

Consistent Application of the Scriptural Injunctions Concerning the Role of Women in the Church

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In this year of our beloved nation's 200th Birthday, we must remember that by God's grace shed on us, our country was founded as a land of liberty. We have freedoms unlike any nation in history. We should praise God daily for the Constitution of the United States and its Bill of Rights.

It is in the same spirit of liberty and independence that under President Abraham Lincoln, the Emancipation Proclamation of 1865 brought freedom to all slaves in America. More recently in the civil rights movement of the 1960's freedoms were gained more equally for minorities in our nation, especially for the black population.

Now our nation is facing the Equal Rights Amendment, approved by the United States Senate. Nearly a majority of the states have approved it, which is all that is needed for its enactment. It says, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

We agree that equal pay for equal work is fair and not unscriptural. But many also feel that this Amendment will mean opportunity to be employed in any job or calling there is, including the total ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

The feminists and women's liberationist are quick to point to the Church with a critical eye and condemn us for prejudice against women. A former member of my congregation was so taken up in the study of women's liberation in college that, after being dismissed from our congregation for persisting in her errors, wrote a paper for Alverno College professor entitled, "Sexism in the Wisconsin Synod or How to Hate Women with God's Approval." Lately some of the male instructors at that women's liberal arts college in Milwaukee, have brought charges of sex discrimination against the college, because of what they say is an overwhelming concern for the women's liberation movement to the extent that normal academic work has been interfered with.

Perhaps the women's liberation movement has been good for us at least to the extent that we are more conscious of the women's need to feel appreciated, valued, and a part of the world, predominantly run by men as it is. To avoid provoking offense in our feminine sensitive society today, we could perhaps take a few minor steps to improve our preaching and teaching with regard to woman. We could perhaps be more clear in expounding the Scriptures so everyone will better understand that when the Bible says, "God created man in His own image" (Gen. 1:27), it is really speaking of both Adam and Eve, not just Adam. When Paul writes, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10), he means here all people, not just the males. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sins," (Rom. 4:8) is also the Gospel's promise to women. "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25), was spoken by Jesus to Martha. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" is the Lord's comfort to all the children of God, male and female." To them that believe on His name He giveth power to become the sons of God and hath promised them His Holy Spirit. He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved." We hear that every week in the Order of the Morning Service, page 5 in the Lutheran Hymnal. How good that the absolution concludes with the warns, "Grant this, Lord, unto us all."

The point here is simply this. When we criticize the feminists of our day for being overzealous and exaggerating of their cause, let us be careful that we don't commit the same mistake in reverse – overzealously rejecting everything they have to say and thereby throwing out the proverbial baby with the bath water. We as Christians want to be in the forefront of doing what is right, fair, and honest. We want to be examples of

Christian love for our neighbors! Yet this does not mean that therefore we will embrace everything the feminists are saying.

Dr. Martin Luther said that our love must be as broad, wide, and infinite as God's. But our faith must be as narrow and strict as God's Word is! In this way we shall always show that we know the difference between what is a matter of Christian love and what is a matter of Christian faith. What God's Word teaches us and has decided for us to believe, that we must follow closely and cling to with all our heart no matter what our neighbors and the world say against it. God's Word is truth. It alone saves! It shall outlast all generations, even the earth itself! "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). If we build our house of faith on His Word, we shall stand secure against all the storms of life and attacks of the wicked. "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash" (Matt. 7:24-27 NIV).

Now we recognize that in the Church of Jesus Christ we have a ministry in which both men and women are legitimately engaged. In the teaching ministry, we call it, for instance, we have both women and men teachers in practically all levels of Christian education. This, too, is in accordance with the will and Word of God. Scripture, however, clearly lays down the guidelines concerning the roles of men and women in the Church and their ministries. Therefore, we would now like to focus our attention on the proper and consistent application of the Scriptural principles which pertain to such ministries.

Thesis I: God's Order of Creation for Man and Woman has Given them Specific Roles in Marriage.

On the Sixth Day of Creation, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost took counsel together to plan the creation of the first human beings. "And God said, Let us make man (humankind) in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion....Male and female created He them" (Gen. 1:26,27).

God created the man Adam first on the Sixth Day, and then the woman Eve. But both were created on the same day, in the image of the same Lord. Adam was formed of the dust of the ground. Eve was formed of Adam's rib. Both, however, were of the same substance. "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," said Adam of Eve. "She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man" (Gen. 2:23).

Thus at Creation, there was an equality between the husband and wife in a certain way. They were, of course, of the opposite sex. But God perfectly designed each of them. He created and blessed them equally for their roles in the continuation of life. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion..." (Gen. 1:28). As man and woman, they were together the crown of God's visible creation. God made them perfectly to fulfill their particular roles in life physically, intellectually, and emotionally. They were perfectly compatible and complementary to each other. But their roles were not identical.

Adam's role in life as the husband differed from Eve's role as the wife. Adam was created first. Eve was created second and to be Adam's helper. After God had created Adam, He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help (helper) meet (suitable) for him" (Gen. 2:18). Among the other creatures on the earth which God created, Adam had company and helpers. But none could be the suitable companion for Adam that Eve would be. She was a human being like Adam. She was a helper perfectly suited for him.

That then, is the order of creation, so called. Adam was first. Eve was secondary. Adam was made by God to be the head of the first family, the first Church, the first government, the first society, and the first work force. Eve was made by God second, Adam's perfect helper in carrying out his divinely appointed role in the new world. In this Garden of Eden, this Paradise which was their home, all were perfectly in harmony with God's plans and assigned roles. All enjoyed perfect happiness and contentment. Adam and Eve were to work

together in having dominion over the rest of creation. As "one flesh" they constituted one authority to the rest of the creatures, Eve having as much dominion as Adam over the creation of God. But between them, in their relationship to each other, Adam had authority over Eve. He had the responsibility to carry out that God given leadership. Eve had the responsibility to help him do so.

God had shed His grace on them. They were marvelous creations of a loving, heavenly Father. They had a perfectly wonderful home in which to live together as God's first family. They had a beautiful relationship in which both were able to show their faith and love for God by carrying out His will – toward God obeying his Law and Holy will, toward one another by respecting each other as the first and second in order of authority, and toward the rest of creation by taking care of it.

Thesis II: God's Order of Creation Should Reflect itself in the Christian Home by the Husband being the Head of the Wife, in Normal Circumstances.

As Adam was the head of Eve, so every husband is the head of the wife in a Christian home. This is necessary for good order in the home This is reasonable. A car cannot have two steering wheels. Every four years in our country we elect one president. So also in the home, to be able to function properly and carry out its responsibilities from God, there must be a leader. Husband and wife are not to fight for the headship of a family. They are not to compete for it or be constant rivals for it. That would lead to constant "warfare" in the home, as well as also envy and jealousy. One has to be the head. God has chosen and made the husband to be the head. If God had chosen and made the woman to be head, then we would have to be preaching now about that, I suppose, in opposition to the men's liberation movement. But God has chosen the husband to be the head of the wife.

This leadership of the husband, however, does not permit him to be a tyrant or dictator. Rather, he is to exercise that leadership in love and concern for the wife. They are still one flesh. The two become as one. The husband will lead in those ways which benefit not merely himself, for that would be selfishness. In love, the husband will put the needs and desires of others, especially of his wife, even before his own. She now is the number one concern in his life. He is more devoted to her and her happiness than to his father or mother, than his boss or job, than any children their marriage is blessed with, than any friends or neighbors, than any recreational or social interests, than even the congregation of fellow believers.

The husband is to follow Christ as his example of what it means to be the head of the wife. St. Paul writes in Ephesians 5,

The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the Church, His body, of which He is the Savior (v.23). Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing of water through the Word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant Church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the Church – for we are members of His Body. This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the Church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (v.25-33)

The husband as the head of the home is also to see to it that everything in the home is well taken care of. Wherever there is a need, he will also willingly lend a hand or obtain the help necessary for the good of the home. There is no law in the Bible which says that only a wife can cook, clean, shop, or take care of children. It is important for every husband to realize this fact. In this day and age, when it seems many, if not most, wives have full or part time jobs outside the home, the husband must realize that it is almost impossible for-one person to handle two jobs and do them both well. If the husband comes home from work after eight hours on the job and proceeds to relax or entertain himself in his favorite way, how is it considered fair for the wife to still have

to do all the work around the house after also putting in eight hours at a job. Is it not reasonable for the husband to share in those household duties, no matter what they may be, on a 50-50 basis? Even if the wife only works part-time, or perhaps not at all, but still when the husband comes home from his job, and his wife has work around the house still to do, can and should not he also help his wife to take care of those matters too? If the husband expects the wife to be his helper, then he must not make her his slave or hired hand! They are to be partners in marriage. The husband has the first authority. But authority carries with it responsibility and work! It is only right for a husband in loving concern for his wife's well-being, to see to it that she has all that is possible to carry out her role as his fitting helper. Subjugating her by work makes her unfit for the role God has assigned to her.

The husband is head of the wife and family also, especially in regards to their spiritual life. The husband is not only to be sure that his wife and children have all that is necessary for their physical, earthly well-being. He is also responsible before God to see to it he and his family are all together walking in the straight and narrow road which leads to our Home Eternal. He is to give God a place – yes, first place in his heart and home. His life should also be one which leads the family in the example of godly living. He must lead a life of high moral purity. He must see to it that God's Word is learned by all, also the youngest children, as well and as soon as possible. He will take the lead in active church membership, thereby demonstrating for the rest of the family what it means to be committed with all your heart to the Lord Jesus, our Savior! The Apostle Paul, by inspiration of God, said, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4 NIV).

The husband's leadership should be exercised in all areas of life, also in the financial side of the home. He should make sure that they do not purposely or carelessly live beyond their means. He will make sure that their bills are paid promptly, and whenever possible, that extra is laid aside in savings for future needs. The recreation or "play" side of family life is also important and a husband will also take the lead in including his family together in their favorite forms of recreation, especially his wife. It can be said not only that "a family which prays together, stays together," but also "a family which plays together, stays together."

In recent years, husbands have also been encouraged to help their wives in that very special work which she alone can perform for God – be a mother. Husbands have been learning and working together with their wives during the time of their pregnancies. There is nothing of a grander experience to be shared by husband and wife than when both are present and helping in a delivery room, and together feel the wonder and excitement of their child's birth! How glorious must have been Creation itself that a child's birth can still thrill our hearts so! Husbands can be very supportive of their wives in this most difficult time filled with worry, fear, and pain! Those husbands that show such little concern for their wives when in labor, who can't even spend a few hours at the hospital with her because their job or friends or other interests are more important – how miserably they fail in their role as heads of families. They should take the lead in love, concern, helpfulness, and compassion. How blessed by God they will be then!

But what if the husband is not able to carry out his leadership in the marriage because of mental or physical disability? Then, of course, the wife will voluntarily assume that leadership role for as long as such exceptional circumstances prevail in the marriages. But what if the husband refuses to exercise the authority he has been entrusted with, or by neglect or carelessness lets the marriage and family flounder without leadership? The wife in her supportive role, will surely do all she can first to try to help the husband be the head as he was meant to be. She will not take advantage of his carelessness or neglect. As one Christian to another, she will admonish her husband in all Christian patience and love, to assume the responsibilities which God has laid upon him. Perhaps she will, with the husband's permission, then also assume some of the duties and responsibilities of the husband for him, as his helper.

But if he still refuses to occupy the headship of the family, but rather vacates that position by neglect or on purpose, then the wife will again voluntarily take up the headship of the family. The Christian, wherever a need becomes obvious, will immediately do all with his/her means to meet that need. However, let us emphasize once more that if a wife takes the leadership of a marriage or family, it is to be only under extreme situations. This is not to be done under normal circumstances.

Thesis III: God's Order of Creation Should Reflect itself in the Christian Home by the Wife being the fitting Helper of the Husband, in Normal Circumstances

God has ordained that the wife is to be the husband's assistant in the home. She is to support her husband in his leadership role, and encourage him in all the responsibilities that fall on him. She is to second his authority in the marriage, just as he is to second her authority over sons and daughters – as long as each exercises their authority according to God's will. The president and vice-president of a country represent a united authority to all on the outside. However, within that relationship it is the president who has the priority. Nevertheless, we would not feel that because the vice-president is not president that therefore he is useless or inferior. He has just not been placed in the position of leadership that the president has been. But he is very close to it and supports it, as also a wife is very close to being the head and supports the head, but is not the head. To the children and those outside the home there is but one single authority in the home – husband and wife together. But the wife realizes that in the last analysis it is the husband who has the priority. "For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:13).

The wife in a Christian marriage therefore will not challenge her husband's authority over her. She will not compete with him for the respect which is his as head of the family. Many wives even strive, some successfully, to dominate their husbands. They want to be first and their husbands second in leadership. In my ministry I have met many such domineering wives. But I have never met a happy one! God designed human life, marriage, and family life for the happiness and good of all humankind. God the Giver of only good gifts, established the proper relationship between the husband and wife. God says to the wife, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16). He says so in love and blessing to every wife! Wives who treat their husbands like children should not complain then when they fail to be men.

The wife is lovingly to respect and help her husband just as the Church lovingly respects and serves Christ, who is the Head of the Church. Paul says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the Church, His body, of which He is the Savior. Now as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything" (Eph. 5:21-24 NIV).

The wife fulfills her role in marriage best when she not only permits the husband to be the leader in the home, but also encourages and supports him in that role so that he carries out his responsibilities in a God-pleasing manner. Whether a wife realizes it or not, very often she is "the power behind the throne." She can make or break a good husband by whether or not she is seeking in marriage to be her husband's fitting helper.

Women's liberationists have gone to one extreme in proclaiming a wife's freedom from her husband's rule. Male chauvinists have gone to the other extreme in treating women as if they were inferior to men. The "women's libber" reads Genesis 2 and says, "God created man, took a good long look and knew He could do better: He created woman." The male chauvinist, on the other hand, reads Genesis 2 and says, "God created man and He rested; then, He created woman and there's never been any rest since!"

Such kinds of put downs, however, as humorous as they might sound, betray a lack of understanding and appreciation of God's Holy Word, and do not help the cause of Christian marriage, Christian families, or the Christian Church. Rather, let every believing wife be the kind of helper that her husband needs her to be. We should all be sure we are not blindly following some ancient stereotype of what wife should be. There is no law in the Bible which says that only a husband can take out garbage, cut the grass, shovel the snow, drive or wash the car or repair it, be an athlete, paint the house, balance the checkbook, pick out home furnishings, discipline the children, or have a steady job. The woman was created also in the image of God and was perfect in every way as pertains to her feminine role in life. The Apostle Peter writes that husbands should be considerate of their wives and treat them with respect as the "weaker partner" (1 Peter 3:7 NIV). Adam was given to be the head over the creation, which included tilling the ground (Gen. 2:5). The man was given the broader shoulders and stronger physique for his role in life. The average woman does not have the strength or physique to compete

physically with the average man. However, the man would surely be considered "weak" when it comes to carrying and bearing children. God made the woman the strongest for this important part of her role in life. After the Fall into sin the roles of both the man and the woman were filled with great effort, toil, frustration, pain, and sorrow, all ending in death. "Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam He said, because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:16-19).

There are certain stereotypes of husbands and wives which we need avoid as our examples in life. Neither should we automatically suspect that others are following them. The "Archie Bunker" type of husband pictures men as bigoted, loud and vulgar tongued, ill-mannered, sloppily dressed, dull of mind and strong of back, short tempered and easily intoxicated. The man of God is not that way, for through faith in Christ the Holy Spirit has had His way in his heart. The Christian man does not try to get out of his responsibilities as husband and/or father. He does not forsake his God-given role in the home as its head. He does not blame the family for his mistakes and weaknesses. He does not desert the family emotionally or physically when the going gets tough. The Christian husband and father is the man who follows Christ's example and out of love for his wife and children will even lay down his life if need be, just as the Lord Jesus loved us and gave up Himself for our benefit now and eternally.

The stereotype of wives that degrades women should be put aside, too. That is perhaps the "Edith Bunker" type who is pictured as being foolish, slavishly obedient to her husband, emotionally unstable, irrational, gossipy, a spender, weakling and coward, lazy, and over indulgent of food and television. She does not support her husband's authority in the home nor is a fitting helper. She prefers the easy way out of work, pressure, and trouble. But the Christian wife and mother is the woman of God who loves and helps her husband, encourages and respects his leadership in the same way as believers in faith and love respect Christ our Savior.

The ravages of sin have brought upon our world many Archie Bunker families. We must all hope and pray that such a family does not become common in America! Surely it is high time for the Christian families, especially the husbands and wives, to be the salt and light of the world that Christ has called them to be! We need to resist the same temptations to escape from or rebel against our God-given roles in the home! We need to give ourselves whole-heartedly to the Christian station in life in which we find ourselves and in sincere fear, love, and trust in God seek to carry out our responsibilities with the helping grace of God!

To summarize the relationship between husband and wife as laid down for us by the Lord in His inspired word, we quote from Professor Schuetze's *Family Life Under Christ*, page 14:

It is to be noted that Paul does not say to the wives: "Submit yourselves, if your husband truly loves you." He does not say to the husband: "Love your wives if they are submissive." Verse 33 (of Ephesians 5) clearly enjoins each to meet his/her responsibility completely apart from any consideration of the other's actions. But experience teaches that where the husband loves, he will inspire submission; that where the wife trustingly submits, she will generate love. Let each bring to the marriage relationship what God Himself calls for.

Thesis IV: God's Order of Creation should Reflect itself in the Christian Church by Women Respecting the Men whom God has Placed in Authority over them.

The Bible speaks of the relationship of the husband and wife, and also of the relationship of man and woman in the Christian Church. But in every such relationship of men and women, that relationship should be according to the order of creation. God has placed the man first in authority and the woman second in this creation. God wants the men to carry out their responsibilities in a congregation as leaders of God's people. God

wants the women to help and support the men in the leadership of the congregation according to God's will from the beginning. There are no special laws in the Bible which pertain only to relationship of the man and woman in the Church. That relationship is traced by St. Paul back to the creation (1 Timothy 2:11-14).

Some of the confusion over this point seems to come from the false idea that the Christian Church is supposed to be a sanctified form of democracy. But the fact is, it is a monarchy. Christ is the Head of the Church. He is our King. He rules the world and the Church for the good of the believers. We do not merely elect our Synod officials, missionaries, pastors, or teachers. We call them and believe that when they accept a Call, it is the Lord Himself who has called them and placed them in their role in the Church. The family does not elect the father and mother either. God has joined the couple together. He blessed them with a family. The parents have authority over the children and the husband over the wife, and all under God. The same can be said of the Church! And all there, too are under God!

Therefore, the rights we have in the Church and the family are not ours by merit, nature, or desire. Our rights as Christians are those granted to us by our gracious Lord. The rights of a democracy are those decided on according to human reason, the common good, and the will of the people. The rights of the Church are those given to us by God. Our rights and roles of authority are privileges from our gracious Lord!

Some of the rights of Christians are common to all. We all equally share in the priesthood of all believers. Dr. Luther writes in his *Small Catechism*: "The Ministry of the Keys is the peculiar authority of the Church, given by Christ to His Church on earth, to forgive the sins of penitent sinners unto them, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent." We all have the right or privilege to preach the Word of God, admonishing the impenitent with the Law and comforting the penitent with the Gospel. Every Christian has the divine right to administer the Means of Grace – the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. We are all familiar with the last page in the *Lutheran Hymnal*, which contains "A Short Form for Holy Baptism in Cases of Necessity." There we are told: "In urgent cases, in the absence of the Pastors any Christian may administer Holy Baptism."

We could use the same wording regarding the Sacrament of the Altar, too. There, in urgent cases in the absence of a Pastor, any Christian may administer the Holy Communion. But I think we all feel that there must be some limitations implied in these words.

We naturally feel that any Christian may do so if he/she knows and understands what to do. The same could be said of sharing the Word of God personally. As long as they know what to do, they have the right. A child is a Christian through Holy Baptism. But we would not expect that child to exercise his/her right to preach the Gospel to his neighbor until he/she "have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). Yet how many of us do not remember and cherish the Word of God coming from the mouths of babes in church services or our homes! Once they can understand and speak it, they should. "Our Lord Jesus entrusted the Keys to His disciples, that is, to the whole Christian Church on earth, the royal priesthood of all believers" (Q 370 in the *Small Catechism*, NPH). The Lord Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20 NIV). The Apostle Peter wrote, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9 NIV).

This equality among all the people of God pertains to their creation, their redemption, and their sanctification. St. Paul preached to the Greeks at the Areopagus,

From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, "We are His children." (Acts 17:26-28)

Concerning our redemption by Christ, Paul writes to the Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28,29). In God's eyes, all people are living only by the will of God. All people are redeemed from all sin and its consequences, not by their own merit, but solely by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, who atoned for all sin through His death on the Cross.

All people who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior are sanctified by the Holy Spirit and are counted holy in God's eyes. The Holy Spirit has brought them to faith in Christ through the Gospel and thereby bestowed on them the forgiveness of sins, life, and eternal salvation. The Apostle Paul writes, "But you (the congregation) were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11).

As equally blessed as the people of God are in the Kingdom of God and as equally they share in the Ministry of the Keys, there are, however, limitations on the ministry of God's people. These limitations pertain especially to the public ministry of God's people, not to their private ministry. In private, they still share God's Word with others. In private, they will still administer the Sacraments when because of urgency a pastor is not available to do so.

So although all have the right of the private ministry of the Gospel, the public ministry has been entrusted to mature Christian adults, and not to children. The adults have authority over the children in the public ministry of the Gospel. Similarly, though all adults may minister privately, the Lord teaches us that publicly we should not minister the Gospel unless we are sent or called by the Church to do so (Rom. 10:15). The final limitation in the public ministry of the Gospel is that although both men and women can be called into this work, the men have authority over the women by the order of creation.

The Apostle writes, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbirth, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" (1 Timothy 2:11-15 NIV). The Apostle Paul is speaking here of the public ministry of the church for in the verses before this section he gave instructions regarding the worship and prayer life of the church. He also suggests the manner of dress for women in worship. "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God" (vv.9-10). Paul wants the women to be more concerned about their Christian life and virtues than about how they look to others. Paul doesn't want a church service to become a beauty contest or fashion show, but one which brings glory and honor to Christ and serves to build up His Kingdom.

But then he tells us that a woman in church, including any in the ministry of the Gospel, should learn in quietness and full submission to the men of the congregation. She is not to become the authority or ruler over the men, but is to be silent and listen so that the men may teach and exercise their authority in the ministry of God's people. Paul shows that this is because of God's original order of creation and not just a preference for his day and age. Adam was given priority over Eve. When Eve disregarded that priority and became the leader in the first family, she was deceived by the devil. But the woman has been fully redeemed as the man, as long as she continues in true Christian faith. Adam, of course, also sinned by following the lead of his wife and eating of the forbidden tree also. He is not guiltless here. Paul merely wants to emphasize that Adam was supposed to take the leadership in all things. Eve should have let him do so. Instead, Eve exercised authority over Adam and he let her. They both sinned grievously.

So in the Church, women are permitted to serve in the public ministry, but only in such a way so that the men of the congregation remain in authority over them. A woman is a teacher, but only under the authority of men and not over them. The male teacher has the authority over the female teacher. The pastor, because he is a man, has authority over the female teacher. The congregation's male voters assembly has authority over the whole congregation. All are under God's will from creation.

Women may teach and exercise authority over children, when they are not violating the authority of men in the congregation. We call women, therefore, into the full time ministry of the Christian Day school. They teach also in part time agencies of Christian education such as the Sunday school and vacation Bible school. A woman may be the principal of a Christian Day school or the superintendent of the Sunday school, if there are no men able to handle such responsibilities. But they should not hold such positions of authority without the consent of the men of the congregation nor where they would be in authority over men.

Can we be sure this is not just Paul's male chauvinism sticking out? Can we be sure it was not just the popular custom of that age and culture? Listen to the inspired Apostle:

As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Did the Word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored. Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. (1 Cor. 14:33-40)

Here we can plainly see that what Paul says is the command of the Lord, God's will from creation, and not just Paul's personal opinion or preference. The liberals in many Christian churches today argue that Paul here speaks according to the prevailing customs of his day. That is not true, for he expressly states, "as the Law says" (v.34) and "what I am writing to you is the Lord's command" (v. 37).

Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul does lay down some other policies he wants followed in the congregations he founded, such as women covering their heads in public worship. But admits there that this is not some kind of New Testament ceremonial law of the Lord, but just his personal and wise preference due to the society of his day. At the end of 1 Corinthians 11:2-15, where Paul sets forth the policy of women covering their heads, he concludes the section by saying, "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (v.16). The uncovering of the woman's head in public in Corinth tended to brand her as a morally loose woman. No Christian woman would like that kind of reputation. Paul therefore encouraged the women to cover their heads, at least in church, so she would not look like a hypocrite. But it was only a custom that pertained to that time and place, not a divine rule for all time.

Since the 1920's our church has had to contend with women's suffrage, which our civil authorities have granted. May a woman vote in a congregational meeting? What uniform practice should follow? These are questions which also pertain to the woman's God ordained role in life since creation.

Every Christian congregation or fellowship has certain work to take care of for its spiritual and earthly life. It must do such things as call workers, elect officers, manage its funds and property, make membership changes, and admonish fellow Christians. Such activities call for decisions, which congregations make by voting. Therefore, "the right to make decisions by voting is a leadership role," as Professors Schuetze and Habeck state in *The Shepherd Under Christ*. Voting is a means of ruling a body. It is an exercise of authority. Voting rights can be granted only to those who have been given by God the right to have authority in the congregation. That authority rests with the male members, as God's will has shown since creation.

Surely the women of the congregation have brains and good Christian judgment. Any woman of the congregation may have authority and make decisions by voting within her role as a Christian woman. She makes decisions concerning the spiritual and earthly life of her family, of course. A woman teacher will do the same for her pupils. The Christian woman will vote in a woman's assembly of the congregation. But to vote together with the men in a congregational assembly would be in violation of God's Word. The woman may still protest an unchristian act or policy of the congregation, which is in violation of God's Word. That is the right of every Christian.

The entire adult membership of the congregation may wish to meet together, both men and women, to discuss certain matters which are of vital concern to all the members, such as a congregation's specific needs or programs. Keeping the membership informed or even gathering opinions from all the members is not granting voting rights to everyone. Men are surely not experts in everything. Being able to see a problem also from a woman's view point will enable a decision to be made (by the voters) which will be of benefit to the greater number of members. But the making of decisions, the setting of policies or of directions for the congregation is the authority and right of the adult male members only.

The authority naturally carries with it responsibilities which concern the entire congregation. The voters of a congregation have the responsibility to care for the spiritual needs of the children, though the children are not personally present in the decision making process. Likewise, the voters assembly must be concerned about the spiritual life of the women of the congregation, even though they are not personally present in the voters meeting either. The voters, in a sense, are therefore representatives of the entire congregation and make decisions for the good of the whole Church. Paul said to the elders of the church at Ephesus, "Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood" (Acts 20:28 NIV). In the Order for the Installation of a Church Council, *The Lutheran Agenda* includes these duties of their office:

You are to be associated with me, the appointed minister of the Word, in the work of upbuilding the Kingdom of God among us. You are to see that the services of God's house be held regularly and conducted decently and in order; that the Gospel be preached in its purity, in accordance with the sound Lutheran faith; that the necessary provisions be made for the instruction of the young; and that Christian discipline be maintained. You are to administer the temporal affairs of the congregation, keep its property in good repair, and provide for the pastor's support and for all other necessary expenses. You are to assist the pastor in the care of the sick and the needy, in the cultivation of peace, harmony, and love among the members, in the promotion of the general welfare of the congregation, and in the furtherance of Christ's Kingdom at home and abroad.

Realizing the wide scope of authority and responsibility resting on the men of the congregation, they will need the help and support of the entire congregation. All the members, men and women and children, can help those in authority by making known to them the needs of the congregation as they arise. No pastor, teacher, voter, or member is clairvoyant or omniscient. They depend on the eyes and ears, the hands and feet, of the entire congregation to take care of the entire congregation's needs.

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above. (LH 464:1)

Thesis V: God's Order of Creation may Reflect itself Slightly Differently in Individual Situations, Because of Exceptional Circumstances, Needs, or Personal Judgments.

As the time of the End draws nearer, the problems afflicting the Church will also increase. There are conditions in the Church today which our forefathers never had visions would occur. There are problems which must be worked out with patience, time, and evangelical admonition. So far, we hope that this paper has provided some guidelines for the uniform practice of our churches applying the Scriptural injunctions which pertain to the role of women in the church. How these guidelines will apply in every situation, however, is impossible for us to cover in one such paper. There will always be exceptions to the rule, also when it comes to the rules of God. For instance, the fifth commandment does not forbid all forms of killing. An exception is made by the Scriptures to enable the government to inflict the death penalty when necessary (Rom. 13). We cannot make rules to fit every exception. Rather, the exceptions prove the rule.

But a few of the more common exceptions could be considered here. For instance, what about women organists or soloists? Is it proper for women to serve the congregation in this manner, or are they having authority over men by so serving? We do insist, of course, that because they are joining us in worship by playing or singing for a service at the request of the congregation, that therefore they should be people of our fellowship, otherwise we'd be guilty of religious unionism, forbidden by God in Romans 16:17. Perhaps we would do well to encourage more of our men with musical abilities, especially our male teachers, to develop and use their talents in this manner. But if a congregation needs an organist or soloist to serve in the congregation's worship, and the one with the talents is a woman, we would be despising such God-given talents if use failed to make use of them.

The same could also be said in the case of a choir director or perhaps the treasurer of a congregation. In these cases, because they have more of a leadership role in a congregation, men would be preferred. But if there are no men available with such special talents, and there are women in the congregation who do have the talents, we should make use of such talents in the congregation's service. Note: we are not recommending this as standard procedure, but only in exceptional cases.

Women could serve the congregation by assisting the men in other ways, too. They could help the finance committee count the weekly offerings. Women could help not only by singing with the choir, but also by helping in a congregation's evangelism outreach. Stewardship committees have used women in their every member visitations. Women have helped also, I've heard, as ushers at worship services.

There are congregations in urban areas where the majority of adult members are women. Due to the shortage of men, they may delegate some of the matters of the congregation usually done by the men, to qualified women in the congregation. However, in all these situations, it should still be under the supervision of the male voters assembly and by their authority. In none of these cases then would women be given authority over men.

A similar application could be made in the secular world, too. Although this matter is outside the scope of this paper, surely the relationship of men and women is not limited to the walls of the church or home. It is still God's primary rule that the woman not have authority over the man (1 Timothy 2:12). However, in the lack of qualified men, able to take the lead also in secular matters, where a woman is so qualified to do, then she should fill that exceptional vacancy by using her God-given abilities in His service.

The Bible also mentions such exceptional practices being done. Luther states,

Some women have been very good at management: Huldah, Deborah, and Jael, the wife the Kenite, who killed Sisera (2 Kings 22; Judges 4). Where men and women have been joined together, there the men, not the women, ought to have authority. An exceptional example is the case where they are without husbands, like Huldah and Deborah who had no authority over husbands. Another lived in Abela (2 Sam. 20:14-21). The evangelist Philip had four unmarried daughters (who prophesied; Acts 21:9). He forbids teaching contrary to a man or to the authority of a man. Where there is a man, there no woman should teach or have authority. Where there is no man, Paul has allowed that they can do this, because it happens by a man's command. He wants to save the order preserved by the world – that a man be the head of the woman, as 1 Cor. 11:3 tells us. (*Luther's Works*, Vol 28, CPH, page 276f.)

But let us stress once more that in every situation in which a woman has been permitted to rule beyond her usual role, due to exceptional circumstances, it should still be carried out in a manner befitting the woman as man's helper and not as his head.

In conclusion, we could say simply that the Lord has set the man as first in authority in creation and the woman second. Each role has its responsibilities and privileges. Both men and women will help and encourage each other to carry out their God-ordained roles in life. In this way, good decency and order will be maintained in the world so that the primary purpose of the Gospel – the edifying of the Church – be carried out.

It is impossible to try to answer every question in your minds, without knowing every question that will come up. I feel a little like television's "Karnak", who first gets the answers and then tries to divine the questions that fit the answers. I do not claim such powers, real or imaginary. In all things, we want to follow closely the Word of God, which alone is "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths" (Ps. 119:105). And in the practice of our Christian faith, we want to let love for God and our neighbor come before all else. Even when we seek to follow the Word of God carefully, we do so in Christian love for our fellow believers, lest we offend the weak. Rather than boldly insisting on our rights or suddenly overthrowing the customs that have prevailed in congregations for generations, we will use Christian love and patience, gently applying Scripture for the benefit of the entire Church.

God's Word is our great heritage and shall be ours forever;
 To spread its light from age to age shall be our chief endeavor.
 Through life it guides our way, in death it is our stay.
 Lord, grant, while worlds endure, we keep its teachings pure
 Throughout all generations. Amen. (LH 283)

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