, rather, the author of John reaveals an eagerness on the part of both Father and Son to honor, glorify and lift up one another (Jn 3:35, 8:50, 54, Jn 14:28, 17:1). This

characteristic of self-giving and self-emptying extended not only to one another, but to the world which they had created. It is indeed central to the identity of the Godhead.

In contrast to the human condition, relationships within the Godhead are not characterized by any of the fallen features that make social organization necessary. Jesus actively spent his life incarnate for the Father's goals because the Father's goals were his own. Why then would it be necessary for God the Father to exert social control over the Son in order for the Son to go to the cross? Did Jesus endure crucifixion because God the Father had greater power in the form of ability, knowledge, or strength such that the Father would be the acknowledged decision maker and enforcer? It would seem that if all members of the Trinity are united in will, and are investing themselves to accomplish the common mission of redemption of the world, then this liquidates the necessity of subordination and egalitarianism, making them irrelevant, even irreverent, terms in describing the Trinity.

Much more significant for human relationships is the fact that the Trinity models a unity in purpose and a power that is poured out for each other and for the world. Were we to pattern our relationships on the interaction of the Trinity, they must first and foremost reflect communities of individuals who are expending their lives for the sake of others, that is, power-giving, in the midst of whatever social organization (recall it is a human necessity) is most applicable to the situation.

Whether speaking of the imminent or the economic Trinity, the relationships between the Father, Son, and Spirit as portrayed in scriptures do not hint of the existence of the social organizational necessities listed above. Therefore, it is hard to imagine that they take on the social control mechanisms, which include insulation, competition, and self-protectionism—the defining features of hierarchal and egalitarian relationships. The communion of the Trinity exists on a plane far above tainted human mindset, and therefore completely dis-attached from, and unconstrained by, the organizational poles that mire the interactions of churches and families.

Model of Trinity: Beyond Hierarchy/Egalitarianism

Although hierarchy and egalitarianism are sociological realities in earthly organizations, the Trinity models a relationship that critiques at once both a high Grid and a low Grid social

organization as Father, Son, and Spirit associate together in mutual, reciprocal and harmonious relationship. The Trinity demonstrates a better way;

- The greater narrative of God continues to be the Story (Truth) in which all individuals, families and communities of faith should strive to be embedded, allowing that narrative not just to be told, but to be lived out in its particularities in local communities.

- The will of the community is to be molded by the mission of the Father and the operation determined by the giftings given to the body by the Holy Spirit. In correspondence with the philosophy of action of the Trinity, self-giving and self-sacrifice is the *modus operandi.*

- Self-aggrandizement and compiling of power, prestige or possessions, honor or glory do not belong in the community of faith, either by leaders or followers. Even as Christ did, the church should be giving glory to the Father.

- Sharing in power as given by the Holy Spirit to be a witness, not only in word but in social organization and action, so that life-giving communities are formed and a prophetic voice is raised against the abuse of power in the world.

Redeemed individuals are called to incorporate these attributes in any and every form of earthly social organization, following Christ in self-giving, self-sacrifice, committed to the mission of the Father and investing power for the love of the community.

This leaves us with a greater task as mission and cross cultural workers in this world. If there is no biblical legitimization of one social structure over the other, then we are challenged to consider which structure is best suited to a particular environment. More importantly, how do we model trinitarian relationships within this earthly, human organization of the Church in such a way that we prophetically challenge the local cultural power norms? How is a leader in a hierarchical setting to be a self-giving, empowering leader? How do followers in an egalitarian community covenant together with leadership to accomplish a Spirit-given task?

Imagine with me a community of believers who have at the core of their identity the self-giving character of God. Would it be possible to be a hierarchy that did not serve the purpose of protecting the self-interests of an echelon of people at the expense of the rest? Instead, truth and information would be shared; leaders and laity alike would believe that God has revealed himself to those who are open, that the revelation in the Bible is available to all who are willing to search for it, and all are responsible to become knowledgeable of God. Truth would be best understood through dialogue of the community and there would be no fear of speaking truth to power.

Leaders in a hierarchy would not accumulate personal wealth for the sake of self-interests, political pursuits, or personal power. A spirit of generosity and caring for others both inside and outside the community would take precedence over personal comfort. A hierarchy would remember that Jesus Christ is the head of the church, and all are his children. He is the one who gives authority (*exousia*), gifts, grace, and power (*dunamis*) to serve. All decisions would be made in reference to the self-emptying character of the head, Jesus Christ.

Neither would laity adopt the fatalistic attitude of so many authoritarian regimes, and passively allocate responsibility for determining truth and mission to the clergy. Rather they would covenant to work with the leadership even as they submit themselves to the teaching of leaders in order to mature and grow into full participating members of the body of Christ.

Is it possible to imagine an egalitarian social organization that is *not* characterized by competition, manipulation, bickering, splintering, or alienation? Competitive exchanges and individualized power contracts for the purposes of self-aggrandizement would be abolished and replaced with sharing of resources and trusting relationships. The freedom-loving individual would lay aside personal ambitions and insistence on self-determination, and instead would be concerned first of all with core community issues. All would be participants in a "community of persons bound in membership to each other so that each person-as-member is treated well enough to be sustained as a full member of the community" (Brueggemann 1997:421). Covenant loyalty and faithfulness lived out as *koinonia* would be the sign of true Holy Spirit transformation, and as others' talents and gifts are recognized, each would learn to submit and appreciate the role and contribution of the others.

Redeemed individuals living in community, free from false assumptions of any certain structure being "biblically correct", are free to efficiently and lovingly organize themselves to accomplish their Christ-given mission. Focused on the task and following Christ, self-giving

leaders are not afraid of restructuring or relinquishing leadership when necessary for the health of the community. The members at all stages of maturity are humbly aware that their capacity and power are inadequate for the mission and therefore they are in need of the whole community, thus critiquing arrogant individualism and independence as well as mono-centric leadership. On the other hand, the redeemed individual is confident in service, knowing that their particular, unique giftings are a vital part of the mission of the community. Individuals are not simply assimilated into a mass of mindless followers. They are not left to be immature subordinates who only follow orders, but theologizing, envisioning, passionate followers of Christ. This is good news in any context!

Conclusion

Hierarchy and egalitarianism are dimensions of social organization and power distribution that are necessary to be able to live together in today's fallen world. They are part of the earthly, historical church; however, the actors or agents in the community of faith should reflect these characteristics of the Trinity in whatever social organization they live.

Just as the disciples wondered if Jesus was going to set up his kingdom–meaning a kingly rule that would overthrow Rome—and thereby misunderstood the true nature of Christ's mission and kingdom, so too, when we try to defend, protect, or legitimize our social "kingdoms" in terms of "hierarchies" or "egalitarian networks" on the basis of the Trinity, we have truly misunderstood the character of the Triune God and His mission. Today, Jesus would again speak to us: "Do not rule over one another like the Gentiles do". To cast the categories or terminology of our social order upon the Trinity in order to legitimize our own social structure, I suggest, is severely diminishing the perfection and the glory of the Godhead and relationships as they were meant to be. The trinitarian relationships serve rather as a model and a critique of our own fallen power-keeping structures.

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[i] In dialogue with then Cardinal Ratzinger and metropolitan John D. Zizioulas, Volf examines the link between trinitarian theologies and the resulting church structures of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. He then argues for an egalitarian church structure in "free churches" on the basis of egalitarian relationships between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[ii] See an excellent review of two books that present opposing points of view concerning women in ministry edited by John Wilks (Wilks 2006): Wayne Grudem who endorses the view that women can be equal in value and dignity but restricted in the roles they are allowed to play in the church and in the family and Ronald Pierce, Rebecca Groothuis and Gordon Fee et.al., who argue for equality and that no role is assigned on the basis of gender.

[iii] See, for example, Challies.com, http://www.challies.com/archives/book-reviews/the-shack-by-william-p-young.php, Kjos Ministries, http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/08/shack.htm, Focus on the Family's The Line, http://www.boundlessline.org/2008/06/the-shack-ramsh.html, http://theshackreview.com/, Windblown Media, http://www.windblownmedia.com/shackresponse.html.

[iv] Both deference and honor are actions that can be characteristic of relationships in either a hierarchical or an egalitarian relationship. In an egalitarian relationship, the actions would be appropriately reciprocal, while in a hierarchy, the actions would uni-directional. In using them Driscoll blurs the implications of authority and submission that he is applying to the relational dyads of husband and wife, pastor and laity, father and children.

[v] This discussion itself is "proof" of these fallen tendencies that make human social organization necessary. There is disagreement over what is right and true with multiple competing interest groups (egalitarians vs. complementarians, for example) who have conflicting goals (empowering women in ministry or restraining them within traditional roles and rules) that have arisen because of the fact of gender inequality, etc.

[vi] As much as equality is a value of the western world, it is only a myth. There is a wide range of inequality due to access to resources, natural ability and skills, ambition, maturity levels, and simply differences in make up and personality. Western individualism tries to build the illusion that every person has all the gifts and resources necessary to build and determine their own destiny, however, the fact remains that no one does, creating the presence of competition and control in egalitarian social contexts.

[vii] Hofstede (2001:80) claims that "stratification systems are extremely culturally dependent"

[viii] For a discussion of the problem of power in hierarchical social systems, see Walter Wink's work (1992:350). He argues that an egalitarian setting is the answer to the problem, however, as I have discussed in earlier papers, evil in terms of selfishness, greed, competitiveness, and destruction can and does exist in egalitarian systems. Simply changing social structures does not transform human decadence.