

Women's Call to Serve in the Church, the Home, and Society

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In the possibly jaundiced eyes of a male observer, the women's movement appears to be in serious trouble. He could easily note a number of rather negative straws in the wind beyond the subjective general impression of dissension in the ranks of liberationists, pessimism over their current initiatives, and the unmistakable feeling that the earlier surge of momentum has been nearly expended. He could cite the backlash represented by Marabel Morgan, who preaches a gospel of sweet submission, compounded of roughly equal portions of Biblical precept and material incentive.¹ He could point to the dismal fact that despite widespread "conscious raising" sessions, the gap between average yearly earnings of men and women is widening.² Despite delicious campaign promises of massive involvement by women at the cabinet level, the Carter administration is bitterly regarded by feminists as no less guilty of tokenism than previous administrations.³ Most strikingly, the *cause celebre* of the women's movement, the Equal Rights Amendment, seems likely to stall and die inches from its goal.⁴

An ardent feminist can, of course, find bright spots and silver linings in abundance to offset the gloomy prognosis. She can say that the present halt is merely a pause while the movement internalizes and gains deeper and more sophisticated ideals perceptions and objectives.⁵ She could cite recent polls which show that a majority of American citizens favor the principal feminist goals.⁶ She could assert that for all the media-reported controversy, abortion on demand (a major goal of radical feminists) is quietly accepted by an overwhelming majority of U. S. citizens as something they will tolerate, even if not their personal choice.⁷ She can point to women in positions of world power in recent years like Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir, and Margaret Thatcher, current leader of Britain's Conservative Party and likely next Prime Minister. And even on the darkest days, there is always the Church to cheer about. In the Church, despite the stiffest and most deeply entrenched opposition, one bastion of male supremacy after another crumbles. The majority of U.S. Lutherans favor women's ordination.⁸ Even the highly traditional Episcopal Church gave in last year. The Missouri Synod has granted women the franchise.⁹ Can ordination be far behind? It may be awhile before any woman of the Roman Catholic Church ascends the legendary throne of Pope Joan, but even that goal may not be out of reach.¹⁰

The Church is our primary concern. Any pastor knows that even movements discredited and waning in the secular world have remarkable staying power in the Church.¹¹ Many Americans still may doubt in their secret hearts whether a woman is ready to play hard ball against Brezhnev, but few doubt that she is qualified to pastor the average congregation. Besides, it is precisely here that the most vicious double standard of all is in operation. Namely, as every parish pastor knows, arguments of a caliber deemed insufficient by the average American to sway his choice of a bank, automobile or toothpaste are considered heavy artillery when some teaching of the Church is to be assaulted. The role of women as confessed by the Orthodox Church is under heavy fire and will be for years to come. But what do the Scriptures say?

The Role of Women: Three *Sedes Doctrinae*

"But you are not to be like that," said Jesus. "Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves." (Luke 22:26 NIV) The way to true greatness in Christ's Kingdom is through service and submission, not through the this-worldly exercise of power and executive on-upmanship

We hear a lot from all quarters about the role of women today, but the metaphor is rarely taken seriously. "Role" implies an intelligent interpretation of the intentions of the author. A good actress does not "do her own thing"; she seeks rather to fit herself into the attitudes, character, personality—the very being—of someone the

author has invented. Though her role demands creativity and imagination, these qualities are worse than useless unless they function under the author's discipline.

The Christian woman's first question is not: how can I liberate myself from male domination? But: how can I best fulfill the role my Author has prescribed? How can I serve Him in that role?

The Scripture knows of dozens of passages which describe and define the service women have to perform in the Church, home and society, but three are outstanding. These, the principal *sedes*, we turn to next. They are I Cor. 11:2-16, 1 Cor. 14: 33b-36, and I Tim. 2:11-15.

I Corinthians 11:2-16

(2) I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you.

(3) Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. (4) Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. (5) And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. (6) If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. (7) A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. (8) For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; (9) neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. (10) For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.

(11) In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. (12) For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. (13) Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? (14) Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, (15) but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. (16) If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice--nor do the churches of God. (Verbatim NIV.)

Controversy continues over many individual points in this section, yet the major lessons emerge clearly enough. Paul is speaking of the relationship between men and women under God and of how Christian people will want to conduct themselves in order to exemplify that relationship.

The relationship is male headship coupled with female subordination. Paul's hierarchical structure is: God-Christ-Man-Woman. By showing Christ's subordination to His Father, Paul underscores how natural obedience and submission are for God's people. Christian men and women both are never to forget that indelible portrait of service and submission John paints when he shows Jesus in the Upper Room, donning the towel to clean the dust off the disciples' feet. (John 13:1-17) The Christian woman recognizes that she is under the headship of man, not only in marriage (Gen. 3-16, Eph. 5:22-32), but throughout God's created order. That surely is the thrust of verses 7-10, which are unanimously translated as "man" and "woman" throughout this portion, not "husband" and "wife."¹²

Paul is concerned with appropriate ways of communicating this principle of headship. He wants customs to be observed which naturally dovetail with the principle, Both men and women should reflect in their worship of God and in the proclamation of His Word, the roles He has assigned them. Whether "prophesying" refers to instructing in Christian teaching (as Priscilla did with Apollos) or to the charismatic communication of a direct revelation from God (as Philipp's four daughters are generally assumed to have done, Acts 21:8-9) need not be decided.¹³

In either case, Paul is speaking of an activity which could be observed and could have force as a witness, either for or against God's order. Is Paul speaking of the Christian assembly or in general? The latter is strongly

suggested by the completely general nature of Paul's remarks. Not until 11:17 does Paul expressly refer to the assembly and the church service.¹⁴

Now even though Paul is zealously upholding the order of creation, he has no intention of trying to impose any kind of NT ceremonial on the Corinthians. Therefore his concern for the customs of Corinth is only for the sake of the headship principle, not to perpetuate customs *per se*. Since this has been at times misunderstood, let us adduce the evidence at some length.

Paul is the last person to reintroduce regulations of a legalistic nature. His entire epistle to the Galatians is a vehement attack on just that very thing. Col. 2:16-17 is a sweeping statement of Christian liberty, making clear to all time that the NT will not be bound by any set of prescribed ceremonials. In this, of course, Paul had caught the spirit of Jesus, who told the Pharisees, "Eating with unwashed hands does not make (a man) 'unclean'" (Mt. 15:20; see also 1-19 and Mk. 7:1-23.) He also told them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27-28; see also 23-26.)

Can we picture Paul ordering for all time the observance of a commandment regarding head covering for women when he wrote to the Romans, "The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"? (Rom. 14:17) It strains credibility too much. Paul does not do it anymore than Jesus confers on His Church the sacrament of foot-washing. (John 13:1-17)

Only a fundamental insensitivity to context can deduce hats for women, foot-washing, or prohibition against blood transfusions from the NT.

The specific context is just as emphatic on this point. Verses 13-16 appeal to propriety, not law. Verse 16 especially makes head covering a matter of customary practice.¹⁵ Verse 14 refers to the conventions of society.¹⁶

History also makes clear that the custom Paul encouraged was not his own. In Judaism men prayed wearing the *tallith*; women took off their veils in the synagogue.¹⁷ The Romans worshipped with covered heads too.¹⁸ We know that Paul was Jewish and Roman by extraction and that he observed their principles among his own people. (Acts 21:17-26) All he is telling the Corinthians to do is to follow their native customs because they so harmoniously witness to the order of creation. Greek freemen went about bareheaded; women and slaves were covered.¹⁹

We can understand Paul by comparing his stance to our own in a contemporary situation where a good custom is changing and we are inclined to resist that change. The Bible says nothing about wedding ceremonies. Tradition dictates that the virgin bride wear white as a symbol of her putative intact status. There was a recent convert in our congregation who had borne a child prior to marriage and was now marrying a young man in the congregation (not the father of the child). She wanted to be married in white. This greatly distressed some women of the congregation, far more so than any purely doctrinal issue would have. The girl had admitted her sin and was repentant, but wanted to wear white "because brides wear white."

As pastor, I am not concerned with upholding a custom as such, but I know that the custom of a virgin bride's wearing white does embody a theological principle to which I am committed. The first to change such a custom are not likely to be engaged in innocent social innovation. They are attacking the Scriptural position on marriage just as surely as young men who wore beards in the middle 60's were definitely rejecting the values of the Establishment and were defiantly wearing beards as a badge of their repudiation. In time there are bound to be droves of sheep who witlessly follow the leaders without reference to any principle besides "being like the others." By then a new custom is in vogue, and the entire issue has been obscured. But at the initial stages the resistance to custom is bound to be a stalking horse for something more fundamental. Paul saw the threat of an attack on the order of creation and wrote I Cor. 11:2-16, in part, to fend it off. Some day all brides may marry in green, but for now the desire of the non-virgin to wear white or of the virgin not to wear white is certainly an ominous token in a socially conservative community.

Verse 6 is a typical Pauline *reductio ad absurdum*, much like Gal. 5:12, a verse for which women's liberationists ought to be willing to grant Paul a plenary indulgence for all his other sins.²⁰

It should not be necessary to demonstrate that the angels of verse 10 are God's good angels. Their interest in the affairs of men and the plan of salvation is easily documented (Mt. 18:10, 1 Cor. 4:9, Gal. 3:19, 1 Tim. 3:16, 1 Tim. 5:21, Heb. 12:22, Heb. 13:2, 1 Peter 1:12).

I Corinthians--14:33b-36

As in all the congregations of the saints, (34) women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. (35) If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands (prefer: their own men) at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.(36) Did the Word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? (Verbatim NIV except as noted.)

In this section Paul is expressly referring to worship in the public service. In other cases (I Cor. 11:2-16), women show their respect for God's order by wearing a symbol of man's headship over their hair—a head covering. In the service, women are not to speak in such a way that their voices would challenge male headship.

A head covering may or may not symbolize masculine headship. Among the Greeks it did; among the Jews it did not. So long as the headship itself was not threatened, no problem arose. But speaking out on a matter of the Church's doctrine, initiating discussion, interpreting Scripture in the presence of others, raising questions about interpretation—these all are activities which by their nature presuppose authority. Women who do this in church are, by those very actions, claiming equality with men.

Surely innocent questions of information could be asked, could they not? In the specific situation Paul addressed if they were asked in the assembly, they could too easily be mistaken for a challenge. If information was desired, it could be supplied outside the teaching assembly where no ambiguity or opposition would be perceived in the asking of a question.

The Law, by which Paul means the Pentateuch (or with less probability the entire OT), states clearly in Gen. 3:16 that women are to be in subjection.²¹

The first women's liberationist was the serpent; Eve was the second; Adam the third. The fruits of that original "liberation" are "sin, death and all our woe." To Eve's credit (disgrace), let it be said that she was more ambitious than some liberationists today. She was not satisfied with equality with Adam; she strove for equality with God via Satan's path (Gen. 3:5). In so doing, she locked the gates of heaven on herself and induced Adam to throw away his keys too (Milton, following I Tim. 2:11-15 no doubt, portrays Adam as doing this for love, not because he was deceived). From this bent pair we descend. Therefore, there is more than a little sad truth in the women's lib cigarette ad, "There's a little Eve in every woman."

Because of creation and as a remedy for the fall, God subjected Eve to Adam, and womankind to mankind. The world many not grasp this, but in the churches of God it should be upheld. To the world, man's dominance may appear to be the mere exercise of traditional male brute force.²² Some men may share the notion of women's liberationists that it is only justice to free women from male authority. Other men may exercise their authority for purely selfish reasons. Women outside the women's movement may accept male authority only because it seems to be in their self-interest, while they secretly hope to dominate through cunning and sex appeal. The variations on these themes are endless. Those who know the Word and who do not set themselves arrogantly above it (cf. vs. 36) will learn and obey in silent submission.

It is asked, then, whether women had to remain in utter silence or whether they could join in congregational singing, praying aloud, or litanies and confessions. The question is hard to answer. We don't know whether the Corinthian service had these elements or not. Everything we learn about congregational worship in I Cor. 14 gives us the impression that we would be quite unfamiliar with their worship if we could sit in on a service. There seems to have been no regular pastor, but a series of speakers, some of whom spoke in an unknown tongue (1-5). The whole tenor of chapter 14 and verse 33 in particular suggest that the liturgy bore very little resemblance to ours.

Though Paul mentions *psalms* (vs. 26), we do not know if they were said, chanted or sung, or if this was done in unison, antiphonally, or as a solo. Paul mentions “singing” in vs. 15, but how it was done is unknown.

Apparently there was opportunity for questions, but all we can definitely assert about them is that women were not supposed to raise them.

Prof. Scaer suggests a reasonable hypothesis for understanding the worship service in Corinth: a dialogue type of sermon with various speakers addressing the group, asking each other questions, and commenting on each other’s statements. Perhaps it would closely resemble a panel discussion.²³ For women to participate as members of the group would, of course, assert basic equality with men in instructing the congregation. Scaer’s conjecture is attractive, but our conclusions are not dependent on it.

We can assert with a high degree of confidence that the Corinthian congregation was influenced in its liturgical development by the synagogue. The founding of the first congregation in Corinth is recorded in Acts as a breakaway from the synagogue (Acts 18:1-17). In any case, what other serviceable models were available? In Judaism, though the women were segregated from the men by a screen²⁴ and were expected to play a rather passive role (they would never be invited to read or speak to the assembly), they did join in the congregational responses.²⁵ Paul alludes to such responses in vs. 16 (“How can he say, “Amen” to your blessing since he does not know what you say?” The “blessing” referred to was in an unknown tongue.).

From these considerations and the other uses of “speak” (ἰσχυροῦς) in I Cor. 14, it is clear that Paul is using his term in a specialized sense almost identical with our meaning of “speak” for public speaking. (For example, “Who is *speaking* at the convention?” Obviously, the mere sense of “talk” is not intended.)²⁶

From which we may safely gather that God does not expect stone silence from women in church, but the avoidance of such speaking as would challenge His created order. It would be strange indeed if Paul were trying to bar women of the NT church from a role they possessed under the Old Covenant. There they were urged to participate in the singing, praising and confessing of the congregation. (See Ps. 149: 1; II Chronicles 29:25-30; Dt. 27:11ff.; Ezra 2:65; Neh. 2:65; et al.) The church at Ephesus likely had mixed congregational singing (Eph. 5:4-20).

I Timothy 2:11-15

(11) A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. (12) I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. (13) For Adam was formed first, then Eve. (14) And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner (prefer: who was indeed deceived and fell into transgression). (15) But women will be kept safe (NIV margin: be saved) through childbirth, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (Verbatim NIV except as noted.)

Though not stated expressly here, Paul has been instructing Timothy in regard to worship in the church. This is one of the Pastoral epistles whose concern is almost exclusively centered on the public teaching and worship of the Church. Verses 3-7 of chapter 1 deal with false doctrine and heretics, 1:15-17 with the essence of salvation, 2:1-7 with prayer for all men and its basis, 2:8-15 with the specific roles of men and women in their public worship. Verse 8 of chapter 2 would be inexplicable (“I want men—ἀνδρες, not ἀνθρώποι—everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer. . .”) unless it refers to the act of leading congregational prayers. Surely Paul would never discourage women from praying otherwise.

Women, on the other hand (9-10), are to dress nicely, but without vanity and luxurious affectation. The words “decency and propriety” suggest again not an absolutistic NT dress code for women, but due consideration for a woman’s station in life and for the feelings of others. A queen would wear gold and jewels naturally. For her it need not be vanity, but a symbol of her station. She wears the marks of wealth without ostentation as part of a duty to others. For all Christian women the goal is not to catch the eyes of men, but to let the light of their good works so shine before men that they may glorify their Father in heaven (Mt. 5:13-16).

A key feature of such modesty and sobriety in the Church is not to attempt to wrest the teaching office from men.

Paul cites two facts from the early chapters of Genesis to substantiate his words.

As Genesis 2 points out, Adam was not concreated with Eve, but ahead of her. As the section in Corinthians and the Genesis account both make clear, this is not an accidental or trivial fact. Adam and Eve were to be precedents for our entire race. Whatever God did with them is significant. Adam's prior creation is a sign of his primacy. So, too, the fact that Eve was created derivatively from Adam, not independently, a fact which Adam recognized instantly and commented on with gratitude (Gen. 2:23-24).

The second fact is that the manner of the fall does not offer us a basis for denying the continuing force of the order of creation. Precisely because she stepped out of God's hierarchy, did God in love and discipline reaffirm His order. (Gen. 3:16, "Adam shall rule over.")

Adam was not deceived, Eve was most decidedly. That is fact. To infer from it a greater measure of deceivability in Eve, an inherent weakness which Satan exploited, is in some measure to exonerate man and lay the blame for the fall at God's feet (cf. Gen. 3:12). That is the ultimate blasphemy.

Adam was not approached by Satan directly. If he had been, he might well have fallen for the glittering trash the serpent held out. There is nothing sexist about Satan's appeal to Eve and since that time he has tried it again and again on the male of the species with great success. In fact, only the God-man refused his blandishments altogether (see Mt. 4 and Luke 4).

Paul is saying that Adam sinned without being deceived as to God's hierarchy. If anything, this would increase, not decrease, his culpability. But it was not the sort of offence against God's order which would have justified his being stripped of his primacy.

On the basis of these two witnesses from the Torah, witnesses which would be ludicrous if we assign a mythical status to Gen. 1-11, Paul directs women not to seek the teaching office at the expense of men, but rather to exercise her proper influence over God's order in the sphere God has given. As Hendriksen well states,

It is God's will that the woman should influence mankind "from the bottom up" (that is, by way of the *child*), not "from the top down" (that is, by way of the man). She must choose to do that for which by God's creation-ordinance she is naturally equipped, both physically and spiritually. She must reach her goal *by way of (dia) her childbearing*.²⁷

Called to Serve in the Church

The NT is full of references to the service of women in the Church. In the close of Paul's letters to Rome (Rom. 16:1-16), Colossae (Col. 4:15), and Timothy (II Tim. 4:19), there are greetings to women who served Paul's congregations. Phoebe hold the office of deaconess (Rom. 16:1), probably a position of service similar to that exercised by the original seven deacons (Acts 6), though in regard to the particular areas of women's concerns. From Acts we hear of Dorcas (Acts 9), Eunice (16:1, II Tim. 1:5), Lydia (16:11-15), Priscilla (18) and Phillip's four daughters (21:9), who typify the service of women to the early Christian community.

Dorcas made clothes for the needy. Lydia used her wealth and influence to aid Paul's ministry. Eunice imbued her child with the desire to serve God's Church all his life as a pastor and missionary. Priscilla used her knowledge of Christian teaching discreetly to impart advanced theological training to Apollos, the probable author of Hebrews. Phillip's 4 daughters *prophesied*, which means they either acted as Christian instructors to women and children in the early church like our own day school teachers, or that they foretold the future by virtue of a special charismatic gift. The former is more likely because Luke intends to connect them in more than a superficial way with their father. About their father's prophetic ability we are well informed. His remarkable exposition on Isaiah 53 and its effect on the Ethiopian eunuch are well known (Acts 8:26ff.).

The Prophet Joel had foreseen, as Peter preached, that women too would be active in the NT ministry of the Gospel. (See Acts 2:17, Joel 2:28) They, too, are part of the “chosen generation” (I Pet. 2:9). They are heirs of the grace of God (I Pet. 3:7). That is, they join men in the redemption (Gal. 3:28) of Christ and in the proclamation of that redemption to a lost world.

But they do so as members of the body of Christ in organic harmony with the other members. I Cor. 12 shows us that in Christ’s Church we are not interchangeable parts. We do not operate there with legal fictions of equality or automated impersonality, but the Spirit endows us each with a special role and special gifts for that role.

One thing the Spirit has not done is to give women the unseemly exercise of teaching authority over men. I Tim. 2:11-15, 1 Cor. 14:33b-36, and I Cor. 11:2-16 make this clear. So does I Tim. 3:1-7, which describes the bishop’s office in male terms (“husband of one wife,” “manage his own family well”; cf. also Tit. 1:6). Having canvassed many arguments advanced for women’s ordination, I have not found one that holds water. All assume defects in Scripture in order to reach their goal (accommodation to the false nations of patriarchal antiquity, inconsistencies in Paul, multiple theologies, contradictions, etc.), or they invoke a purely subjective method of Bible interpretation which allows one to extract any meaning that suits him from the text. Let a few examples satisfy.

Rev. Prohl of the LC-MS lists in his study 6 principles to be used in settling the issue of women’s ordination. He draws them from Prof. Bodensieck of Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque. The sixth reads: “Rejection of any principle which is not applicable to women in modern society . . .”²⁸ That is a plain declaration that the modern world will tell the Church what is relevant, not vice versa. His third and fifth principles are equally damaging when they assert that we must reject anything which “conflicts with the placing of equal responsibility upon men and women” or which “is based on a number of isolated texts.”²⁹ As for the last, it could be used as a license to shoot *sedes* on sight.

Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty have written, in the estimation of Christianity Today, “One of the finest books to come out on the controversial subject of women’s liberation.”³⁰ In it they make an effort to treat the passages in question with sad results. According to them, Paul’s injunction to women not to speak is a mere reference to “idle chatter.”³¹ His reference to the Law is only “social custom”³²

The reference could not be to Gen. 3:16 because that urges men to dominate women. “Surely Paul would not have the Church perpetuate a sinful condition.”³³ I Timothy 2 is disposed of with remarks like “some modern Bible scholars regard the book as non-Pauline.”³⁴ There is the catty statement: “Judging by the space devoted to the subject, NT writers seem most concerned about how women wore their hair and jewelry. These instructions are almost totally dismissed by today’s church as cultural and irrelevant . . .”³⁵ The prohibition to women’s teaching is only really concerned with “the possibility of false doctrine.”³⁶ The only passage treated with respect is Gal. 3:28, for reasons only too clear.³⁷ Constant appeal is made to what current theologians and church commissions think about the matter and the frustrations and hardships women suffer when they bravely try to assault the patriarchy to offer their gifts to an often unheeding church. Jesus’ own maleness is necessary, they concede, “given the setting of patriarchal Judaism,”³⁸ as though God Himself (Herself?) was incapable of coping with that fact.

Krister Stendahl does the best job of making a case, and it is none too good. All he can do is to pit Gal. 3:28 against the other texts with frequent snide asides directed at those (like ourselves) who “want to play First Century Christians.”³⁹ This is a prime example of what C. S. Lewis meant by “chronological snobbery.” It has the advantage of serving the modern exegete when evidence and logic won’t.

The question of suffrage in the Church belongs in the same boat, though our friends in the Missouri Synod do not see it this way. Since their ‘69 convention, they have permitted suffrage. (“Scripture does not prohibit women from exercising the franchise in congregational and synodical assemblies,” that is, provided that they conform “to the general Scriptural principles that women neither hold pastoral office nor ‘exercise authority over men’”)⁴⁰ But they still somewhat inconsistently hold out against ordination to the Pastoral office.

How can suffrage in the congregation, even granting the (paper) strictures noted, not involve the exercise of authority over men? If women vote at call meetings, at meetings in which the doctrinal status of a congregation is at stake (as when the decision to join the AELC is pending or the support of Seminex or the adoption of “A Statement”), at voters’ meetings which exercise church discipline, is there any way that women will not be violating the principles discussed above? Paul would not allow asking questions in the worship assembly because implicit in the right to question was the right to teach. We deem it advisable to solicit the views of women on matters in which they are most qualified to advise. Whether the formal procedure of voting is employed or not is peripheral. Of vital concern is whether a vote cast has the force of policy and decision. No LC-MS congregation has produced an electoral mechanism by which women’s votes are seined out or neutralized in the areas of their expressed concern. This is frankly impossible because such machinery would be unfeasible to operate and would only result in rendering suffrage contemptible in the eyes of women if it could be made to function practically. The LC-MS convention’s restrictions are more paper guarantees used to mollify the naive conservatives.

Prof. David Scaer in the Sept. ‘74 *Springfelder* attempts to maintain a retaining wall against women’s ordination. He does so by bolstering the “old Missouri” concept of the ministry at the expense of Christian teachers at the elementary and secondary levels. “The word ‘teach’ as used by Jesus and Paul does not really involve the duties and functions usually associated with parochial school teachers or others engaged in the tasks of Christian education, as we think of them today.”⁴¹

If this line becomes the position of Missouri, women will be kept from the pastorate, but will in time wonder what all their work in the Bible and Christian doctrine is for if it is not really *teaching* in the Biblical sense.

Our Christian day school and secondary level teachers, whether men or women, are engaged in the public ministry. The work they do differs in no essential respect from a pastor’s. Out of deference to the order of creation, women teachers do not exercise their ministerial office over men. Knowing the great love in which Jesus hold children (Mk. 10:13-16), who is to say that there is more honor or value in the office of preaching to adults? The world with its hang-ups about status and power will, of course, regard the adult ministry as superior, but we should not. There are also differences in the scope of certain calls, but these are determined by circumstances and the free choice of the calling body, not by God’s ordinance. They are not, then, essential differences.

I think a word to my brothers and sisters in the ministry is in order. To my brothers I give a warning in the form of an admonition, which I also must heed. The Master told us to serve, not to lord it over others. Some of the reasons behind women’s liberation are to be found in the sinful defiance of the Old Eve to God’s order. But some are also in our own behavior. Christ was not one to glory in His *Amt*, to enjoy the modest thrill of wielding raw ecclesiastical power, to put down an earnest seeker with snide jokes, ill-suited sarcasm, or huffy insistence on male prerogative. Pastors, it may be a part of your ethnic heritage to refer to your marriage partner as “the wife,” or “die Frau” or “the Frau” (showing that we are at least half Anglicized by now), but I will give you excellent odds that your wife does not appreciate it, nor is she likely to call you “the husband!” or “der Mann.” There are, perhaps, some parts of our heritage we should shed.⁴² Your home may be your castle, but even the OT does not encourage you to treat your wife as your chattel.

Are our churches guilty of only offering this kind of choice?

The church bulletin one Sunday advertised a “Men for Missions” breakfast coming up at a special restaurant. Men were also invited to visit a seminary in another state to discuss possible calls with a leading theologian. A third announcement stated: “Women are needed to help make Raggedy Ann dolls or the nursery.”⁴³

Jesus (John 13:35) and Paul (II Cor. 3:2-3) would have us remember that the world will judge what we teach by our attitudes and behavior. *Reine Lehre* is not enough. Humility, charity, devotion, and the servant’s

endless submission to his Master's will must become so much a part of us that women perceive our exercise of authority as just. Our Model in this was a carpenter by trade, a Shepherd by profession, not an executive behind a walnut desk. He prayed and wept and washed dirty feet. He never had a more exalted means of transportation than a donkey. Women of His day did not resent Him or think Him an arrogant chauvinist. "The disciple is not above his Master."

To my sisters, I say, turn your backs on the world's goals of power, prestige, and dominance. If you have resented the abuse of power in men's hands, do not believe that the answer lies in tearing the power away. Do not be bitter, but pray even for those who persecute you and spitefully use you, that you may be daughters of your Father in heaven. Pray also for your bishops and serve Christ in serving them gladly.

To my sisters in the teaching ministry, I say, do not seek to vote at your conferences or in faculty meetings to the detriment of your male colleagues' authority. Always conduct yourselves in such a way that it is clear that your voting, if it does occur, is purely advisory and informational, that it makes no claim to parity with men in establishing policy or exercising the teaching and disciplinary authority of the Church.

A final matter of lesser importance. The roles of organists, choir directors, and soloists in congregations deserve some mention. Those who would argue that these positions necessarily imply the leadership of the congregation in its public worship must logically deny these positions to women except when only women and children are present,

It seems more sensible to believe that organists, choir directors, and soloists are not, in fact, leading the worship but are under the direction of the pastor and church council. As long as they have the final say on the choice of selections, their contents and manner of presentation, I can see no violations of an order of creation. Consistency demands one of two things: (1) women barred entirely from these positions, or (2) women admitted, in which case no leadership is implied. Some seem to wish for a fence straddling-position which says in effect that women are only leaders if they belong to another denomination (thus violating our fellowship principles), but if they are good WELS girls, then acting as soloists is no problem.

It won't work. I realize that weddings are very confused and confusing. I have no quarrel with the pastor who says, "I want to avoid having a soloist of another faith in the service because of the difficulty of trying to clarify things with outsiders and even members whose understanding of our fellowship principles is very weak." That pastor has my full sympathy; the technically lawful is not always expedient. But then we are talking about the prudent use of an *adiaphoron*, not a doctrinal concern.

Women Called to Serve in the Home

The home implies marriage, whose NT sedes is Eph. 5:22-32. Women serve by obeying their husbands in all things (Acts 5:29 not being forgotten).

The home has often been romanticized and extolled at great lengths, but even the Victorians were not excessive in their praise, so much as they were deficient in their love for God. They did not praise the home too much, but God too little. Whoever loves father, mother, son, or daughter more than Christ is not worthy of Him.. But next to the Kingdom of Heaven, the domestic kingdom is God's highest gift. Modern people often regard the individual or the State as the ultimate, but Scripture speaks in exalted terms of the home and of marriage which creates it.

These are plain facts, not greeting card fancies. King Lemuel can hardly find enough words of praise for the virtuous wife (Prov. 31:10-31), indicating either that he had one or that he didn't. When the Spirit searches for an exquisite metaphor of the relationship between Christ and His Church, He chooses marriage (see Eph. 5:22-32). We may differ about the purposes served by the Canticles, but surely the lush erotic imagery in them is highly supportive of our conclusion regardless of how we read Solomon's love lyrics (see The Song of Solomon).

We are inclined to exhort the Christian wife to obedience and submission as the brightest jewels of her dowry (I Tim. 2:9-10, 1 Pet. 3:1-6), and indeed they are, but let us not think of these things only in terms of domestic drudgery. To clarify what I mean, let me quote from the Rev. R. C. H. Lenski. I am certain that if feminists keep a list of top pigs, past and present, the Rev. Lenski is near the top. But if they could get to know the man, they might feel differently. For his rehabilitation and our own enlightenment, let me bring to light a little gem of his I found buried among the constative aorists and *hina* sub-final clauses:

It is the intent of nature that woman should wear long hair. Back of nature is the Creator. A beautiful head of hair is the natural crown which God has given to woman. Made for man, she is to be attractive to him, and one of her great attractions is her beautiful hair. Hence to discard it is shameful for her.⁴⁴

The Christian wife also serves by maintaining her beauty for her husband. (A note to the women present: you can either turn livid with rage at Lenski's sexism, or use his little insight as a handy excuse for trips to the beauty parlor, beauty naps in the afternoon, etc. Your choice.)

Scripture frequently exhorts women to use their natural position and authority to instill faith in their children (II Tim. 1:5, Prov. 1:8, Prov. 6:20).

When Paul writes (I Tim. 2:15), "But women will be kept safe through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety," he is saying what is painful to many modern ears. As a general rule, woman's place is in the home. *Kinder, Küche, und Kirche* is not a bad trio, even if Hitler extolled it and many others have abused it. (See also I Tim. 5:14, Gen. 3:16, Ps. 128:3).

It ought to go without saying that when Paul writes of woman's vocation as "childbearing," this is hardly compatible with the uninhibited practice of birth control.

A brief word to husbands and wives.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." (Eph. 5:25)

"Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them." (Col. 3:19)

"Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." (Col. 3:18 NIV)

Called to Serve in Society

The question really before us is: how does the Christian woman best serve the Lord's purposes in a corrupt secular society?

Is she to shun all contact with it? Clearly impossible and unevangelical (see I Cor. 5:9-10). Is she to hector and wave an angry finger? Put that way, the answer is bound to be, "No." But if we extract the malice from that question (as it is naturally injected whenever the world formulates it), the answer is no longer obvious.

Is Christian woman to assume the podium, or in more modern terms, face the microphones and cameras to speak out for God's order and the principles she holds sacred, the very principles so often attacked today?

It is a vexing question. For to speak out, at the very least gives rise to the appearance of inconsistency, for it is bound to call into question the principles of submission and obedience, which she is committed to uphold. At worst, it could vitiate all that she is attempting to achieve. On the other hand, not to speak imperils God's order, too, particularly so when issues like abortion, homosexuality, and pornography are at stake. I say this not because men of God will keep silence, but because often their testimony lacks a certain directness and immediacy. Men will testify, of course, against abortion, but if women do not the world will be quick to say (no doubt, unfairly, but that is precisely the point), "What do the women of your Church think? They are most directly concerned in this matter; why don't we hear from them? Is it perhaps the case, that you men only pretend to voice their sentiments and opinions?"

Someone will say that we gain nothing by fighting God's battles with any but His weapons. I totally agree, but the issue here is: what are God's weapons?

To make my dilemma worse, I must ask myself, "Do you really want to see women like Phyllis Schaffly and Anita Bryant silenced?" To say that they are not of our fellowship and are therefore not likely to be silenced is beside the point. If women are not to speak in secular society, then the logic of the position demands that I condemn such speaking even when I know my voice will likely be ignored and even if the very things I believe in are being championed by these women.

The Lutheran teachers who have addressed this subject are not in agreement. The matter first arose in the early years of this century during the suffragette movement. Before the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, there was naturally considerable agitation over a period of years for its adoption. In this *millieu* Dr. Franz Pieper wrote:

Since women's suffrage in the state implies participation in the rule over men, it is contrary to the natural order which God has established to govern the relation between man and woman. Just as invalid in this connection (as in the matter of the ordination of women) is the objection that women are more prudent than men, more adroit at making election speeches, and more intelligent in the use of the ballot. We are bound to the order which God has instituted, Gen. 2, 18; 1 Tim. 2, 12-13; and wherever this order is perverted, His punishments are sure to follow.⁴⁵

Some 60 years later Prof. Gawrisch of our Seminary addressed the Wisconsin State Teachers' Conference on the subject of "Man and Woman in God's World." He approaches the question by noting the improper motivation behind the suffragette movement and our own government's erroneous assumption of male-female equality. He also reminds us that speaking and voting per se are not wrong, but adiaphora. Does the unscriptural bent in the early emancipation movement mean that Christian women dare not vote? Would women, by voting, necessarily assent to their stand, and thereby violate God's will? Can we say, then, that though the State grants the legal right to vote, Christian women do not have the moral right to exercise the franchise? Prof. Gawrisch answers:

Not necessarily. The Bible does not say to women, "You shall not vote," but it does say they shall not exercise authority over men. Since voting is not in itself a sin, the spirit or attitude with which it is done will determine whether it is right or wrong. The spirit or the inner motive is the important consideration in all matters which are not in themselves immoral. It is the attitude in the heart that determines whether or not a man sins in looking at a woman (Mt. 5:28). If a woman, therefore, exercises the privilege the state extends to her with the attitude that this gives her an opportunity to step out of her subordinate rule in life and to demonstrate her equality with men, she is violating the order of creation and is guilty of sin. On the other hand, if a Christian woman casts her vote in a spirit of humility and service in full recognition of her subordinate role in God's order of creation, she can do so with a good conscience. It is necessary to distinguish carefully between the state's motive in extending the right of suffrage and a Christian's motive in exercising this right.⁴⁶

I'm afraid that Prof. Gawrisch has not really grappled with Pieper's point. The issue is not whether an individual woman consciously wants to express defiance to God's order or not. If she does, of course she is wrong. But even if she doesn't intentionally wish to overturn the applecart she may still do so through clumsiness or misdirection. Pieper is saying that the structure itself of political suffrage for women is contrary to God's order. Women who employ it, regardless of their conscious intention, are violating God's order. If you are holding a knife and trip and fall against someone, that knife will cut regardless of your intention. Doubtless we are more lenient with a person who trespasses our property inadvertently, but it is still trespassing. Pieper is arguing that the government's acts of granting the franchise and postulating equality in its exercise are the very

features which remove it from the realm of adiaphora. To adduce a parallel, who determines the meaning of membership in the Masonic Lodge? The individual who only wishes to join for social and business reasons, or the Masons by their charter principles? One cannot say feebly, "Joining a social organization is not in itself wrong; it's purely a matter of motive." Our church has consistently said that because of the principles of the Masons, joining the Masonic Lodge is not adiaphoron.

I sympathize with Prof. Gawrisch's conclusions, but I admire Dr. Pieper's logic more. With great reluctance, I propose a possible way around the impasse. If anyone tears it mercilessly to shreds, I will not complain. I offer it with great trepidation only because my mentors have left me stranded. I will in any case stand by Augustine's dictum: "*Non possum haeres, enim volo doceri.*"

Luther established the doctrine of the two kingdoms. It was his understanding that the Church and the State are to be governed by two quite distinct sets of principles. Though there may be a mutuality of interest and of application in many areas, the State has quite a different rationale and goal in everything it does. Both Church and State desire religious freedom, but the State does so for the sake of domestic tranquility, the Church for the free course of the Gospel. The State can only look to temporal concerns and can only govern by reason and the application of natural law. The Church must concern itself with things eternal and must govern by the Keys and the Sacraments.

For this reason there is nothing contradictory (in the famous example) about a Christian judge granting a divorce in the morning and voting for the excommunication of those divorced in the evening.

When the Christian engages the machinery of the secular world, he does not lose his Gospel insights or defy them, but at the same time he realizes that he cannot appeal in the State's tribunal to the invisible realities most precious to him. "My Kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36) "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation . . ." (Luke 17:20-21). Therefore the arena of secular society the Christian must appeal to reason and society's self-interest. If he advances his convictions on religious grounds, he is impertinent and may become guilty of casting his pearls before swine (Mt. 7:6).

I take it that women like Phyllis Schaffly, Anita Bryant, and Queen Elizabeth II are endeavoring to protect God's interests in the market place with the use of reason and tradition. I, for one, am glad. But I welcome comments and discussion. If this issue is still unclear in the Church, let us remember that it is young. It is only within this century that a serious attempt to achieve full equality has been made. By the Church's standards that is recent indeed.

When we turn to questions of employment—of women executives, police officers, doctors, lawyers, government officials, etc.--the principles governing suffrage in the State would again apply.

However, a word of caution is in order. No one can truly serve best if he or she neglects the natural aptitudes and abilities given by God. Does God distribute these randomly with no regard to sex? Evidently not. God chooses to differentiate. If God creates them male and female (Gen. 1:26-27), then it is foolish to say that differences in gender are superficial modifications that only concern procreation. Does not our spontaneous reaction to homo- and bisexuality attest to this? God's creation is organically differentiated throughout. Each creature has a niche and a complement. The glory of an archangel is not the glory of a wild flower (I Cor. 15:38-41!). The glory of a man is not the glory of a woman (I Cor. 11:2-16), but each is to God's glory in its own way.

Those who have shown differences between men and women in terms of athletic competition are only exploring one tiny facet of this fact.

Is it purely accidental or cultural that there are very few women among the first ranks of scientific genius? Some might say that deep-seated cultural bias has been decisive from an early age in stifling women's scientific propensities. But women have been trained and encouraged in music extensively, often much more so than men in their early years. How many first rate women composers are there? As for mathematics, there has never been a first rate woman mathematician.

Lest we forget our purpose, I would be equally emphatic in saying that men simply are not, as a rule, as good in many of the areas at which women excel. I do not just mean the domestic arts either. George Ballanchine

has said: “Ballet is woman.” I do not believe that it is just cultural, or in any way derogatory that women dominate primary education. And is society really so foolish in predominantly awarding the custody of children to women in divorce cases? A child should have two parents, but if we must choose, are we really as likely to choose the father as often as the mother to do double duty? General observations like these naturally cannot encompass the many exceptions that are bound to occur.

Liberation for Us All—”The truth shall set you free.” (John 8:31)

Jesus’ promise to us is not empty. The more perceptive women’s liberationists argue that for women to be truly liberated men must also be set free from their dehumanizing role as patriarchs and oppressors. There is a measure of truth in this, but not perhaps the truth that feminists care to see. One of the causes of feminine backlash to the women’s movement stems from the perception that merely to gain men’s privileges and status assures nothing. Some feminists have nearly attained their goals, but in the process have become as hard, ruthless, nervous, and arrogant as the men they so often berated. Is that victory? Is it liberation to inherit the contemporary executive’s proclivity to hypertension, lung cancer, ulcers, and a vision of life that might depress some of B. F. Skinner’s rats?

“The truth shall set you free.” “But if the Son shall set you free, then are free indeed.” Jesus meant, among other things, freedom from worldly categories of thought. One trap the women’s movement sets and springs on the oppressed, the oppressors, and the revolutionists is that of trying to rank everything and use rank as an absolute measure of worth. How important is importance? How much time should we invest in upping our rating? In telling us to suffer oppression rather than rebel, to be humble and concerned for our neighbor, to leave unnecessary judgments to the Judge, the Bible is trying to tear us free from our secular moorings. I recall that one of the disciples’ quarrels over greatness ended with Jesus’ putting a little child in their midst.

The fixation on power, rank, and rights is itself, for men and women both, a form of slavery. The demand for judgment in the world’s eyes (often called “history’s judgement” when we are not faring too well in the present), for fame, and for vindication before men is equally tyrannical in enslaving us. Those engaged in the elusive pursuit of ultimate worldly values can never be free. A simple test will show how futile these categories are for the Church. Who is more important for the Church, Jude or Martin Luther? By the criterion of inspired writings, Jude wins hands flat. None of Luther’s 100 volumes was inspired. But if Jude’s epistle disappeared this moment, what single truth of God would we lose? “Judge not” is often misapplied, but here it fits.

Another bugbear is equality. The pursuit of worldly equality is slavery too. Galatians 3:38 is the favorite text of liberationists, but there Paul (the same Paul who wrote I Corinthians and I Timothy) is not teaching us to struggle for equality. He is telling us that in Christ differences of that kind do not matter. What does count is what Paul calls a *new creature* (Gal. 6:15). That we can be busy about as we seek to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, working while it is day till the Day dawns and the Daystar arises. Then, to the delight of all of us, even feminists, “they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but shall be as the angels of heaven.”

ENDNOTES:

¹ *Time* cover story. March 14, 1977.

² As reported by Feminist Gloria Steinem in a CBS interview with Martin Agronsky, June 10, 1977. Ms. Steinem stated that in 1976 the average black high school dropout earned more than the average college educated woman.

³ *Ibid.* According to Steinem, President Carter vowed that his administration would be to women’s rights what Johnson’s was to civil rights. Though two women, Juanita Krebs of Commerce and Patricia Harris of HUD, hold

cabinet posts (100% improvement over previous administrations), Ms. Steinem complained that most of Carter's promises were still "out" and that women had largely been denied sensitive, i.e., responsible positions.

⁴ Only 3 states to go. But the ERA lost in an important fight in Florida in the closing weeks of April despite personal appeals by the Carters, Mondales, and Fords. With less than 2 years remaining for ratification, the 15 hold-out states have control. All have rejected the ERA in at least one house. Most are conservative Southern states where the greatest opposition to ERA lies. Only 2 states have ratified since 1975; three have rescinded ratification. *Time* (April 25, 1977, pp. 89-90) and *U. S. News* (March 28, 1977, P. 53) have already written near obituaries for the ERA.

⁵ So argued Robyn Morgan in a PBS interview two weeks ago.

⁶ *Time* (April 25, 1977), p. 89.

⁷ Gloria Steinem's assertion again (see above). The writer can see little basis for denying it.

⁸ A fact in the ALC and LCA; growing sympathy in the LC-MS.

⁹ In the '69 convention; as we shall see presently, the limitations were merely cosmetic.

¹⁰ Current historians do not even dignify her as an antipope. Legend locates her between Leo IV (847) and Benedict III (855), masquerading as Johannes Anglicus and then as John VIII on accession. The sudden onset of labor is said to have exposed her and precipitated her stoning. Schaff IV, 265ff.

¹¹ Historical Criticism is a perfect case in point. Though widely abandoned in the study of secular literature and history as unreliable, it remains the mainstay of Biblical interpretation to this day.

¹² In verse 3, the *TEV* and the *Living Bible* render *gune* (gunh) as "wife." The *RSV* and *Beck* lean that way too by translating *aner* (anh̄r) as "husband." The *KJV*, *NASB*, *NIV*, *NEB*, *The Jerusalem Bible*, and *Philipps* make the reference completely general: "women," "man."

¹³ Lenski and Calvin understand by "prophecy" teaching. Godet and Grosheide believe that charismatic revelations are referred to.

¹⁴ Lenski and Grosheide argue for a completely general reference. Godot argues on the basis of his own topical division (see p. 103 of his commentary) for a reference to the service, but subsequently shows how fraught with problems this stance is (pp. 115-117).

¹⁵ I know that some, Lenski and Grosheide included, want *sunetheian* (sunh̄q̄eian) to refer to the custom of contentiousness. Godet is right in exposing the artificiality of this position.

¹⁶ Again I know that some take *physis* (fusiv) to be Nature in our sense (Lenski, Groshaide, and Godet). However, I have not been able to find any evidence that women's hair is naturally longer than men's. Indeed, in our day mistakes in identifying gender are made quite frequently when a person only sees a head of hair from behind. In Greek *physis* (fusiv) signified what grew up by itself. Social conventions would be included. The opposition was *physis-nomos* (fusiv, nomov), not Nature vs. Science.

¹⁷ Prof. Zerst, *The Office of Women in the Church*, p. 37.

¹⁸ Lenski, p. 435.

¹⁹ All authorities agree on this point.

²⁰ Were shorn women likely to be regarded as prostitutes? The evidence is divided. Prohl, Grosheide, Godet are pro; Lenski, con. In any case they would be disgraced.

²¹ Paul might have had Gen. 2:18-25 in mind also.

²² Read Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will*.

²³ Sept. '72 *Springfelder*, p. 96 in the notes.

²⁴ See the article on *gune* (gunh) in the TWNT.

²⁵ Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, pp. 439-449.

²⁶ Delving into the etymology of *lalew* is wasted effort. It has no bearing.

²⁷ Hendriksen, p.111.

²⁸ Prohl, *Woman in the Church*, p. 19.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁰ Back cover of *All We're Meant to Be* by Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty. Word Books, Waco, Texas.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁹ Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women*, pp. 17, 36, 40, e. g. and passim.

⁴⁰ LC-MS *Convention Proceedings '69*, p. 88.

⁴¹ Sept. '74, *Springfelder*, p. 131.

⁴² My own German heritage and roots are deep enough to permit that fearless observation.

⁴³ Scanzoni and Hardesty *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁴⁴ Lenski, *Corinthians*, p. 440.

⁴⁵ Sept. '70, *Springfelder*, p. 39 (From Pieper's *What Is Christianity? And Other Essays*, CPH, 1933, p. 157.)

⁴⁶ Prof. W. Gawrisch "Man and Woman in God's World," p. 30.