

THE ROLE OF MAN AND WOMAN
IN OUR LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOLS

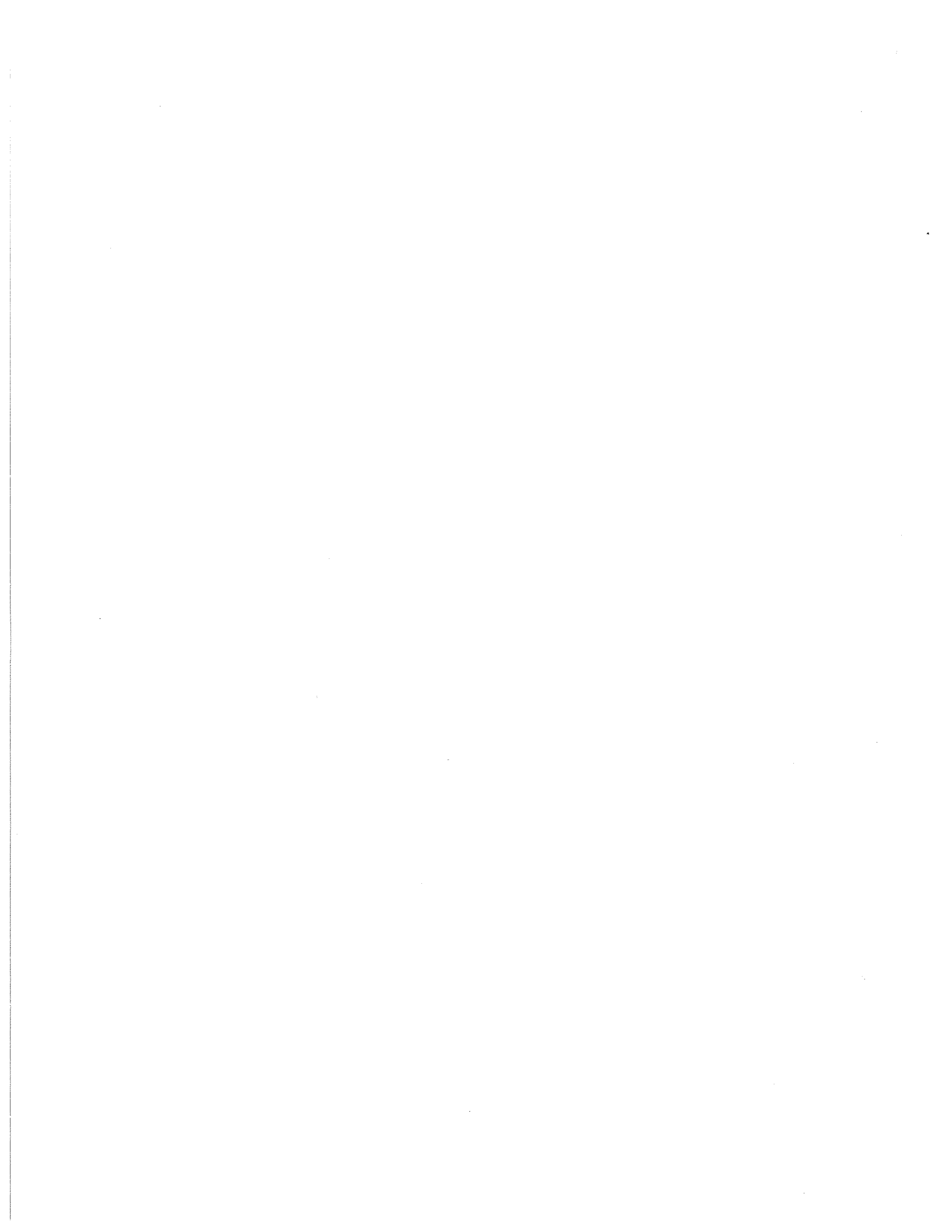
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A generation ago our society defined the roles of men and women more sharply than it does today. A generation ago everyone knew (or at least assumed) that men become doctors; women become nurses. Men become police officers and firemen; women become secretaries and check-out clerks. Men smoke cigars while women do the dishes.

For the same reasons (whatever they might have been) society assumed that men become pastors and professors while women become teachers in the grade school and Sunday School.

Today, however, we are living in a different world. Women become doctors, policemen and firemen. Some of them even smoke cigars. The job market offers opportunities for male nurses and secretaries.

Archie and Edith Bunker might sing "Those Were the Days," and long for the 1930's when "girls were girls and men were men." But those days are gone forever. Several years ago an equal rights amendment almost became part of the United States constitution. Although that attempt failed, such an amendment will certainly be proposed again.

We are now living at a time when people are asking, "If women are smart enough to become doctors and strong enough to become firemen, why can't they become pastors? When is the church going to wake up and see what is going on?"

We are living at a time when homosexuality, the ultimate role reversal, has gained a degree of acceptance and even a degree of support. In our society 74% of the people claim to be anti-communist; 43% claim to be conservative; and 7% claim to be "in favor of equality for homosexuals."

We are living at a time when our young people no longer accept automatically marriage promises that are not identical. The temperature seems to drop by at least 10 degrees when we get to the word "obey" in our pre-marital counseling sessions. Interestingly enough it seems to be the men

more than the women who object to the use of that word on wedding day. One young man insisted recently that (according to the Bible) "all men are created equal." Another couple, clearly upset by my incorrigible attitude, joined a non-WELS church soon after wedding day.

God's people, including those who are high school students, are bombarded constantly by the world's influence. Therefore God's people need to hear again and again about the wonderful creation of God, including the creation of manhood and womanhood. They need to learn which rules about men and women were established by the customs of society and which rules were established by God at the creation. In our Lutheran high schools that instruction will take place not only in the religion classroom but also through the examples of the teachers. Since our young people are quick to sense attitudes and are good at remembering off-the-cuff remarks, the teaching done in the corridor and faculty room are as important as that done in the classroom.

As long as men are interested in women and as long as women are interested in men, there will be an interest in the wonderful role relationship which our God has created. That, I think, is the reason for the assignment of this paper,

THE ROLE OF MAN AND WOMAN IN OUR LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOLS,

Part I - A Review of the Principle

In 1981 our Conference of District Presidents appointed a committee of ten men to study the Scriptural principles relating to the role of man and woman in the church, in the family, and in society. The committee produced two pamphlets which have recently been published by our COP. They are entitled, "Man and Woman in God's World," and "Man and Woman in God's World - An Expanded Study." Both of these pamphlets are available from

Northwestern Publishing House. The material in those pamphlets is excellent. We urge you to study them carefully on your own.

Today we will not try to review or even summarize all that is contained in those two documents. Instead we will spend a few minutes reviewing key passages from Genesis 1 and 2. Here God tells us about the beginning of all things - the creation of the world, the creation of man and woman, the relationship between the sexes, and the institution of marriage. Those who learned the facts of life in a biology classroom may well know which door to use at a public facility. But if they learned nothing from Genesis 2, they will be ignorant regarding the Creator's plan for men and women. Churches which have rejected a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 have built a theology which has no foundations. A proper understanding of these two chapters is vital.

In Genesis 1 Moses describes the six days of creation. On day number six God announced,

"Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it."
Genesis 1:26-28, NASB (All quotations are from the NASB.)

Here God shows how the man and woman were alike; and how they, as man and woman (as mankind), differed from the animals. God made both the man and the woman in his image. No animals were created with this perfect knowledge of God's will and this ability perfectly to do God's will. God gave to both the man and the woman rulership over the creation. It was theirs to use and enjoy. God also spoke a creative word of blessing on both the man and the woman when He said, "Be fruitful and multiply."

Moses intended Genesis 1 to be an introduction to his first book. It is in Genesis 2:4 that Moses himself begins the first chapter of his book.

There in Genesis 2 Moses gives not a different account but a fuller account of how God made the first human beings. He gives us more details as to how they were different from the animals. And, of greater importance for today's discussion, he tells us how the first man and woman differed from each other.

Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:17)

God created the first man as a single individual. He did not create many human beings from the ground. He did not even make male *and* female from the ground as He did with the animals. The entire human race springs from one man (one male), that is, Adam.

The man received his soul (his "nephesh") from God as a personal gift. According to Genesis 1:24 and 7:22 the animals also have a soul (a "nephesh"). Other passages of the Scripture tell us that the soul of a human being is of infinite worth. It can be redeemed only by the blood of God's Son. It is immortal and will continue to live even after the body returns to the dust.

In Genesis 2:8-14 Moses describes the Garden of Eden together with its fruit trees, its two special trees, and the four rivers which had their source in the Garden.

Moses continues, "Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." (Genesis 2:15)

Now that a man had been created, there would be someone to tend and cultivate the plants God had created, someone to direct their profuse growth toward constructive ends. Without the interference of thorns and thistles, without the burden of sweat on the face, the man's work would be sheer delight.

Note that God put the man into the Garden before the woman was created. Note also that God gave to the man directions as to how he should serve God there in the Garden:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat from it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16,17)

The man God created was not a robot. He had a free will. He could choose to serve God perfectly; he could choose to disobey God. By obeying God's simple command, the man would freely show his love for that God who had given him everything. By disobeying God, the man would earn the severest penalty from a holy God who in His justice must punish all sin.

It is at this point that God talks about making a female counterpart for the man:

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." (Genesis 2:18)

In Genesis 1 we heard God say seven times, "And it was good." It is heard on each of the seven days except day number two. It is heard twice on the third and sixth days. *Only once in the creation story do we hear that something is "not good." That is here with respect to the man's being alone without the woman.*

It is of greatest importance that every person, every male in particular, note and understand this fact.

God does not call this situation "evil." But He does call it "not good." A vital, indispensable piece of the puzzle is missing. A part of the plan for mankind announced in chapter 1 could not yet be carried out. The man could be in God's image without the woman. He could rule God's creation without the woman. But the part about "be fruitful and multiply" would be impossible without the woman. The joys which God offers in marriage, in the family, and through human sexuality in general were not to be found at this point in time.

In order to change this situation from "not good" to "good," God announces that He will make a helper corresponding to the man. Note that God

says "helper." He does not say "wife" or "woman." He does not say "boss" or "slave."

This helper would be "suitable for him." The Hebrew preposition here means literally "like-corresponding to." She would not be Adam's clone; but she would be that missing piece of the puzzle that would correspond to the man physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The addition of this counterpart would be something "good."

God knew exactly what He was going to do - and the reasons for it. At this time, however, the man did not realize from any personal experience that something good was indeed missing. God therefore taught the man. He gave to the man an opportunity to "think God's thoughts after Him." God permitted the man to name the animals.

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. (Genesis 2:19)

In Hebrew "giving a name" to something or to someone generally means "giving a descriptive name." After Jacob had overcome God in a wrestling match at the Jabbok River, God gave him a new name. God changed his name from "Jacob" (that is, "the Trickster") to "Israel" (that is, "One who overcomes God"). God's angel told Joseph that Mary's baby would be called "Jesus" (that is, "Savior"). His name would also be "Immanuel" (that is, "God with us").

That is what the man did here in the Garden of Eden. He did not give names to each animal he happened to meet. He did not call one dog "Brownie" and another dog "Fido." Rather he, as the ruler over God's creation, became acquainted with the actions and habits of a particular kind of animal and then gave to each kind a name which aptly described it. (This becomes very important when we get to verse 23.)

This naming of the animals awakened in the man an acute awareness that

he alone was without a female counterpart. Neither among the animals nor apart from the animals was there a counterpart "like-corresponding to" the man.

God therefore remedied the incompleteness in a most unusual way:

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place. And the Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.
(Genesis 2:21,22)

Experience teaches us that every person is born of a woman. But here is an exception. God "built" the first woman from the man's rib.

Now there can be no question at all about this creature being the one "like-corresponding to" the man. If God had started with more ground, we would never know if the man had been made of Minnesota black ground and the woman made of Wisconsin brown ground. Now we can be sure that the woman is made of exactly the same "stuff" as the man is made of.

God also instituted marriage when He brought the woman to the man.

The man immediately recognized this creature as the one who is "like-corresponding to" himself and he received her with joy:

And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man." (Genesis 2:23)

Remember that the man had spent much of the day naming the hairy beasts of the field. Now we can see the man's face lighting up as he sees for the first time that perfect companion which God has prepared for him. Now, according to the Hebrew, he says, "This time, God! This time You have got it right!"

Some might say that a dog is a man's best friend. Another man might have the name "Philip," that is, "lover of horses." But that is no comparison at all with the real, live, beautiful helper which God had made specifically as a counterpart for the man!

Now everything was indeed "good."

The man had given descriptive names to the various animal kinds. Now he gives a descriptive name to this creature also. He calls her name "woman."

The wording here is of greatest importance.

Note that the first couplet is specific:

This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh.

The first female was made specifically from the flesh and bone of the first man. Adam recognizes that immediately. But this is NOT the reason why she is called "woman."

The second couplet is generic:

She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.

Her kind receives the name "woman" not because she was taken out of Adam as an individual; not because she was to become Adam's wife; but because her kind (woman-kind) is taken out of man-kind. What is true in a literal and specific sense of Adam and Eve is true in a generic way of men and woman in general.

The Hebrew makes this clear by using for the first time a second word for man (Hebrew "ish"), a word that had been used proleptically in verse 22. Not only does Moses use a different word here in verse 23, but the words are used without a definite article. They refer to men and women in general, not to Adam and Eve in particular. "She shall be called woman, not the woman (that is, "ishah", without a definite article, generic); because she was taken out of man, not the man (that is, "ish," without a definite article, generic).

Genesis 2, in particular Genesis 2:23, holds the key for a proper understanding of the role relationship of man and woman.

The New Testament writers refer to the relationship between men and women on several occasions. In each case the writer makes an application based on the principle enunciated in Genesis 2.

In I Timothy 2, for example, Paul was talking about the role of man and woman as it manifests itself in the Church. There he writes, "I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man." (I Timothy 2:3) Paul's words are not an absolute prohibition against women preaching the Gospel. The Apostle is saying that the woman in her teaching should not violate the principles God established at the creation. "For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve." (I Timothy 2:13) What we read in Genesis 2, Paul says, applies to the conduct of men and women in the church today.

In I Corinthians 11 Paul discussed a custom peculiar to the church in Corinth. It involved the woman's practice of wearing a covering on her head. Paul encouraged the women in Corinth to observe that custom because there it was commonly viewed as a proper expression of the role relationship God had created. The basis for Paul's answer is again found in Genesis 2: "For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake; but woman for the man's sake." (I Corinthians 11:8,9)

Later, in I Corinthians 14, Paul discusses speaking in tongues and good order in the worship service. His word here is, "Let the woman keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak." Why? Paul continues, "But let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says." (I Corinthians 14:34) Since we do not find a particular commandment in the Old Testament stating that "Women shall keep silent in the churches," we are led to believe that with the word "Law" Paul is referring to the Old Testament in general and to Genesis 2 in particular - just as he did in the other two passages cited above.

Since Paul uses the word "head" to describe the man in I Corinthians 11, we might refer to this man/woman relationship as "the headship principle."

Part II - An Application of the Principle

The pamphlets prepared by the COP Committee on the Role of Man and Woman carefully restate the Scriptural principles that are involved. The committee, however, did not include all sorts of detailed applications. This omission was deliberate. The committee felt that a "book of canon law" which attempts to deal with every possible situation would be impossible to produce. Such a book of canon law would soon become dated. No author could possibly imagine the various circumstances to which the principles were being applied. The committee felt that if all of us understand the principles, then the applications will come naturally.

Our motivation in applying the principle and living according to the principle also enters the picture. Will we strive to live according to God's "headship principle" because this is what our laws and rules demand? or because we love the Savior who loved us first? Will we be moved by the Law or by the Gospel?

In Genesis 3 we learn how both the man and the woman disobeyed their Creator. After that Fall into sin God came looking for the man, the head, and called him to account. In His infinite grace and mercy God then promised to send a Savior for both the man and the woman as well as for all of their descendants regardless of sex. That promised "Seed of the woman" is the Lord Jesus. He crushed Satan's head on that first Good Friday when He died to pay for the sins of the world. Because we have tasted the love and forgiveness of that Savior, we Christians will strive to please our Lord. In particular we will strive to act as Christian men and Christian women.

In order then to fulfill the directions of your program committee (and

in order to give you teachers an opportunity to place some critical check marks in the margin of this paper), I offer you several applications of the "headship principle."

Situation #1 - Should a woman teach a religion class at a Lutheran high school?

Some of our people have gained the impression that a woman is not to talk about Jesus or should say very little about God. Scripture nowhere teaches this. All Christian men and women are royal priests whose privilege it is to "show forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9) What God forbids is that a female teacher of God's word find herself in a position of having authority over the man. Since we have considered the male high school students to be boys rather than men, the woman who teaches high school religion is not violating the headship principle.

As a matter of fact we have called both the men and the women on our high school faculties to be teachers of religion. The call document (which is sent to both men and women) reads in part: We "have elected you to the sacred office of a public servant of the Word." We ask you to assume your office "as part of the public ministry of the Church." "We authorize and obligate you to instruct and train the students in your charge diligently and faithfully in harmony and in accord with the Word of God.... To maintain Christian discipline in your work at this school and to this end to employ such means as are in accord with the Holy Scriptures."

If the ladies were not to teach religion, we would have given them a contract rather than a call.

Whether it is wise for a lady to teach the religion class is a different matter. There may well be a man who because of his seminary training and because of his experience in the pastoral ministry is better qualified to do so.

For the same reason a woman might conduct a devotion in her classroom or homeroom.

(Here is a question for you: Would it be proper for a woman to teach religion on the college level? Should a woman receive a divine call to teach college age men as well as women? At what point does the male student become a man?)

Situation #2 - Should a woman conduct a school chapel service?

The chapel service ordinarily involves the entire school family, students and teachers alike. Since the chaplain assumes a position of teaching authority as he conducts the chapel service, and since that authority is exercised over adult men and women, the chaplain ought to be a man.

Situation #3 - Should a woman read a devotion or a prayer at the opening or closing of a faculty meeting?

Since the men act as chaplains for the school worship services, I would think that the men would want to take a headship role in the faculty room when the children of the school family are absent.

If a man disagrees with my answer, I would ask him, "Why don't you want to take the headship role in faculty room?" If a woman disagrees, I would ask her, "Why is it that you desire this position of leadership?"

Situation #4 - Should a woman serve as a delegate to the high school federation? Should she serve on the high school board?

The high school board is the group which establishes school policy. The high school federation is the body which ultimately governs every aspect of the school. Both bodies are, by definition, positions of authority. Since they exercise authority over men, women, and children, the positions

ought to be held my men.

Serving on a committee is a little bit different. The committee's purpose ordinarily is to gather and present information to a higher board. The Bible nowhere forbids men and women to sit down at the same table to talk over church matters. When that does happen, both the men and the women will want to behave in a God-pleasing way.

It is an excellent idea that the women somehow have access to the reports which the principal and the chairman of the board present to the federation.

Situation #5 - Should a woman act as an assistant principal or as a counselor?

Do the principal and his assistant exercise authority over male and female teachers? Are they viewed by parents - fathers and mothers - as holding positions of authority? If so, then a man should take that leadership role.

If a counselor or guidance director deals exclusively with students (children), there is no reason why it must be a man.

Situation #6 - Should a woman serve as head of a department?

Here we ask the question, "Why?" Did a woman strive for this office to prove a point? to satisfy her desire for power and authority? to prove that she can do the job as well as her male counterpart? Did a qualified man decline the position because he did not want to be bothered with it? because he was shirking his role as head? Or was the woman asked to assume this position simply because no one else was qualified for it?

Can she act as a department head with proper demeanor toward her male counterparts, without "usurping authority" over them?

Much depends on the attitudes of the men and women involved.

Situation #7 - Should a woman be a speaker before the federation or the board in their formal meeting?

If a woman simply presents information to a board or federation, she does not necessarily "usurp authority" over the men.

Again much depends on attitudes. If a woman presents her information with an arrogant lip, deliberately despising the role relationship created by God, the matter would be different.

Situation #8 - Should female students serve as ushers for religious services? Should they serve as a student body president? or as a class president?

Those who say "Yes" point to the fact that no woman here is exercising authority over any man. Those who say "No" point to the fact that the boys should learn to assume a headship role during their student days. The "No's" also argue (from experience) that if a boy is not elected president, the girls have a tendency to take over the work while the boys sit back and watch.

I think we have more to gain pedagogically by asking the boys to assume headship roles during their student days.

Situation #9 - Should a lady teacher be paid less because she is a woman?

Before 1975 it was a common practice to pay the women less than the men. It may well have been true that the woman had fewer expenses and responsibilities than her male "head of house" counterpart. At the same time the old policy was perhaps just one more example of how men throughout history have abused their headship.

Male students who feel they need not listen to the directions of the lady teachers are similarly misunderstanding the principles.

Conclusions

One pet peeve of mine is to hear people talk about "the role of women" while neglecting to mention "the role of men." That kind of language implies that we are having problems with the women and need to put them in their place. As a matter of fact we are not having "problems with the women" in Manitowoc or (as I understand it) in any of our Lutheran high schools. The problem today often involves the men - men who do not attend the voters' meetings, men who are not concerned about the Christian training of their children, men who push their God-given headship onto that woman whom God has given them as a helper.

It is the men who often object to the word "obey" on wedding day. If the woman promises to obey, that means the man will have to act as the head. This is a position which he often does not want to fill.

Practically speaking we need more papers on the role of men in the church. We know what the word "obey" means. Now we need some discussion on the words "love, honor and cherish."

In our WELS circles we do have some "happy inconsistencies" as we attempt to apply the headship principle. Instead of making more rules, however, let us each learn a lesson from Genesis 2, a lesson which applies to men and women in the home, in the church and in society. The lesson is this: *Let each man look at each woman as a representative of that kind of whom God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone." Let each woman look at each man as a representative of that kind whom the Bible calls the "head," that kind for whom she was made as a "helper."*

Let each one learn to apply God's word to himself, removing the beam from his own eye before attempting to remove the speck from his brother's eye.

In short, "Let each his lesson learn with care,

And all the household well shall fare."

