

THE ROLE OF WOMEN
IN THE CHURCH - WISCONSIN SYNOD
A PEOPLE PREPARED?

Senior Church History

April 18, 1984

Glen Hallwig

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11831 N. Seminary Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin

INTRODUCTION:

In the historical development of the Christian Church, the church has ~~had~~ to face numerous doctrinal controversies. Each century or period of church history presents a new and different challenge to Christ's disciples who want to continue in the truth. Already in St. Paul's time, false teachers were challenging the teachings of salvation by grace alone (Galatia), the resurrection of the dead (Corinth), and the second coming of Christ (Thessalonica). In the early post-apostolic church, the scriptural teaching of the Trinity and the person of Christ were vigorously challenged. At the time of the Reformation, the visible Christian Church had succumbed to the false teaching of salvation by works. In its own time, every major teaching of Scripture has been challenged by those outside the visible Christian Church and also sadly enough by those within the pale of the visible Christian Church. ~~Often the challenge comes first from outside and eventually works its way into the church. When~~ the pressure becomes too great, the truth is set aside. God's people who are to be in the world but not of the world become both.

In our own century, the greatest challenge to the truth has been in the area of the authority of Scripture. Is this book called the Bible the Word of God? Does it provide us with God's clearly revealed will? Are its teachings or doctrines unchanging over time? Or, does the Bible just contain the word and will of God? Are its teachings subject to change as mankind and society develop? This doctrine is central to all biblical doctrines. Unfortunately, the vast majority of modern Christian denominations (also Lutherans) have denied, either explicitly or implicitly, the unchanging authority of Scripture. For many, the teachings of the Savior have been replaced by the doctrines of men. As we contend for the Truth, we do well to remember the words of the Savior, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Jn. 8:31-32.

One of the particular challenges that face our own synod today is the role of Man and Woman - both in the church and in society in general. At the present time, a committee of ten representatives from the various districts has finished writing a second attempt at a position paper for the Synod. The author has intentionally excluded discussion of this latest written document from this paper since it has not been presented in final form to Synod. The purpose of this paper is rather to examine one aspect of our synod's preparedness for the present questions concerning woman's role in the church.

The general question that will be addressed in this paper will be - "Have our laymen been properly prepared to evaluate

the scriptural teaching concerning the role of women in the church?" The primary emphasis will be on the role of women in the church - not in society in general. The point of attack will be the Northwestern Lutheran as an educating tool in this area. As the official English voice of the Synod, particularly for laymen, this publication has (for 70 years) *served* and must continue to serve as an educating force in the synod.

Three major areas that will be considered are:

- 1). The late development of this issue in the Wisconsin Synod;
- 2). Historical issues and answers in the Synod; and
- 3). The Northwestern Lutheran's historical educating role in this area.

The first two areas set the foundation upon which the final section evaluates how thoroughly historically the Northwestern Lutheran has addressed the issues surrounding women's role in the Lutheran Church - Wisconsin Synod.

I. WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH - A LATE DEVELOPING CONTROVERSY

To a certain degree, it is a misnomer to speak of this controversy as a late development in the Synod. As early as June of 1931, an article appeared in the Northwestern Lutheran, entitled "Woman Suffrage in the Church." The writer (from the Pacific-Northwest District) wrote, "You are all aware of the occasion last summer at White Bluffs that brought this subject to our attention. A practical situation exists in the Pacific Northwest District. Therefore no confusion ought to exist concerning the point under consideration, . . ." ¹ Even before 1931, the questions related ^{to} women serving as teachers

or organists were addressed. However, the situations were for the most part of lesser significance; they were addressed, a position was adopted, and the resulting impact on Synod life was no more than a minor "bump in the road".

Other Lutheran denominations in America faced the question of woman suffrage in the church much earlier and allowed varying degrees of woman suffrage. The model constitution for the General Synod (forerunner of the present LCA) at the turn of the century granted women the right to vote but not to hold office. The more conservative Augustana Synod granted women the right to vote in 1907 and in 1930 allowed them to be delegates to conferences and synod meetings. Congregations in other Synods often granted women the right to vote or hold office in the church without consulting their respective synods, and without any synod disciplinary action. However, German bodies as a whole applied, especially I Cor. 14:34, 35, literally and denied women the right to ask questions at church meetings.²

In general the more Americanized Lutheran Church bodies were the ones most easily influenced by the socio-political scene, namely the various women's movements. However, the German language Lutheran bodies were much more cautious. Nelson comments concerning the development of national women's societies in Lutheran Churches. "The Synods that longest retained the use of the German language were generally most cautious in permitting or encouraging their women to form synod-wide societies."³ Two of these former German language Lutheran bodies are the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and our Wisconsin Synod.

The Missouri Synod position on ~~w~~oman's role in the church began to show clear signs of drifting as early as 1938. In the formal essay presented at synod convention by Dr. John T. Meuller, he included an observation that women were not allowed to vote. One delegate objected to the statement and eventually the Synod resolved to restudy the matter. Fifteen years later (1953), a committee was finally appointed to do a thorough exegetical study of the applicable texts including I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2. One of the reasons for the restudy cited in the resolution was; "There is a sincere difference of opinion among many clergy and laity concerning the full and correct application of these texts to the question of woman suffrage in the church. . ."⁴ This sincere difference of opinion eventually allowed women in Missouri Synod the right to vote in congregations that locally accepted the practice. The present position of Missouri Synod on the role of women in the church features the following points:

1. Scripture does not prohibit women from voting in voter's assemblies;
2. Scripture only excludes women from the pastoral office;
3. Women ought not hold an office in the church whose function it is to assist the Pastor in the exercise and administration of the Office of the Keys;
4. Scripture does not prohibit ~~W~~omen from holding Synodical level offices on boards and committees; and
5. Each congregation is at liberty to alter their practice as it sees fit.

This position was officially adopted in the 1969 convention, clearly repudiating the validity of the historical position of

the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. At each step in the controversy, the scope of the application of the pertinent passages was narrowed. Most notably, the I Cor:14:33-38 passages were limited in application to "the congregation at worship." Thus, the only official exclusion in the Missouri Synod, today, is that of the pastoral office. It is only by the grace of God, that the "Moderate" trend in the Missouri Synod was reversed by the split with their congregations which formed the AELC. For these "Moderates" not only supported woman suffrage but also women pastors.

It is for this reason, that we can speak about the controversy concerning Women's Role in the Church as a late development for the Wisconsin Synod. We presently stand as the only major Lutheran church body in America that officially does not permit woman suffrage in the church. We together with the Missouri Synod are part of a minority of denominations in America that do not permit women pastors to serve in our congregations. The danger is very real, that we, too, might ignore clear words of scripture and desire "a King like all the other nations."

But as a Synod we have passed the early stage of development when we could simply resolve the question by saying, "we don't do things that way." The question lies open before us.

It is interesting to note the source of this late development. In April, 1978, the Commission of Higher Education (CHE) adopted a study entitled "The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture" prepared by Professor Carl Lawrenz of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This attempt by the CHE to resolve the matter

of woman's role in the church, more than likely appeared as an attempt to answer questions related to scriptural limitations associated with women teachers at various levels of education.

The CHE, with the approval of the Conference of Presidents, submitted the paper to the 1979 Synod Convention. At that time, the Synod officially recognized the importance of the matter at hand:

Whereas: 1) the theses listed in "The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture" addresses a subject of great concern in our times;⁵

The congregations, conferences, and districts were directed by Synod to study the matter. The districts were directed to submit reports to the CHE. The CHE was directed by Synod to report the findings in the 1981 convention.

Again in the 1981 Synod Convention, the Synod did not adopt the Lawrenz paper as the official position paper for the role of man and woman. Instead, a committee of ten pastors (one from each district) was appointed to study the matter and compose a new document for synod's adoption. In the 1983 Synod Convention, this second written attempt was not accepted. The Committee was directed to rewrite the original work and prepare it for consideration at the ^{next} convention. At this present time, (April, 1984), the committee has met and rewritten their original attempt. To my knowledge, although copies are available, the final presentation has not officially been released for congregational or district approval. God-willing, a scriptural resolution of the issues pertaining to women't role in the church should be resolved in the 1985 Synod convention. The section

that follows will treat of some of the issues that must be resolved and their historical answers.

II. HISTORICAL ISSUES AND ANSWERS

But just what are the issues at hand? We must now examine the historical issues and answers before we attempt to evaluate the thoroughness of layman education provided by the Northwestern Lutheran. To examine the historical issues surrounding woman's role in the church, it is helpful to examine writings from four primary sources:

1. Professor William Henkel's essay, "The Status of Woman in the Public Life of the Congregation; (1920's)
2. Professor Wilbert Gawrisch's essays -
 - a. "The Place of Women in the Life and Work of the Church. (1966)
 - b. "Women in the Teaching Ministry" (1975);
3. Professor Carl Lawrenz's Essay, "The Role of Man and Woman According to Scripture." (1978); and
4. The Committee's Report to the 1983 Synod Convention - "The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture."

Each essay provides insight into the prevailing accepted thoughts of the pastors and theologians of the writer's day. However, none of them was accepted as an official Synod position. Not one of them has been published in the Northwestern Lutheran or generally made available to the complete body of laypeople in our Synod. The essay by Henkel represents the concerns and issues ^{of the church} in the 1920's; while the later essays and reports reflect numerous additions and subtractions. But what are the historical issues and answers?

The Issues and Answers of the 1920's

As the use of the German language among laymen began to

decline, the Americanizing influence of other Lutheran bodies began to be felt. As noted above, woman suffrage was generally accepted by the General Synod congregations and even the more conservative Augustana Synod congregations more than 20 years prior to the time Professor Henkel's essay originally appeared in the German forerunner to the present Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly. Thus even in the 1920's it is not surprising that there was pressure from outside the Synod and possibly within the Synod to revise its historical position. It is appropriate that at that time the Henkel essay should appear to set the record straight for the pastoral readership of the Quartalschrift. The issues and answers are summarized by Henkel as follows:

There is therefore no doubt that Scripture assigns a different status to woman in the public life of the congregation than to man. That her relationship to man is not one of equality but one of subordination should find expression also in the congregational life. Therefore she is not to rule, nor to join in ruling the church, nor is she to teach publicly unless urgent necessity demands it so that the principle established in I Corinthians 14:34 is not violated according to its sense and spirit.⁶

The primary scriptural support he develops is drawn from the familiar passage: I Cor. 11:3-16; I Cor. 14:34-36, and I Timothy 2:11-15. These passages are used to support two thoughts:

1. Women are to be silent in the church; and
2. Women are to ^{b^c}subject to man in the church.

A significant portion of the argumentation for the essay centers around Henkel's attempt to explain "why" God established the two distinct roles. The reason cited for this god-pleasing difference of role he gives as follows:

God has assigned to man a different position in the public life of the congregation than to woman because

their gifts differ, and both should be good stewards of their gifts.⁷

Henkel presents a two-fold difference in gifts, namely, that women lack sound judgment (are more easily deceived and they are too subject to influence from their emotions). As we will note later, the later essays which will be considered do not attempt to explain the "why" of God's will - only what his will is and significant applications.

Most significantly, Henkel identifies the principle that the passages under consideration may only be applied to the role of woman in the church today if they are part of God's Moral Law, i.e. his unchanging will. He identifies these passages as part of the Moral Law, especially by making use of St. Paul's reference to the order of creation and the fall.

The issues which he considers are summarized below:

General Congregation Affairs

- 1). ~~As~~ Chairman of the Congregation;
- 2). Active participation in Congregational Meeting;
(i.e. joining in discussion)
- 3). Voting -
 - a. Matters pertaining to the Ministry of the Keys; and
 - b. Outward affairs (how the new school should be equipped, etc)

Preaching and Teaching

- 1). As Pastors;
- 2). As Teachers; (Sunday School and Day School)
- 3). Leading in Public prayer; and
- 4). Giving confirmation instruction.

In all of these areas with the exception of teaching, Henkel indicates that the principles of subjection and silence apply,

in those cases where only women and children are involved or where the men who are there are unwilling or unable to serve the congregation as the need arises.

In the area of teaching, Henkel limits the sphere of women teachers to the grade school level (preferably the lower grades) because women lack the ability to teach the upper levels (high school and college). In addition, he voices a concern over joint teachers conferences (men and women day school teachers). He cites the possible negative influence of women teachers in such joint conferences, because women are identified as lacking both the ability and emotional stability for the important decisions that must be made.⁸

In presenting the "classical" Lutheran view concerning the role of women in the church, Henkel is careful to examine and expound upon the relevant biblical texts. However, his argumentation is often lacking because he relies heavily upon the major premise that ~~women~~ women are lacking the ability and emotional stability necessary for leaders in the church. Unfortunately, he never clearly establishes the premise from scripture. It should be noted that this premise is unnecessary for establishing the scriptural role of women in the church, since it only attempts to explain the "why" of the two roles rather than "what" the God-pleasing roles are.

THE GAWRISCH PAPERS

Professor Gawrisch has provided the Synod with two major essays in the area of the role of woman in the church. The focus of the two papers differ. However, both deal with the general

topic of Women in the church. The first to be examined will be the more general of the two. The second deals with the role of women in the teaching ministry.

Paper #1 - "The Place of Women in the Life and Work of the Church"
(1966)

This essay was originally read to two different WELS district conventions and later appeared in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly. The paper deals with the subject of the role of women in the church, first by stressing the positive and then by presenting the God-given restrictions on the activities of women in the church. The outline identifies this pattern:

Part I - The High Calling God Has Given to Women;

Part II - The Restrictions God Has Placed on the Activity of Women in the Church.

Part I might well be summarized with these words:

As far as life in this world is concerned, however, it is just in the sphere of the family and the home that a woman most fully comes into her own, fulfilling her God-given role, accomplishing truly great things in caring for her husband and bringing up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and in this way achieving genuine happiness and satisfaction for herself.⁹

He points to her blessed role as wife and mother. In addition, he points to the equality of man and woman in the order of redemption.

In the second part, Professor Gawrisch presents a thorough examination of two key passages (I Cor. 14:34-36 and I Tim. 2: 11-15) followed by their application to the role of woman in the church. In the exposition of the I Timothy text, it is notable that Professor Gawrisch, like Henkel uses the fact that

Eve was deceived to support the idea that women are in some way naturally inferior to men in the area of understanding. Although the Gawrisch essay does not as forcefully pursue this line of argument, nevertheless, the fact that he quotes the Henkel essay with approval indicates an agreement in line of argument in this area. A portion of the Henkel essay quoted in the Gawrisch essay follows.

It is therefore clear that the Apostle does not forbid woman to teach publicly and to rule because she has committed a greater sin in Eve than man in Adam, but because from the beginning she showed herself to be "the weaker vessel", because in the area of understanding she is not equal to man, because she is more easily deceived and therefore not qualified for ruling and authoritative teaching.¹⁰

This argument together with the order of creation is presented in support of the silence of women in the church.

The issues or applications of the passage presented in this essay are for the most part identical to those presented in the previous essay. Since some of the explanations (answers) provided herein are more complete, the following summary of issues and answers is provided.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Woman's Role</u>	<u>Answer (explanation)</u>
1. Chairman of the Congregation		
2. Active participation in Cong. Mtg. (i.e. joining in discussion)		<u>NO</u> - This would clearly violate the subordination of woman to man - would place men and women on an equal level and allow usurping of authority.
3. Member of Church Council		
4. Delegate at Convention		
5. Listening at Cong. Mtg.		May create difficult situations
6. Giving Advice in matters which women understand better. (e.g. needs in the kitchen)		Men should seek such advice in other ways

- | | |
|--|---|
| 7. Pastors | NO - Self-evident |
| 8. Leading in public prayer | NO - provided there is a mixture of men and women. |
| 9. Teaching an Adult Instruction Class | |
| 10. Teaching an Adult Bible Class | |
| 11. Organists | YES - unless she begins to dictate to the Pastor. |
| 12. Teachers | YES - for Sunday School and Day School.
NO- (very cautiously) for Synodical High Schools and Colleges. |

Of all of the above mentioned areas, probably one of the most controversial areas examined is the area of women teachers in our high schools and colleges. Henkel centered much of his argumentation against women teachers in our high schools and colleges around their lack of ability. However, Professor Gawrisch rather defines the basic issue as subjugation, ". . . for the basic issue that the woman is not to usurp authority over the man will be our guide."¹¹ The question remains, "At what age level does a boy become a man?" Because of our inability to precisely answer this question, Professor Gawrisch presented this note of caution in his essay:

On the high school level, women teachers, for the most part, are serving in our Christian schools in ~~the commercial, home economics, or physical education~~ departments, areas in which they deal principally with girls. In our colleges we employ them in the capacity of deans of women, library assistants, or music teachers. It is our conviction, of course, that in our Christian schools all those who teach, whether it be history, English, science, mathematics, or other branches of learning, are also ministers of the Gospel. In these classes, too, as well as in the religion classes, the Gospel is served and taught. That we have been hesitant and cautious about calling women to teach English or history, for example, on the high

school level and beyond where they would be teaching both boys and girls is wise. In this area we will want above all else to be conscious of the will of God. While we will not, therefore, on the one hand, arbitrarily prescribe limits or impose restrictions in a mechanical, legalistic way where none have been set down by the Word of God, we will also, on the other hand, ever bear in mind the basic principle that the woman is not to exercise authority over the man.¹²

Because of the difficulty and sensitivity of the role of women in the teaching ministry, it is only natural that Professor Gawrisch should address this subject in detail in a second paper and that later the CHE should request the study that produced the Lawrenz Paper.

Paper #2 - "Women in the Teaching Ministry" (1975)

After again covering the scriptural considerations in detail, Professor Gawrisch presents a number of new issues that are unique to woman's role in the teaching profession. They are presented below together with the proposed solutions (answers).

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1. Women teachers as voting members of Synod.	NO - for the same reason they may not be voting members in congregation.
2. Play the organ or direct Choir.	YES - If done in a submissive spirit.
3. Attend Teacher's Meetings or Sunday School Teacher's Meetings.	YES - Reports and information are necessary.
4. Attend School Board Meetings.	YES - Upon request to give information or advice directly related to their work.
5. Attend Teacher's Conferences	YES - If properly submissive; the same need arises as in #3 above.

Most notably absent from the issues presented was the question of whether or not a woman could be a member of the school board.

The Lawrenz Paper (1978)

The essay entitled "The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture" was prepared by former Professor Carl Lawrenz at the request of the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) of the Wisconsin Synod. In April, 1978, it was adopted by the CHE and submitted to the 1979 Synod Convention for approval.

The approach is somewhat different than that of the previous works. The text studies and related arguments begin first by establishing the Order of Creation as part of the immutable will of God (Gen.2:18-25) and then demonstrating that St. Paul's inspired statements in I Cor. 11:1-9, I Cor.14:33b-35; and I Tim. 2:11-15 appeal to that Order of Creation. Three aspects of the essay are especially worth noting:

1. There is no longer an appeal to woman as the "weaker vessel" to explain WHY she is not to hold a leadership role. Concerning woman's subordinate role, the writer of the essay declares: "The force of the argument does not depend on this that we are able to carry out in specific detail what it is in her creation for s helper role that caused her to be deceived while Adam was not deceived."¹³ The primary consideration is given to the Order of Creation.

2. The Order of Creation has application in the realms of marriage, service in the church, and situations in public life. Concerning this matter, the essayist writes, ". . . the applications to the marriage bond do not support the contention

that the creation order is restricted to the marriage bond.¹⁴

3. Although some time is spent developing a limited number of applications of the Order of Creation within the marriage relationship and public life, no specific applications (Issues and Answers) are presented for the areas of application to woman's role in the church.

It is difficult to understand the purpose of the essay as envisioned by the CHE which is responsible for education particularly in the Synod's high schools and colleges. Most notably, there is no mention of the application of order of creation to the pastoral or teaching offices. The biblical principles were examined, but no specific issues and answers were ~~present~~ presented in the essay.

The Report of the Committee of Ten (1982)

This report was prepared by a ten-man committee prior to the 1982 district conventions and presented at the district conventions for consideration prior to the 1983 Synod convention. As noted previously, this report was not adopted at the 1983 Synod Convention. It is unfortunate, but the paper provides only limited insight into the matter of issues and answers (or applications). This approach is by design as noted in the paper:

The approach taken by the committee was guided by the very short period of time available to us, by the resolution of the 1981 Synod convention, and by the knowledge that public hearings had already been encouraged and held in congregations, conferences, and districts. Within this context the committee decided to work only with the principles in the case.¹⁵

Three areas of the role of man and woman were examined, namely, in marriage, in the church, and in society. The report, including text studies, is presented in a narrative style to leave the impression of new study and to present a more readable and appealing paper. Although little is presented by way of application (issues and answers), it would appear that the previous application of the principles related to the silence and submission of women in the church have been somewhat altered. The "headship" of man in the church appears to be restricted to the public exercise of the office of the Keys. Note the following excerpt:

The second area in which the New Testament specifically applies the principle of the headship of the man is in the church, particularly in the public exercise of the Office of the Keys.¹⁶

And again:

In I Timothy 2, Paul again emphasizes the headship of the man in the public ministry of the church.¹⁷

And in conclusion it reports:

Paul does exclude women from exercising the office of the Key publicly when such service would cause them to exercise authority over men. And yet, the apostle is just as quick to extol their works of faith in other areas and to exhort them to continue in such works.¹⁸

It is not clear from the report whether the writers intended to limit the application in the church in this way or not.

However, such a limitation would clearly provide different answers in terms of application in our congregations even though the issues would remain unchanged. Such an intended interpretation would sound very much like part of the present Missouri Synod position adopted in 1969, which limits the silence and

subjugation of women in the church to the area of the public exercise of the ministry of the Keys. In any event, this report presents no new issues for our discussion in this paper. It is now time to consider the role that the Northwestern Lutheran has played in preparing our laymen for the challenges that lie ahead as our synod considers the role of women in the church.

III. THE NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN'S HISTORICAL EDUCATING ROLE

Historically the Northwestern Lutheran has served as a uniform educating tool in the Wisconsin Synod. Important issues such as unionism, fellowship, revivalism, lodges, and scouting have been again and again addressed. As the official English voice of the synod to our laymen, the Northwestern Lutheran has played an important role in educating our laymen to face the day-to-day spiritual challenges of the sinful world in which we live. God-willing, it will continue to play an important role in the doctrinal education of our people.

But just how thorough has the Northwestern Lutheran been in examining the questions and issues pertaining to woman's role in the church? Has this Synod publication helped to adequately prepare our laymen for the doctrinal challenges that lie ahead? It is interesting to note that E. C. Nelson (editor) in his history of The Lutheran's in North America notes that Lutheran literature, especially in the early to mid 1900's reflected little of the ferment of the times. He raises the question, "Could this be because they didn't see this as their job?"¹⁷ Just how often has the Northwestern Lutheran addressed

the issue of the women's movement within and outside of the Wisconsin Synod?

The major issues that might have been addressed can be summarized as follows from the previous section:

1. Women pastors?
2. Women voters?
3. Women Officers or Committee Members?; and
4. Women Teachers - at what level?

After examining the 70 year record of the Northwestern Lutheran (1914-1984), it seems that the complete scope of the issues surrounding woman's role in the church has not been thoroughly presented. Of the five major issues noted above - only one "Women Pastors?" has been repeatedly and clearly presented as contrary to Scripture.

Women Pastors?

It is in the area of women pastors that the Northwestern Lutheran (NWL) provides the most "coverage". In its first two years (1914 and 1915) of publication, the NWL briefly addressed the questions surrounding women pastors in such articles as: "A Women's Church" (NWL Vol. 1, p. 66); "Woman and the Church" (NWL, Vol. 2, p.40); and "Women in the Pulpit" (Nwl, Vol. 2, p.82). Over the 70 year life of the NWL, no less than 40 articles have directly or indirectly addressed the question concerning the ordination of women and women pastors. The great majority of these articles were primarily comments made against the unscriptural practice of women pastors as they began to appear first in other denominations and Europe and finally among Lutheans in the United States. The frequency of such critical commentaries reached their peak in the 50's, 60's, and 70's,

when the ordination of women became much more common place - especially among other Lutheran bodies.

From an educational standpoint, the numerous articles served the purpose of identifying for our lay readers this unscriptural practice. These articles also served the purpose of demonstrating the fact that this unscriptural practice was striking closer and closer to home. However, most of the articles did little more than identify the problem. Only a very small number of authors attempted to explain the scriptural "why" of the matter. The spiritual food presented was primarily negative - not positive.

However, there were a few notable exceptions to this pattern. In 1940, the article entitled, "Women in the Church", addressed the matter of woman's role in the church, especially the matter of women pastors. The article presents a brief but concise interpretation and application of I Cor. 13:34, I Tim. 2:12-14, and I Cor. 11:8, 9. The majority of the remaining articles related to the ordination of women simply appealed to the key passages or Pieper and Fritz and did not attempt to educate our laymen concerning this important matter. While time and space considerations no doubt have limited the completeness of any scriptural presentation, certainly this is an area worthy of more print as part of our attempt to educate our laymen.

It is interesting to note that according to a survey of Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, the great majority of our laymen: strongly oppose the ordination of women.²⁰ At least most of our people know what the correct answer is - hopefully they also know the scriptural 'why' of this matter.

Women Voters?

The Northwestern Lutheran has not covered this issue pertaining to woman's role in the church nearly as frequently as it has the prior subject. In fact, actual specific references to the scriptural principles pertaining to accepting women voters or woman's suffrage are infrequent.

The first thorough presentation of the scriptural approach to woman suffrage in the church appears in 1931. As noted in Part I of this paper, the essay appeared in response to a controversy that had arisen in the Pacific Northwest District in the summer preceding. After covering the texts and the topic, the writer presents these conclusions:

1. Women shall be subject to men.
2. There is no specific passage in the Bible which denies women a vote in the congregation.
3. Whenever the voting of women is a stepping out of her subordinate position, it is contrary to Scripture.²¹

Another fine presentation appeared in the NWL in 1959.

Professor A. Schuetze addressed the topic: "Why Don't We Have Woman Suffrage in Our Church?" The article was brief but complete. An appeal was made to the I Cor. 14:34 and I Tim. 2:12 passages and the order of creation as God's divine unchanging will. The summary is worth noting:

In considering woman suffrage, then, we are not concerned simply with the "rule" of a certain congregation or of a particular synod, but we are involved in applying what God established in the beginning of time about the relative position of man and woman. If the woman were to participate actively in the congregational meeting, would she not during the discussion and by her vote be setting up her authority against that of man? And so Scripture advises: "Let your women keep silence in the churches," that is, there where their speaking would usurp authority over the man.²²

This article was timely, given the steps that were being taken in the Missouri Synod at that time to change their historical position. Is it possible that since ^{our Synod was} still in fellowship with LCMS at that time, our people were also feeling the pressure for change? It is also noteworthy that since that time (1959) to the present, no articles have been published in the Northwestern Lutheran that would be thorough enough to provide for a positive education of our laymen.

However, there have been a number of brief references to unscriptural woman suffrage. In 1969, the unscriptural suffrage position taken by the Missouri Synod in convention was briefly condemned (NWL, Vol. 56, p. 314). Again in 1979, woman suffrage was less directly condemned in the article "Prevailing Winds" (NWL Vol. 66, p. 179). Other references to this topic in the NWL have been limited and presented little in the way of educating our laymen in a positive way to meet the doctrinal challenge.

Women Officers or Committee Members?

At first glance it may seem that one or both of these roles are scripturally permissible for women if they are not permitted to vote on the congregational level or serve as pastors. However, the answer is not quite that simple. The work of the various boards or committees is not considered to be part of the ministry by many. As a case in point one need only examine the Missouri Synod's position on woman's role in the church. Women pastors are not permitted but they do allow women to serve on various boards and committees at the synodical and lower levels. Such an application is permitted by limiting the application of the

I Cor. 14:34 and I Tim. 2:12 passages to the public use of the Ministry of the Keys. This limitation possible coupled with their misunderstanding of the Office of the Ministry produces the seeming incongruous result.

For us the question that might strike closer to home may be, "May women serve as members of our school boards or on building committees?" Needless to say, almost nothing has been directly spoken of in the NWL to educate our laymen in either a positive or negative way. Although this area may not seem as significant as the other three, preventative education (before problems arise) is much easier than trying to address the matter after numerous conflicts have been identified.

Women Teachers - At What Level?

This issue of all those surrounding woman's role in the church is probably one of the most sensitive. The secondary historical exegetical argument, namely that women "lack the necessary understanding to teach higher levels" has at times made it almost an emotional issue. Because of that it is understandable that I was unable to find any specific reference to the matter in the 70 years of the NWL. And yet as a synod, we must continue to address the question, especially given the prominent role women teachers play in our educational institutions (especially grade schools and high schools) and in a more limited way in our colleges.

CONCLUSION:

The Wisconsin Synod as a church body is a relative late-comer to the field of church bodies whose historical doctrinal position on women's role in the church has been challenged. How well have our laumen been educated to meet this challenge? Certainly the first responsibility for the Christian education of our laymen lies with the local pastor. However, we have another tool that is available to help educate laymen in the Scriptural truths pertaining to woman's role in the Church, ~~namely~~, our official synod publication - The Northwestern Lutheran. It is unfortunate that as a Synod we have used this means only in a very limited way to help educate our laymen in this important matter. Perhaps, now is the time to use the NWL to help educate laymen as we as a Synod join together, with God's help, to retain the Scriptural principles and applications related to woman's role in the church.

FOOTNOTES

1. Sydow, A., "Woman Suffrage in the Church", Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 18 (1931), p. 279
2. E. C. Nelson (ed.), The Lutherans in North America, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, Penn. p.417
3. Ibid., p. 302
4. Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations - The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, "Woman Suffrage in the Church," 1969, p.4
5. Carl Lawrenz, "The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture", Unpublished Essay, p. 12
6. William Henkel, "The Status of Women in the Public Life of the Congregation", Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, 59:1, p. 30
7. Ibid., p. 35
8. William Henkel, "The Status of Women in the Public Life of the Congregation", Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, 58:3, p.9
9. W. R. Gawrisch, "The Place of Women in the Life and Work of the Church," Reprint Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, 66:1 and 66:3, p.9.
10. Ibid., p. 30
11. Ibid., p. 27
12. Ibid., p. 27
13. Lawrenz, op. cit., p. 5
14. Ibid., p. 7
15. Committee Report - Wisconsin Lutheran Synod, "Report on the Committee on the Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture, Unpublished (1982), p. 1.
16. Ibid., p. 7
17. Ibid., p. 7
18. Ibid., p. 8
- 19., Nelson, op. cit., p. 417
20. G. R. Barnes and J. R. Isch, "What We Believe", Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 69 (May, 1982), p. 151

21. Sydow, op. cit., p. 280
22. A. Schuetze, "Why Don't We Have Woman Suffrage in Our Church?", Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 46 (1959), p. 150
23. I. C. You, "Just Checking to See if You Were Checking", The Historical End, 1:1 (April 1, 1984), p.2001ff.