

Elucidations and Additional Substantiations on “The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture”*

Carl Lawrenz

[Presented to President Mischke and the Council of Presidents of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in response to their inquiries,
June 2, 1980]

Dear President Mischke:

You state: *"Some of the presidents are wondering whether your sentence: 'God is speaking of man as the male generically, not merely of Adam as the first individual,' can be further substantiated or elucidated."*

The sentence in question is made in connection with my translation of Genesis 2:18: "It is not good for man to be alone." The Hebrew has an article (אִתְּךָ) and both the KJV and the NIV retain the article in "It is not good for the man to be alone." I indicate my reason for omitting the article by saying: "God is speaking of man as the male generically, not merely of Adam as the first individual." Note, I am not denying that God is also speaking of Adam as the first human individual. But what I want to bring out is that God is not merely speaking of Adam as the first individual. On the contrary, he is principally speaking of him generically, as representing the human male. It is a generic article.** If God were speaking of Adam exclusively as an individual, the first individual, he would undoubtedly have used "Adam" as a proper noun without the article, as we find it in Genesis 5:1 and 5:3-5, where in the genealogy facts are given which pertain only to the individual Adam and to no one else.

In the divine statement of Genesis 2:18 under discussion, however, God expresses a double concern:

- a) What would not be good for Adam as an individual;
- b) What would not be good for the class of human males whom Adam represents.

I take the latter concern of God to be the principal one in the whole account of Genesis 2:18-25. It needs to be kept in not address the statement in question to Adam. Rather, God's inspired writer Moses states "the Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone" in order to inform us concerning God's thoughts which prompted him to create woman and to institute marriage.

- a) God was indeed concerned about what was not good for Adam as the first human individual. He says so: "I will make a helper suitable for him," Note that God did not act in this matter until Adam as the first individual through the assigned task of naming the animals which God passed before him had come to realize his need for the very helper whom God intended to supply and until he felt a deep desire for such a helper. Then first did God create Eve by forming her from a rib out of Adam's body. This certainly showed concern for Adam as an individual. When God then brought Eve to Adam, he acknowledged that in contrast to all the animals which he had carefully examined and named, she was just the kind of helper that he

* "The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture" is available at <http://www.wlsessays.net/node/1338>.

** Though English also has a generic article, it is quite specialized in its use. Idiomatic English generally omits the article in using a noun generically. That is why I translated Genesis 2:18: "It is not good for man to be alone." Hebrew on the other hand generally uses the article with the noun in expressing a generic idea. For example, when in Genesis 2:11 we are told that in the region of Havilah, adjacent to Paradise, there was gold, the Hebrew has a generic article: "...where there was the gold (hazzāhābh)." Both the KJV and the NIV omit the article in translating: "...where there is gold." I will grant, however, that in the particular statement of God in verse 18 the use of an article also in English is neither strange nor out of place, but a matter of preference. For here God is also speaking about the first human individual, for whom he intends to do something very specific; yet God's concern in doing it is not exclusively or even principally for him as the first human individual. That is why I prefer to omit the article in English.

as the first human individual needed and deeply desired. With amazement and joy he received her from God's hand, exclaiming: "This one this time is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."

- b) It becomes even more evident, however, that it was not merely out of concern for Adam as the first human individual that God formed this new person out of Adam's rib. I contend that the account shows that God principally thought both of Adam and of Eve generically. For this contention I see a double basis:

1. The emphasis that the generic view of Adam and Eve receives in the Genesis 2:18-24 account.

Adam himself indicated that he realized that it was not merely out of concern for him as an individual that God formed this new person out of his rib. He indicated it by his additional exclamation: "This one shall be called woman, for out of man was this one taken."

Note that Adam is not speaking of a personal proper name which he intends to give this new person because she was formed from him to be a helper to him. Rather, with an impersonal construction (yĕkārē, she will be called) he declares that a class name, woman, will be given to her and to all who through her and with her will constitute this class. And why will she receive this class name? Because she was taken out of man, ʾīsh. Note Adam also refers to himself out of whom she was taken with a class name, ʾīsh, the human male. From this statement it is evident that Adam realized that the new human person whom God had made represented a class, ʾīshshah, woman, the female sex, a class specially created out of man, ʾīsh, the class of human males to which he himself belonged. He realized that in the creation of Eve womanhood was created as a fitting helper for manhood, brought into existence in the earlier creation of Adam.

This generic understanding of Adam and Eve is brought out even more fully by the inspired comment which Moses adds: "For this reason (ʾāl cēn) a man, ʾīsh, will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." For this reason, namely, for the reason that God made woman, the female sex, to be a fitting helper, a suitable complement for man, the male sex, it will occur again and again that a man, ʾīsh, will leave his father and mother and will be united to his woman, ʾīshṭō, and they will become one flesh. Thus marriage continues to be established before God, just as the first marriage of Adam and Eve was established before God: namely, when Adam with joyful amazement received Eve whom God had made and brought to him, and when Eve in turn was willing to be thus received by him. Marriage is established by an unconditional mutual commitment of a man and a woman to one another to become husband and wife. The man is spoken of as taking the initiative, but the woman's unconditional consent is just as clearly implied. How otherwise would the man know that she is his woman to whom he is determined to cling?

2. Second basis: The clarity with which the generic understanding of Adam and Eve's creation is brought out in the New Testament.

Hand in hand with this goes the clarity with which Adam and Eve's creation and their uniting in marriage are distinguished. The creation of the sexes and their joining in marriage are distinguished, even though it is made evident that each of the sexes was

made in such a way that it would principally serve marriage, the basic God-ordained unit for human society in this life.

Jesus in Matthew 19:4-5: "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.'" Jesus sees in the creation of Adam and Eve in the beginning the creation of the two sexes. He also points out that the creation of the sexes principally served the institution of marriage: "For this reason."

St. Paul's use of Genesis 2:18-25 in his epistles: The generic emphasis with reference to the creation of man and woman is brought out by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:8,9: "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man." The anarthous terms, man and woman, are indisputably generic in the Greek and also in the English translation. Though the Greek vocable for man and woman can also mean husband and wife the latter meaning cannot be applied throughout 1 Corinthians 11:2-12. That meaning definitely does not fit into the context of verses 7, 8, 12.

In 1 Timothy 2:13 we read: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." Even here where St. Paul uses the proper names of the first two human individuals, it is nevertheless evident that he thinks of them generically, that their respective creation henceforth determined the role of man and woman and their relationship to one another in this life. Only with this understanding can St. Paul use what he says in verse 13 as his first basis for not permitting a woman "to have authority over a man."

You also state: *"Similarly, the two later paragraphs beginning with the words 'We will have to say that the distinctive roles, etc.' and 'We properly speak of this divine arrangement, etc.' Can this be further elaborated?"*

Contrary to what we have elaborated and elucidated above, some do not recognize a distinction in Genesis 2 between the creation of the two sexes and the institution of marriage. They also do not acknowledge that a subordination of woman to man is set forth in chapter 2 either in marriage or apart from marriage. They contend that even in marriage there was no subordination of the wife to her husband before the fall. They do, however, acknowledge a subordination of the wife to her husband in marriage since the fall. They see this subordination established in Genesis 3:16 as a punishment for the woman's fall into sin, laid upon her when God said to the woman: "...your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

This interpretation, however, does justice neither to chapter 2 and 3 of Genesis, nor to the rest of Scripture.

- a) Nowhere does Scripture place the sole or even the prime responsibility for the fall into sin upon the woman. Yet if Eve was subordinated to her husband and bidden to be in submission to him as a punishment for her fall into sin, then Adam would be absolved of all guilt in being appointed to rule over her. Then Adam's excuse of blaming Eve: "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it" would be upheld. Actually Adam's excuse revealed his own total depravity since his fall into sin. He now selfishly made Eve, whom he had previously received from God with joyful, thankful amazement, the butt of his excuses.

Yet Genesis 3 by no means absolves Adam of full responsibility for his fall into sin. According to Genesis 3:17-19 the Lord God severely rebuked Adam for defaulting in his

assigned leadership role. Because Adam instead of exercising leadership had listened to his wife, he is now to suffer constant insubordination from the ground over which God had given him dominion. It was to be a constant needed reminder of the manner in which he had disobeyed God, so that he might look all the more firmly to God's gracious promise and gift of salvation. Not work in itself in the sense of an assigned task and responsibility was the chastisement laid upon the man in his sinful state. He had an assigned task even in his state of perfection in the Garden of Eden, namely, "to work it and to take care of it." He had the responsibility of ruling over all of God's creatures and over all the earth and to subdue it. The chastisement laid upon man in his state of sin consisted rather in the lifelong toil and weariness, in the difficulties, hardships, inadequacies, and frustrations which he would experience in his God-assigned tasks and responsibilities, in his leadership role. Since the fall into sin the lot of Adam is still the lot of all manhood whom he represents.

Deceived by Satan, Eve on the other hand in her fall into sin had assumed a leadership role which not been assigned to her. Seeking exquisite delights and superior wisdom, which were deceptively held out to her by Satan, Eve gave up her trust in the Lord and took the initiative in transgressing God's commandment and then persuaded Adam to follow her in her sin. As a chastisement to keep her constantly mindful of her sin, she was now to suffer much pain and distress instead, and that particularly in connection with her God-assigned basic role as wife and mother. She who had acted independently of her husband was to hear: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." Yes, she was given to hear that God's order, established at creation, still stood, and would continue to stand. Her natural concreated desire for her own husband would continue to assert itself, yet in her state of sin selfishness would also assert itself and she would not be able to carry out her submission to him in perfect love. Her husband would continue to rule over her; yet in the state of sin this rule would be in constant danger of degenerating into heartless domination and chauvinism. Since the fall into sin the lot of Eve is still the lot of womanhood whom she represents. Yet Genesis 3:16 is the reaffirmation, not the establishment of the woman's subordination to her husband in marriage. This subordination was established in woman's creation and is to express itself most specifically in marriage.

In 1 Timothy 2:13 the point that St. Paul makes is not that Eve bears the prime responsibility for the fall into sin. His point is rather this that Eve in contrast to Adam became a sinner because she was deceived. In a most momentous matter she had assumed the leadership role, for which she had not been created and for which she was therefore not particularly suited. Only with this understanding does Eve's fall through deception become an argument for the apostolic assertion: "I do not permit a woman...to have authority over a man." On the other hand, when Paul states "and Adam was not the one deceived," he is not thereby saying that Adam was less of a sinner than Eve. His was the grievous sin of the leader who was not deceived but let himself be persuaded to enter upon sin against his better knowledge.

- b) Presenting the woman's subordination to her husband in marriage as a punishment and consequence of sin is not in keeping with the scriptural concept of the marriage relationship. It degrades the woman's submission to her husband in marriage as her head. It is not in keeping with the Lord's use of the marriage bond, of the relationship between husband and wife in marriage, both in the Old and New Testament to depict the blessed relationship between him and his people, his church of believers (Isa. 54:5, 62:4,5; Jer. 3:14, 31:32; Hos. 1:2, 2:19,20; Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7-9). This use of the marriage bond and of the relation between husband and wife in marriage remains fitting and meaningful only when with St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 on the basis of Genesis 2 we lead it back to God's order of creation:

"the head of the woman is man. . . . For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man." This order of creation was to be most explicitly expressed in marriage.

With this understanding Paul could indeed write: "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. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with 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."

It is a blessed privilege for the church of believers to submit to Christ who has redeemed us in self-sacrificing love. To do so as believers in thankful love is the height of blessedness. So also the wife will find the true blessedness of God's gift of the marriage bond to the extent that she submits in love to her husband as her head; similarly the husband will find, the true blessedness of God's gift of the marriage bond to the extent in which he exercises his headship over his wife in Christ-like self-sacrificing love. The evil consequence of sin for the marriage bond lies not in the woman's submission to her husband as her head, nor in the husband's rule over her as the head. The evil consequence of sin upon marriage lies rather in this that a sinful nature keeps even a Christian husband from fully exercising his headship over his wife in a Christ-like self-sacrificing love, and in this that a sinful nature likewise keeps even a Christian wife from submitting to her husband in everything in a perfect love. Thus even Christian spouses can only approximate the full blessedness which God had in mind for them as he originally instituted the marriage bond and the marriage relation upon creation.

- c. Some seem to have difficulty with the statement that the relationships established by God at creation are apart of the moral law. They are accustomed to think of the moral law in terms of the Ten Commandments as Luther has explained them on the basis of the New Testament. They recognize, of course, that only that is God's immutable holy will for all men which is repeated as binding in the New Testament Scriptures. They acknowledge that the Mosaic Law Code was a special discipline binding only for God's Old Testament people Israel, and binding only for them until the completion of the Savior's work of redemption. They somehow fail to find Luther's explanations of the Ten Commandments speaking explicitly, however, of an order of creation, or of any of the relationships which are summed up with this term.

Upon careful thought it should become evident, however, that these relationships ordained by God at creation are the structure behind the Ten Commandments as explained by Luther on the basis of the New Testament; they are the structure behind the immutable holy will of God that is binding for all human beings in this life. You cannot teach and expound the first three commandments without first recognizing and acknowledging the relationship that exists between God as the Creator and human beings as his rational creatures. You cannot expound and teach the second table of the law without realizing and acknowledging that God has placed all human beings on one and the same plane and bids us to love them as ourselves. The various commandments of the second table merely unfold the different spheres in which we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Yet within the second table of the law you cannot teach or expound the Fourth Commandment without realizing and acknowledging the God-

ordained relationship which God has established since creation between parents and children, and between all others whom God has somehow placed over us as our superiors. It is a part of God's immutable holy will that in addition to the love which we owe parents and superiors as human beings we accord them special obedience, honor, and esteem. Thus also the relationship which God has established by creation between the sexes and the way in which God would have us recognize and express this relationship inside and outside of marriage needs to be understood if we are to expound God's immutable holy will concerning the sphere covered by the Sixth Commandment.

I hope that this communication covers some of the elucidations and additional substantiations which you and the district presidents have requested.

Cordially and fraternally,

(signed)

Professor Carl Lawrenz