

Exploring Old Testament Foundations that Support Distinct Roles for Men and Women in Work, Worship, and their Walk Together

By, John C. Lawrenz

[Prepared for the Pastoral Conference of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, November 12, 2004]

Introduction

Allow me to thank my Christian brothers in Ukraine for the invitation to speak at this year's pastoral conference. It is a joy once again to serve the Ukrainian Lutheran Church. You all continue to be in my thoughts and prayers. Thirteen months ago, while living in Ukraine, I traveled to Hong Kong for a week to speak on this topic to the Lutheran pastors of the South Asia Evangelical Lutheran Mission (SALEM).¹ During the first half of 2005 I will be a guest professor once again at St. Sophia, lecturing on Genesis, whose opening chapters dominate the paper I am about to present.²

As my contribution to your on-going concern for God-pleasing gender roles in the church, I would like to examine with you the Old Testament foundation upon which Jesus and the apostles built their teaching regarding the roles given to men and women in God's world. A year ago Pastor Serhiy Borshch presented a paper on this subject at a meeting of the pastors of the Kyivan eparchy. May God bless our efforts to honor his Word. *Slava Bohu! Slava Isusu Christu! Slava naviki!*

We live in a world sin stains everything. We Christians look forward to a time when our struggles with sin will finally be over. We yearn for Christ's return. Scripture only gives us a glimpse of what eternity with God will be like. These things are sure! There will be a new heaven and a new earth. In this new creation sin will have no place. God will restore perfect order and goodness to all things. Our bodies will be real, but immortal. The mistakes of the past will be left behind. Only deeds done in thankful love for our Savior will be remembered. Then each of us will be what God wants us to be—perfect and holy, yet fully human. We will be like Adam and Eve before the Fall and like Christ Jesus after his resurrection.³

Until that time sin makes us struggle!⁴ It hinders our work together as members of the body of Christ, his church. It makes difficult the relations between men and women, both inside and outside of the church. Our weapons in this struggle are God's Word, our baptism and the body and blood of Jesus. With such tools we do not take polls to determine what is right or wrong. We do not bend to the arguments of philosophy. Sociology is not our dogma. We can't even follow the lead of our God-given consciences. Under sin's influence conscience is able to accuse and excuse falsely in areas where God has not spoken.

I was asked to speak to a gathering of university students in Madison, Wisconsin, a few years ago. The question for the evening was, "Does the church oppress women?" Madison is a hotbed of liberal thinking and a place where radical equality between the sexes is taken for granted. Those who came to hear me expected me to say "No, the church does not oppress women!" How surprised they were when I answered their question with a "Yes!" I sat down. There was silence.

After a short pause, I got up from my chair and explained. The church is a healing place for sinners and it is led by sinners. Only Christ, the head of the church, is sinless. He called twelve disciples to lead. And, as Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:3, the church has been passing on the task of leadership to men ever since. If men are sinners and men lead, sinful human behavior directed against women will appear. The Word of God is our tool to define what is sinful. God's Spirit, working through the Word of God, moves sinners to confess their sins. And that same Word of God gives us the power and authority to forgive sins."

¹ My current position is professor of Old Testament and administrator of Asia Lutheran Seminary, Hong Kong.

² Genesis is a subject that I learned already as a boy. My father, Carl J. Lawrenz taught Genesis at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary from 1944 until his retirement in 1983. His commentary on the opening chapters of Genesis was published by Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this fall in English. Like my father I taught Genesis at Mequon from 2000 until joining you in Ukraine in March 2003.

³ These truths are presented in 1 Corinthians 14.

⁴ Recall the struggle of the Apostle Paul with his sinful nature described in Romans 7.

The New Testament draws from the Old Testament

The key New Testament passages that deal with male and female issues turn to the Old Testament Scriptures. Let's do the same. I will quote the New Testament passages for you. I will underline words that I believe appeal to the authority of the Old Testament. I will indicate in brackets the precise verses to which Jesus and the apostles turned. In most cases, unless otherwise noted, the verses are from the book of Genesis.

(A) Jesus said in Matthew 19:4-12: "**Haven't you read...that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female** [1:27] **...for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?** [2:24] **So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together** [2:22⁵], **let man not separate. 'Why then,' they asked, 'did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce** [Deuteronomy 24:1-4] **and send her away?'** Jesus replied, **'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning** [2:18-25]. **I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.'** The disciples said to him, **'If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry?'** Jesus replied, **'Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven.'**⁶ **The one who can accept this should accept it.'**"

(B) Jesus said in Matthew 22:30 (parallel, Luke 20:35): **"At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage** [2:24]; **they will be like the angels in heaven."**

(C) Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:3,7-9, 11-12: **"Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God..."**⁷ **A man...is the image and glory of God** [1:27]; **but the woman is the glory of man** [2:23]. **For man did not come from woman, but woman from man** [2:21,22]; **neither was man created for woman, but woman for man** [2:18]... **In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman** [2:18,24]. **For as woman came from man** [2:21,22], **so also man is born of woman** [4:1-2]. **But everything comes from God.** [all of chapters 1 & 2]"

(D) Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, **"For God is not a God of disorder"**⁸ [all of chapters 1 & 2] **but of peace** [2:2,3]. **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** [2:18-23]. **If they want to inquire about something** [3:1-6], **they should ask their own husbands** [3:17, a negative example] **at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church."**

(E) Paul said in Galatians 3:24-29: **"So the law⁹ was put in charge to lead us to Christ** [3:15] **that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female** [1:27], **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** [3:15 plus the whole Abraham story, 11:27 to 25:11]."

(F) Paul said in Ephesians 5:22-33: **Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife** [2:24 in the context of the whole chapter]; **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, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy** [3:15]; **cleansing her by the washing with water through the**

⁵ God brought an "unmarried" woman to Adam. The first man and woman's subsequent choice of each other was certainly part of God's plan. First came maleness and femaleness, then came marriage.

⁶ Paul discusses marriage and the advantages of not being married in 1 Corinthians 7.

⁷ The words omitted from this quotation deal with head covering in the context of worship. The words I have quoted state the principles upon which Paul invites the Corinthians to make a fitting application. Paul does not establish a particular application as binding, although congregations outside of Corinth seemed to have reached a consensus in this matter (see v.16). When believers made choices they were to honor principle and avoided disorder and the evil of confusion.

⁸ Paul closes the chapter (v. 40) with the same appeal to good order: "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."

⁹ Here "law" (Greek: *nomos*) is not capitalized, while in 1 Corinthians 14:34 above it is. The NIV should have capitalized it in both places. The context shows that Paul was referring here to the first five books of the Bible which Jesus called "the law of Moses" in Luke 24:44.

word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless [compare 3:12 with 3:20]. 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 [1:29 and 2:16]; just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’ [2:24]. 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 [2:23]; and the wife must respect her husband.”

(G) Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:10-15: “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 [2:7], then Eve [2:21-22]. And Adam was not the one deceived [3:1-6]; it was the woman who was deceived [3:7] and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing [3:15 and 4:1-2]—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”

(H) Peter said in 1 Peter 3:1-7: *Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit [in chapter 2 Eve is silent]; which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful [OT women like Rachel, Miriam, Rahab, Ruth, Deborah, Abigail, Naaman’s maid, Jehosheba, Hulda, Esther and others]. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master [18:12]. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner [3:16], and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life [1:28], so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

Seven theses to focus our meditation and study

The New Testament principles that Jesus and the apostles drew from the Old Testament may be summarized in the following seven theses.

- #1—Maleness and femaleness are a part of what it means to be perfectly human, that is, to be created “in the image of God.”
- #2—Maleness and femaleness reflect the perfect order that exists within the Holy Trinity; therefore order and interdependence between the sexes are to be held in the highest regard as God’s perfect standard for what it means to be human.
- #3—The “one flesh” unity of the sexes in marriage carries out God’s command to fill this world with people, yet marriage is not required and will not be a part of the world to come.
- #4—Sin is disorder and leads to the evil of more sin and disorder, also for men and women.
- #5—God’s plan of salvation from the beginning was to remove sin and restore divine order and goodness, for men as men and for women as women.
- #6—Sin’s disorder will exist side by side with the “image of God” in the redeemed, yet-to-be-glorified persons of men and women until Christ returns in judgment.
- #7—Holding to the truth of God’s Word is the only sure guide for each of us as men and women in work, in worship, and in our walk together.

THESIS ONE—*Maleness and femaleness are a part of what it means to be perfectly human, that is, to be created “in the image of God.”*

The Creator summoned everything into existence by his Word. God might have done so in an instant. In his wisdom he decided not to. God spread his activity over six days. First the Creator shaped a world that could support life, and then he filled that world with an abundance of life. Finally he put the

human race in charge. In Genesis 1:26 God brought his creative work to a climax.¹⁰ God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule...over all the earth.” In verse 27 we read that created human beings with gender. Then he gave men and women a command to “be fruitful and increase in number” and to “fill the earth and subdue it.” Humans were put in charge in the way a king puts his prime minister in charge. All living things would look to humans for God-like leadership (1:28).¹¹ God blessed living creatures, both humans and animals, with food (1:29). This done, God rested from his work, not because he was weary, but in order to assure us that every thing, up to and including mankind, was “very good” (1:31 and 2:1-3).

Moses selected “image” and “likeness” as words to describe what sets human beings apart, below God, yet above animals. Image (Hebrew: *tzēlēm*) is used to describe a formal resemblance perceived by the senses. Likeness (*ḏmūt*) emphasizes qualities that are beyond feeling, seeing, hearing, tasting and smelling. Taken as a pair, the words combine to form a definition that is not limited to either word, but is a combination of both.¹² Humans resemble God, but are not an exact copy. People are not divine clones. Human beings have a material body that occupies space in the physical universe. Unlike humans God is not a part of the physical universe that he created even though he is present everywhere in it. Physical resemblance therefore cannot be what “image” and “likeness” are all about either.¹³ God’s has will and he wills that things in his Creation be good.¹⁴ God knows what he has created. He creates things with words and then he uses words to define what he has made.

All living creatures, including the animals, have a consciousness of being alive and being what they are. Humans share this quality with all living creatures. But animals do not know their Creator. They do not share God’s will, nor do they have a moral appreciation of what is good. Mankind, however, was created to be more than just alive and aware of the created world. God could express his will to man in words. Humans hear God’s Word and comprehend God’s will. They also have the power to respond to God’s words. To know and be known by God¹⁵ sets the human race apart from everything else that God made. Adam, like God, could use words to name things and do so with God-given insight. Adam could also know the goodness of being presented with a woman to share his life. Adam responded with poetic, insightful words when God brought Eve to him (Genesis 2:23).

The first words that expressed God’s will and his goodness toward human beings were spoken to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” With these words Adam had a choice. He could will to remain good. Or he could will to disobey the Word of God and experience evil. Obedience was worship. The disobedient choice meant separation from God and his goodness. Separation from God (who is the highest good) is our theological definition of death. God’s name for the tree in the center of the garden was perfectly chosen. The Hebrew concept of “knowledge” is not limited to mind. It is centered in experience. Martin Luther was correct to call the tree of the knowledge of good and evil “Adam’s chapel.” Jesus said, “Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it” (Luke 11:28) As long as Adam listened and obeyed he was like God. As soon as Adam and Eve acted against the goodness of God’s will expressed in his Word, death entered the human experience. After disobedience the

¹⁰ Moses uses the word *bārā’* with care in Genesis 1. It is used in three contexts. First, it is used to announce the creation of the material universe (v.1), next the appearance of living creatures (v.21), and, finally in conjunction with the appearance of the human race (v. 27). Moses uses other verbs in Genesis 1 to describe how God divided and arranged these “never-before-existing” wonders. Hebrews 11:3 teaches that only God is capable of creating things that have no pre-existence.

¹¹ After the fall into sin, creatures suffered because of sin. Paul writes in Romans 8:20-21 "the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."

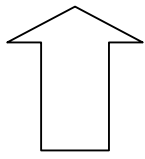
¹² Hebrew uses two words when a single word cannot adequately express a concept.

¹³ In 2 Corinthians 4:4 Paul says Christ is the image (*eivkw,n*) of God and then in Colossians 1:15 Paul states that Christ is the image of the invisible God. These passages clearly show that "image" in Genesis 1:27 is not to be interpreted as physical resemblance.

¹⁴ God says "it was good" seven times in chapter one of Genesis. The last time for emphasis he says "very good."

¹⁵ Sin changed this. Paul says of himself and other sinners (1 Corinthians 13:12), as he waits for the restored perfection of eternal life, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

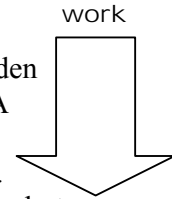
will of human beings was to sin. Humans now became blind, deaf, and dead to God, his goodness, and his Word.



worship

An arrow pointing *upward* illustrates the response God expects from humanity whenever God speaks. Adam and Eve were created with an open invitation to live in the image of God. Such living is the essence of what Jesus called the first and greatest commandment. It is well expressed by Luther in his explanation to the first of the Ten Commandments, “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”

God gave Adam a home on earth and something to do there. Adam’s home was a real garden located in a real place. Adam’s job was to serve God in this garden by watching over it. A *downward*-pointing arrow illustrates God’s will that humans preserve as “very good” everything in heaven and on earth. Adam and Eve exercised the divine image by working. God-glorifying labor was given by God to human beings so that they might guard and keep, but never diminish, the “very good” of all that God had made on earth.



work

Perfect humanity has a third dimension that helps us understand the “image of God.” This is in addition to (a) the will to listen to God and obey his Word in worship, and (b) to complement God’s will in Creation through work. The third aspect of humanity is unfolded in Genesis 2:18-23, but it is introduced to us in the final clause of the brilliantly written verse 27 of the Bible’s first chapter. This verse has twelve words, divided equally into three skillfully interlocked clauses, as follows:

{1}	[and created]	[God]	[the human race]	[in his image]
{2}	[in the image of]	[God]	[he created]	[him]
{3}	[male]	[and female]	[he created]	[them]. ¹⁶

Clause One begins with a subject/verb/object combination that echos the very first words of the Bible. God (^ē*lôhîm*) in 1:27 has a plural ending. God in three persons creates (*bârâ’*).¹⁷ The verb is singular in form. God has a plurality of persons and a unity of essence. The triune God creates *hâ’âdâm*. This word, minus the article, is the same as the personal name given the first human being. The presence of the definite article here tells us that more than one person is meant. Adam was “the man” from whom all other humans would proceed in obedience to the will of God to be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth. At the moment of God’s creative action, this one man represented the whole of the human race. The fourth and final component in this clause is a prepositional phrase that is adjectival. It describes what makes the human race what it is. It is also adverbial in function. It answers the question regarding how this creation of God differed from all God’s earlier acts of creation. What is mankind? Answer: God’s image bearer. How did is this act of creation different? Answer: alone of all God’s acts, this one bore the stamp and imprint of divinity.

Clause Two seems at first simply to reverse and repeat what the first clause says. It does. But note the subtle differences. The word God (^ē*lôhîm*) is attached to the noun image rather than the verb “create.” And, the collective noun *hâ’âdâm*, “humanity” is replaced by a pronoun that is singular and masculine. The second chapter of Genesis makes it very clear that God made Adam first, then Eve. Here Adam as the responsible first keeper of the divine image.¹⁸

Clause Three has something to say about the image of God that has meaning for our discussion of male and female roles. A third clause makes the verse a triplet rather than a doublet. Verse 27 is like a sentence followed by three exclamation points. It is the intent of Moses to express a third time what he has already described twice. In all three clauses “create” (*bârâ’*) is the verb. Hebrew uses poetic pairs to

¹⁶ Genesis 1:27: Mt))rb hbqnw rkz {←3} wt))rb Myhl) Mlcb wmlcb {←2} Md)h-t) Myhl))rbyw {←1}

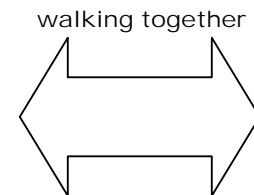
¹⁷ The Word (John 1:1-3) participates, as does the Spirit of God (Genesis 1:2) hovering over an unfinished (empty, lifeless, dark, deep) earth that awaits God’s creative energy to put all things in a good order so that mankind can work and worship in keeping with God’s image. In Genesis 1:26 God (^ē*lôhîm*) says, “Let us make” man “in our image.”

¹⁸ The Apostle Paul (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22) makes Adam responsible for the first sin, although Eve was the first to sin. Adam bore responsibility for the race.

elevated simple prose and signal the reader that divine wisdom is being shared. Poetic triplets heighten the emphasis further. They compel us to pay attention.¹⁹

The third clause restates the object of God’s creative power. In the first clause the object is “humanity.” In the second it is “him.” Here in the third clause it is “them.” This “them” is explained by a pair of words that close the verse, “male and female.” This pair does double duty. It is the object, but it also restates the adjectival/adverbial component of the first two clauses. God’s image, a unitary characteristic, is imprinted on humanity through gender diversity. This diversity no more divides the humanity of the mankind than the three persons of the Godhead divide God’s essence. God cannot be God without being triune. In the same way mankind as a whole cannot bear God’s image unless it exists at the same time both male and female.

The overall message of Genesis 1:27 is that mankind exists in a relationship with God that is unique in all Creation. Furthermore, the vertical fellowship between man on earth and God above is paralleled on earth by a God-created diversity within the human race that carries with it a reflection of the mysterious unity within plurality that describes who God is. Since God’s will and goodness express themselves in all the things he makes, God’s will and goodness are meant to be there—above all—in people. Maleness and femaleness give humans a forum in which to express will and goodness to other humans, to God, and to Creation. Gender therefore is part of the definition of “image” and “likeness”. God says in Genesis 2:18-23 that “it is not good for man [*hâ’âdâm* as first man and human race] to be alone.” A full expression of humanity presupposes society. This society is inherently diverse because of gender, yet at the same time united because God’s will and goodness flow from a united Godhead. As the Father is the Father and not the Son or the Spirit, and as the Son is the Son and not the Father or the Spirit, and as the Spirit is the Spirit and not the Father or the Son, even so men are men and not women, and women are women and not men. Yet there is but one God. And, there is but one humanity created “in the image of God.” Humanity was created to bear the divine will consciously and expressively in the interest of all that is good. God wanted perfect human beings, male as well as female, to walk side by side on earth sharing oversight of God’s work and joining together in their worship of him.



Summing up, we see that Scripture defines what it means to be perfectly human, that is, to be created fully “in God’s image.” God gives the perfect human being **work** to do at a time and place of God’s choosing. God gives the perfect human being an opportunity to respond in **worship** to the Creator through a free exercise of the human will in response to the expressed Word of God. God gives the perfect human being fellowship, a **walking together** within a division of humankind that God himself ordered when he shaped a man first and then fashioned a woman second. We may safely conclude that the “image of God” is only present when all three aspects of perfect humanity are there. The only human being to work, and worship, and walk perfectly among fellow human beings with the will and goodness of God was Jesus of Nazareth. Adam, Eve, and the rest of us fail because of the curse of sin. But where sinners fail, Christ is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4). He has the powerful will and unlimited goodness from his Father through the Spirit to restore God’s image in us (Colossians 3:10).

THESIS TWO—*Maleness and femaleness reflect the perfect order that exists within the Holy Trinity; therefore order and interdependence between the sexes are to be held in the highest regard as God’s perfect standard for what it means to be human.*

Humanity, as we have already shown, is revealed in human fellowship. This characteristic of what it means to be human is revealed after an interval of divine reflection and human investigation. God sees the need. Adam then examines the creature world to discover this need himself. The first man confirms God’s conclusion. Among all living things there is none suitable for him. God wills that Adam’s “other” be a help (*‘ēzēr*) that is opposite and distinct from Adam (*kēnēgdô*). We might say that Eve will be to Adam as Adam

¹⁹ Ancient authors lacked our modern toolbox for signaling emphasis. We have italics, bolding, underlining, and a choice of fonts. The ancients relied much more than we do on the word placement and narrative structure to draw attention. Compare the structure of 1:27 to the three part blessing of the high priest in Numbers 6:24-26 and the three holies of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3 (echoed in Revelation 4:8).

is to God. Paul says as much in 1 Corinthians 11. God builds Eve from the same substance of Adam's self. Therefore she will be as human as he is. She, too, will bear the divine image. Yet she will not be Adam's double. Woman will have her role "in, with, and under"²⁰ her male counterpart in a way that parallels Jesus' relationship with the Father. Jesus is the Father's Son to be sacrificed to carry out the divine plan to rescue sinful mankind. Jesus voluntarily subjected himself to God's service on our behalf. This is how God became our help (*'ēzēr*).²¹ Paul says that God "put everything under Christ" and "the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:27,28). Could we not use similar words to describe the woman's original role as complement and helper to Adam for the sake of the two of them fulfilling their role to "rule" the earth and to multiply and fill it in accordance with God's command?

God formed mankind as the only created entity with the capacity to know its Creator and to contemplate the mystery of who God is. In so doing God gave his highest creature—within the created gift of gender the potential for parenthood—an earthy reality out of which to contemplate the workings of the Triune Godhead.

We have already pointed out that the parallels between God and man are not absolute. So, too, here. God's work is on a level parallel, yet distinct from mankind's work. God creates. Mankind recreates. God communicates his will in his Word. Mankind receives and responds worshipfully to God's Word, using it, repeating it, expounding it, but never altering its essence. God's words and mankind's response complement each other, but are not the same. Divine revelation and human worship of God in and through his Word are distinct from one another.

This applies as well to the horizontal relationship that involves men and women. When we humans contemplate that the human race is divided (male and female), yet co-substantial (made of the same stuff, i.e., the image of God), and that out of such unions proceed human beings like ourselves (of the same stuff too, part from father, part from mother), our own unity in diversity reflects, though never equates with God's most perfect unity in diversity. Even in our fallen state as sinners, being men and women and children do not change. Each has a God-given place within the Creation of God that remains "very good" only when it is affirmed and honored in daily life.

The kind of image that is passed on to offspring is—on account of sin—now Adam's image, not God's.²² But humanity's image, for both parents and children, is an image that may be restored. Sin, and with it death and damnation, are forensically cancelled when faith apprehends the merits of Christ. The indwelling Spirit testifies continually to the ruling presence of Christ within. The power of forgiving grace is the engine of sanctification through which our corrupted humanity says "no" to sin "and" "yes" to Christ. In Jesus Christ we possess the image of the second Adam. The indwelling Christ opens our blind eyes and deaf ears to a what God intended humanity to be. And that includes maleness and femaleness. And, we may add, this includes parenthood and childhood as well.

I believe Paul had such truths in mind when he took up the subject of headship in 1 Corinthians 11:3. In this passage Paul presents two pairs (God and Christ, plus man and woman) in a list of four (God, Christ, man, woman). The first two are divine. Paul says the "head" of Christ is God. The last two are human. Paul says the head of woman (the female) is man (the male). The two pair are connected when Paul says that the head of man is Christ. All four respond to the concept of headship (*κεφαλή kefalē*). Christ restored the image of God through his active obedience here on earth. By his substitutionary death and subsequent resurrection, Christ enabled the Father to declare the whole world righteous and to restore the "very good" created order that had been lost.

When the Holy Spirit works faith in an individual so that the merits of Christ are grasped by faith, a sinner is drawn into the body of Christ and Christ dwells in that individual (Galatians 2:20, also 5:24,25). By this process, the work of sanctification, the "unity in diversity," disrupted by sin, is restored (2

²⁰ Lutherans use these words to describe the mystery involved in the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of holy communion. These words may be the best available to us to describe the mystery of male/female roles in a perfect and sinless world.

²¹ The Hebrew word for helper is used also for God, particularly in his relationship with humans (Psalm 30:11; 54:6). He is a "help" that comes down from above in grace as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

²² Genesis 5:1-3 brings out this truth. There we read: "when God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them 'man.' When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image..."

Corinthians 5:17). Through Christ both will and understanding are “in order” once again. The divine order is God, Christ, man, woman. Just as God the Father remains “head” within the unity of the Trinity, so too man and woman remain distinct in the restored order. Surely, there is no difference (maleness or femaleness) in respect to the received benefits of Christ’s work, just as other categories like Jew/Greek and slave/free do not impede God’s work of salvation. Nevertheless, in Christ a man remains a man, becoming what he was created to be. Similarly a woman remains a woman, becoming what she was created to be. Differences between men and women are as inherent to humanity as the persons of the Godhead are essential to God as God. Maleness and femaleness are not categories shaped by sin, but by creation. In Christ there is an ordered union with God through which the divine image is restored. In Christ human beings again have the God-given desire to honor male/female diversity in a unity, one that is born of the Spirit and that is free from sin’s confusion. As sons and daughters of God by faith, men and women may also contemplate in thankful awe the diversity within the divine unity that resulted in our salvation.²³

THESIS THREE—*The “one flesh” unity of the sexes in marriage carries out God’s command to fill this world with people, yet marriage is not required and will not be a part of the world to come.*

We have shown that this correspondence is not identity. It is semblance. God creates. Humans recreate. God speaks. Mankind responds. God is a unity in diversity. Humanity is male and female. We have also seen from a careful reading of Genesis 2, that God’s way of implementing the divine image in the life of the first human being began with Adam, not Eve. God made the male his first worker²⁴ and worshiper.²⁵ God also led Adam to discover the need for unity within diversity. Woman, taken from the very substance of man, by reason of her own divine creation, received a full share of mankind’s responsibility to rule creation, to reproduce in it, and to respond to God’s expressed will in worship of the divine Word. Yet she was “in, with, and under” Adam even as the Son is “in, with, and under” the Father. Let us now revisit the mystery of the Godhead. The Father is Father. The Son is his “only-begotten” from eternity. God is also Spirit. This Spirit proceeds from the Father and is sent by the Son to complete God’s internal hypostatic order. Together the Godhead created the heavens and the earth. Together the Godhead now works for our salvation in a fallen and corrupt Creation.²⁶

We have already concluded that mankind reflects the mystery of God’s unity within plurality.²⁷ But we may carry our analysis of the correspondence of God’s will and goodness within the “image of God” still further. God blessed the human race with the instruction to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth

²³ The final post-resurrection unity that emerges when God’s plan of salvation is completed appears to be in Paul’s inspired mind in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, particularly where Paul says “...then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.”

²⁴ In Genesis 2 the perfect humanity of the human race was “put to work” by God in a real life situation. Scripture reveals in chapter 2 how God applied in practice what is meant by the concept “image of God.” Adam worked in Eden. We assume that Eve was his helper, complementing him in every womanly way as he went about the task God gave humanity. Together they ruled over all Creation. By being the first to work in Eden, Adam was placed by God at the head of the caretaking business, and we must assume that Eve’s work complemented Adam’s perfectly. By an act of divine grace (3:22-24), no man and woman since the time of Adam and Eve have had an address in paradise, but the principle regarding work in this world remains true wherever man or woman have settled down.

²⁵ God spoke to Adam the first words of permission and restraint. No man and woman since our first parents have had the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as their “chapel,” but the principle regarding worship in this world remains true in respect to every word spoken by God. By being the one human being “chartered” to worship at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam was placed by God at the head of the human race (though numbering only two) in respect to worship. We know Adam taught Eve God’s words because she quoted them later to the snake. In her perfect state we must conclude, therefore, that Eve complemented Adam in worship, and did so perfectly. God spoke to Adam. Adam relayed God’s word to Eve. Adam and Eve, each according to the role given by God, worshiped in unity with God and each other.

²⁶ The procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son—a Spirit equal in all respects to both Father and Son within the Godhead, but not the same as either in respect to person—is a mystery. Our human logic tends to rebel against the truth of the Trinity. As the early Church learned, thinking too much about such things leads quickly to heresy. Contrary to all logic Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one. Yet the persons are distinct. It is heresy to say that the Father died on the cross. It is heresy to say there was a time when the begotten Son “was not.” Jesus did not beget, the Father did. Nor did the Son and Father proceed from the Spirit, but the Spirit proceeded from the Father and is the Spirit of the Son as well.

²⁷ I wish to thank my colleague, the Rector of St. Sophia seminary in Ternopil, Ukraine, David Jay Webber, for drawing my attention to similar thinking on the part of the fourth century A.D. church father, Gregory of Nazianzus. Those wishing to read his views may find them in English on the Internet at <<http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/reading/St.Pachomius/Xgreg-theol.html>>, the website of the St. Pachomius Library. That website will lead you to two places, Gregory of Nazianzus’s Oration 32 on the Holy Spirit, paragraph IX <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310232.htm>> and Gregory of Nazianzus’s Oration 39 on the Holy Lights, paragraph XII <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310239.htm>>.

(Genesis 1:28). In Genesis 2:24 we learn that God intended this blessing is to be accomplished by humanity in this world through the coming together of one man and one woman within the divine institution of marriage. From each marital union it was God's good and perfect will that children proceed. Men and women in marriage create a family that is at once larger than husband and wife, and yet in many respects not essentially different in substance. The human family honors the divine image too. Within the family circle work is accomplished, worship is exercised, and the goodness and will of God is exchanged all around.

As humanity expanded and filled the earth, it became a family of families. Individually and collectively families, tribes, and nations honor the two great expectations of God which are to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30 and Deuteronomy 6:4,5) and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30 and Leviticus 19:18).

Not all marry. But all men and women were meant by God to be born into a family whose parents were bound by marriage. Children with a family are not married to their parents. Children within a family, however, express the wider concept of human fellowship that existed prior to Adam being the first husband and Eve being the first wife. The unmarried, once they became a significant part of an expanding human race, were evidence that unity midst diversity is more than reproductive sexuality. Gender makes reproduction possible. But within families, whose members are either male or female, the "walking together" aspect of humanity is universal in application. Parents are not children and children are not parents. Age and the marriage bond combine to put both father and mother in charge. In a perfect world parents help children and children help parents. Yet only in a sinful world are the two roles confused.

Humans, exercising their "not-aloneness" within society, and within the father-mother-child family unit capture a semblance of the Spirit's work within the economy of the Godhead. The third person of the Trinity proceeds from the Father and the Son in order to incorporate repentant sinners as children of God by faith within the body of Christ who is one with the Father.

Marriage elevated procreation above that of animals and allowed for an orderly experience of unity and diversity between two people living in God's image as well as the human society that results from children born to marital unions. Yet marriage is an application of unity within diversity. It must never be understood as essential to humanity. Jesus pointed out that there is no marriage in heaven (Matthew 22:30 and Luke 20:35). We must conclude that maleness and femaleness (as well as the children that result) will remain into eternity because they are as much of our created humanity as the persons of the Trinity are forever a part of God's divinity. Humans in heaven will not procreate. This Jesus ruled out. Nor will there be new marriages for the purpose of reproduction. The filling of the earth, intended at the beginning, will have been accomplished. What will remain is maleness and femaleness purged of every mark of sin, and minus the need and compulsion to reproduce.

Teachers of Christian doctrine, when dealing with the problem of sin, point out that sin is not part of the human essence. Sin is a foreign characteristic that fully permeates and cripples the human condition. It is possible to be human apart from sin. Thus the proverb "to err is human" is theologically wrong. Adam and Eve were perfectly human before the fall, as Jesus was in his life on earth (Hebrews 4:15). Sin can be removed from sinners. It has been declared removed by reason of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It will be fully removed at Christ's second coming.

Sin is a negative "additive" to humanity. Marriage, on the other hand, is a positive "additive" to humanity²⁸ Neither one is essential. Sin cancels and denies the "very good." Marriage was, and is, "very good" in every respect (Hebrews 13:4) for the purpose of carry out God's will.

God is, of course, not sexed. Here there is no specific parallel between divine diversity within unity and human unity within diversity. History demonstrates that pagans have wanted to project their own sexuality on the gods they have created in their minds as substitutes for the only true God. The Father is presented in revelation as male because his was the act of begetting the Son from eternity. This begetting is not sexual. The Father had no consort. Jesus Christ, in taking on our humanity, was a male. Jesus had to be human in all respects. Therefore he was born with gender. This qualified him to be the second Adam and to make it possible for the image of God to be restored through his active and passive obedience.

²⁸ The holy ministry is another "good" institution that will not be necessary in eternity. It is needed now because of sin, but there will be no Law to preach when sin is removed and no Gospel to proclaim when God's people dwell with Christ in perfect bliss.

Jesus fulfilled all three aspects of perfect humanity. He worked and worshiped. Jesus did the work the Father had given him to do (John 5:17, 36). He listened and was guided by the words God had spoken to humanity through Moses and the prophets. Jesus was quick to point out, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17). Jesus in his life and ministry used God’s inspired words to foil Satan (Matthew 4, Mark 1, Luke 4). Jesus knew how to worship in spirit and in truth and taught others to do the same (John 4:23,24).

Jesus was also fully human as he interacted with the men and women of his day. When reading the Gospels a person marvels at how perfectly human Jesus was in all of his relationships. In his perfect humanity Jesus was “not alone.” He sought out the learned doctors in the Temple. He gathered disciples. He became friends with Mary and Martha. He cared so much about his own people that he wept over Jerusalem, anticipating its fate. He healed. He preached. He raised the dead. Jesus surrounded himself with people. Jesus cared nothing for the chauvinistic weaknesses of those who criticized him for his love of women and men at their weakest. He gathered them all, irrespective of gender, in his holy, self-sacrificing arms in order to save them. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to both men and women, assuring each equally that he was both Lord and Christ.

Yet in all of his perfection, Jesus did not marry. He did not need to be married to be fully human. The Father had given him a mission to walk the earth in perfect fellowship with all people and to be the Savior of all people. Jesus honored marriage (Matthew 19:5,6) as a divine institution for others by quoting and approving Genesis 1:28 and 2:24. Jesus affirmed that marriage takes place when a man leaves his own family and finds a woman to be his own ‘*ēzēr k^ēnēgdō*. Forsaking all others, Jesus taught couples to be united with each other in a “one flesh” relationship. Jesus honored the one-man-plus-one-woman bond. Jesus taught us that this bond was such that, once formed, mankind had no power or right to separate. God ends earthly life and with it the marriage bond established in this life.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that both testaments use marriage as an example of what is “very good” in God’s eyes. Conversely, the corruption of marriage is a metaphor in the Bible for the “truly bad.” Israel is portrayed as the Lord’s bride. Unfaithfulness to the Lord in the Old Testament was both literally and figuratively, adulterous idolatry or idolatrous adultery. Paul compares a Christ-centered married couple to the mystical union of Christ and his church (Ephesians 5). John, on the other hand portrays the God-forsaking world as a great prostitute (Revelation 19:2).

Some have suggested that quietness in worship and submission to male headship on the part of women apply only to wives. This is a false narrowing of the order established by God at Creation. Headship existed in Eden before Adam and Eve consented to be man and wife. And it continued to be part of God’s ordered creation after they were married and produced families and society. Marriage is deeply intertwined with what the New Testament has to say about women at work, at worship, and in their walk together with other human beings. And why not? Marriage is the context in which most male and female interactions occur this side of heaven. God’s appointed roles for men, women, and children, as well as the roles that society derives from the family, supercede marriage, although marriage is the instrument God used to shepherd human unity in the midst of diversity. Couples and families could not exist without roles. And these roles honor the true order and unity within God.

THESIS FOUR—*Sin is disorder and leads to the evil of more sin and disorder, also for men and women.*

Does the mystery of God explain the condition of humanity today? Not for the vast majority of people! The sinner does all in his power to deny God’s very existence (Romans 1). For much of humanity science is perceived as the great explainer. We ask those who have forsaken God for human explanations, has the scientific exploration of life on earth led the human race to solve its problems? Not at all! In reality every time a problem is solved, a score of new ones appear. New problems are often proportionately worse. We should not be surprised that it is impossible for the godless to grasp the permanent impact of disorder in a world that was originally meant to be “very good.”

So great has been the shift away from God in the modern world that “sin” has almost disappeared from the language of post-moderns. Few see sin for the pervasive monster that it is. People will perhaps concede that the world is a bit disorderly. They want to believe it’s getting better. Hope for humanity is not seen in the will and goodness of God, but in a false belief that the human race will somehow, someday, pull

itself up from its mess. The mess is not blamed on any sin for which people are responsible to God, but rather to certain weakness that are left over from the past, which science insists was much worse. Many believe that “good” will eventually be accomplished through the application of human will and the further working of evolution. Nearly everyone acknowledges that life is a struggle. They are mistaken, however, to believe that humanity is moving forward in this struggle.

Evolution has replaced God as the “master mover” of all things, past, present or future. Processes at work today are observed and measured and extrapolated backward over time to explain who we are today, where we might have come from long ago, and where we are headed as human beings.²⁹ Sinful mankind marvels at the works of its own hands, and tells itself that progress has been made, citing all manner of human invention to prove it. Most people today, even the post-moderns, believe evolution will fix things. Evolution is “a process of gradual improvement.” Disorder remains because evolution is not yet finished. People with problems want to believe that disorder may someday disappear altogether. Why wouldn’t they! Given the troubled state of contemporary affairs, present reality solves no problems. Faith holds on to something—contrary to the very tenets of science itself—that is beyond observation and measurement. Hope for the human race is measured in “billions of years.” How sad that so many believe that they don’t need God and put their faith in unverifiable eons of time.³⁰

Scripture tells a different story. Bible history records order yielding to disorder, over and over again, not in billions of years, but in recorded human history.³¹ Disorder, according to the Word of God, produces more disorder. According to Scripture the author of order is God. The Master Mover is the Creator. Only because the God of ultimate order has made it his business to intervene in history is there any hope for mankind at all. God’s love in action is the good news of the gospel. Therefore the Master Fixer is God manifest in Christ. As a result, the word a Christian uses to characterize human history is not evolution, but devolution.³² Things are getting progressively worse. The word to describe mankind’s hope is salvation, God’s work in a sinful world after sin made its first appearance.

Devolution is a process that mankind cannot stop on its own. Scripture teaches that the sinner is at war with God and is dead, deaf, and blind to the God of good order. Disorder breeds devolution and devolution breeds disorder. Disorder is another word for sin. Sin’s ultimate curse is death. Sin and disorder methodically corrupt and systematically destroy (1) God’s work, (2) the worship of God, and (3) a society of men, women, and children who are meant to walk together. Salvation, on the other hand, is God’s unilateral, gracious intervention in human affairs—centered in Christ. God became one of us to keep our undeserving world from total meltdown. Whenever mankind proved faithless, God remained faithful. The God/man Jesus Christ blocked devolution from sweeping everything and everyone into the Abyss. If there is a turnabout in the process of devolution, it is because Christ forgives and then gives those who are forgiven the power to pursue satisfying work, true worship, and noble relationships.

The fiction that simple creatures evolved into complex organisms over eons of time collapses in the face of honest scientific investigation. Creation’s irreducible complexity is such that some processes cannot be altered, even in the smallest detail, without the function of the whole organism collapsing totally. That means that no number of years can allow for a repair, or a restart, or for a mutant variation to “save” us.³³ Beyond the marvel of the mechanistic brilliance of God the Creator, there is the sheer beauty which God built into all things. God created things that have no apparent reason for existence beyond Creation’s need to display the Creator’s glory. Things keep on working in a corrupt world, because God remains good and he wills it to be so.

²⁹ The expensive program of space exploration is “sold” to the public as a noble search for the origin of life, ignoring completely the testimony of the only Being who was actually there “in the beginning.”

³⁰ Not so strangely, there remains a deep fear in many people today that evolution may come to a disastrous halt through such things as global warming or nuclear war through the misuse of the very technology that mankind uses as a proof of progress.

³¹ The origin of the universe is not subject to human observation. No one was there. That includes believers and unbelievers. The Genesis account of beginnings cannot be science according to humanists. For the skeptic God is an “easy out” manufactured by believers to account for mysteries that the human mind has not yet resolved or that evolution has not yet achieved. Most people believe that religion and God must wither away as science advances. Religion is not the first choice of “intelligent” people when they gather to think about this world and its problems. God has been dropped from the curriculum of most universities.

³² As a play bring Satanic meaning into the word, some have cleverly spelled the word “*devil*-ution.”

³³ Within the living cell molecular machines carry out replications that keep us alive. Remove or alter one structural detail in these machines and life stops. Some scientists, some neither Christian nor religious, have been compelled to acknowledge “Intelligent Design” as a better explanation of things as they are, ruling out evolutionary theory as irrational.

God's original architecture was predicated on the exceedingly complex working of many distinct parts. These parts were so wisely defined by God that, even today, they still work together with near perfection. God could have spoken the Word and made everything appear as we know it instantly. But he didn't. He wanted us to see in his Word how he designed a complex world for our human benefit. On the first day God created time, energy and space. In other words, he made everything that supports the visible universe as we know it.³⁴ In the days that followed, a biosphere appeared. God clothed this space for living with biological "inventions" that could change matter and energy into food. Next God introduced living things to fill the waters, to fly in the air, and to spread out on the land. Finally God put mankind in charge. An ordered universe is mankind's home.

God authored order and goodness. Sin is disorder and evil. Chapter 3 of Genesis demonstrates this. Satan had led some of God's serving spirits to abandon their own place of beauty within the divine order.³⁵ Scripture identifies their leader as Satan.³⁶ God did not place animals over the human race to instruct them. Snakes have no innate power to teach. Yet that is precisely what the evil one used the snake to do in order to deceive Eve. For her part Eve did not consult with the man God had given her when she was tempted. She should have since he was her head. Neither Adam nor Eve were created by God to exercise their free will entirely alone. Being alone was "not good." God had made them male and female to "worship" as a unity, with a responsible Adam as Eden's "chaplain" and Eve as his freely consenting "congregation." Both, of course, had separate free wills. Each person had the power to obey or not to obey all by themselves. Each person subsequently exercised their own free will and were independently responsible for their actions. Yet Adam bore the responsibility for a neglect of his headship in permitting his holy partner to act contrary to the will of God. Adam then multiplied his neglect by willfully duplicating the error of his partner. Acting outside of unity within diversity was disorder and evil.

Eve evaluated Satan's words, compared them with God's words, and contemplated the fruit before her. She did it all by herself, alone. She decided without consultation. She saw a beauty in the forbidden fruit that was a conclusion reached by her senses operating alone and apart from God and the rest of creation. Eve cast aside the beauty of God's Word and acted "out of order" on the basis of her "scientific" examination of Satan's hypothesis. Adam stood silently by as his wife performed her act of disorder, though he was clearly there with her (3:6). By remaining silent, Adam yielded his headship within the perfect divine order without uttering a syllable of protest. Then Adam did exactly as Eve told him to do, silently. For this sin of uncritical submission to Eve, Adam later received a pointed reprimand.³⁷ When Adam later spoke, it was too late. He used words that revealed quickly how disordered his thinking had become. To excuse his sin, he blamed Eve. He did it in a way that indirectly, yet pointedly, blamed God as well. Adam said to God, "the woman *you*³⁸ put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it" (3:12).

Sin is disorder and it results in more disorder. Sin is "not good." It is evil. The first two sinners soon came to experience the grievous effect of disorder in the world. By acting on a faulty hypothesis and following a science divorced from the Word of God, devolution manifested itself rather quickly. Things in the garden were no longer "very good." Adam and Eve hid. They blamed each other. They avoided direct questions. They exhibited enmity against God. The world had been, very literally, turned upside down. On top was a demon-possessed snake. Satan deceived the woman. The woman tempted the man. The man blamed God. The new order was (1) Satan using the creature, (2) woman, (3) man, (4) God. The order meant by the Creator had been (1) God, (2) man, (3) woman, (4) creature.

THESIS FIVE—*God's plan of salvation from the beginning was to remove sin and restore divine order and goodness, for men as men and for women as women.*

God, true to himself, spoke words to set in motion the reversal of disorder and the removal of evil from a world that had been "very good" before sin. God address his words to the snake and the evil One

³⁴ Making conceivable Einstein's equation of $E=mc^2$.

³⁵ Regarding this first rebellion, read Isaiah 14:12,13 and Luke 10:18.

³⁶ Revelation 12:9 mentions in the same breath "that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray."

³⁷ The Lord charged Adam with this fault in Genesis 3:17. Paul assumes this, see Romans 5:14 and 1 Corinthians 15:22 and 45.

³⁸ This emphasis is textual. "Woman" is identified immediately as God-given.

who used it. God uttered his first curse.³⁹ The creature that Satan used to tempt Eve would silently eat the dust. The silent movement of snakes reminds us that it is folly to listen to creatures rather than the Creator.⁴⁰ God put Satan, who used the snake as his tool, in his place. God expressed good news to Adam and Eve in words that both could understand when they left Eden to work, worship, and walk together in a sinful world. The heel of a man, born to a woman, would trample the snake's head. This treading on the Evil One would happen in a way parallel to the trampling of a poisonous snake when it strikes and pours poison into the heel of a man walking through tall grass. This picture from nature, which Adam and Eve would come to observe in their lifetime, is Gospel in substance. It says that all created things, including angels, must experience God's deadly, damning curse if they remain enemies of God and his Word. God would do what neither Adam, nor Eve could do by themselves. God would get rid of evil.

God announced in Genesis 3:15—the first Gospel—that he, and only he, would redirect the war waged against him and his will and his goodness. God would break the pact of evil uniting Satan and humans through the highest possible act of divine will and goodness. I, God said, will stand between Satan and the woman Eve. I will do the same between Satan's kin and the children Eve will bear through her descendants as humanity's mother. God, speaking to the snake with Adam and Eve listening, refers to the divine agent as a single "He." One of Eve's many descendants will put his heel down on the head of the Evil One while simultaneously absorbing the poisonous outpouring of evil on himself. A crushing blow to the head is final. Poison's antidote would be just that. The poison of sin would not be fatal to God's Son. We understand today that the "He" of God's promise to Adam and Eve is Jesus Christ. As the Savior sent from God to earth, Jesus took upon himself all the poison of sin. He then died for the sins of the world, but death could not hold him. Rising from death Jesus has crushed the power of sin. This resounding victory of the divine "Him," born of the Virgin Mary, remains God's gift to the whole sinful human race.

Let's now return to our topic and see how it applies to the problem of disorder caused by sin. Satan was God's subordinate, neither God's equal, nor God's master. The God of free and faithful grace promised to send an offspring of Eve to cancel Satan's alliance with humanity. Satan aspired to be humanity's on-going teacher. God would reestablish the divine Word through the coming of the "Word made flesh" (John 1:14). Jesus would overcome Satan's lies with truth. Fallen mankind would outrank Satan in the end.

And what about the woman? She had stepped out of her role as Adam's prefect complement. In place of experiencing a harmony that was meant to mirror God's own unity, sin ripped the two sexes apart. Adam blamed Eve. Both hated the voice of the Creator. They hid. A loving God wanted nothing of this confusion and enmity. Eve, according to the plan that God announced, was given a way to recapture the divine image so recently lost. God denied Adam's assessment that the creation of woman was a divine blunder. God in fact used the very woman whom Satan had corrupted as his chosen tool in the plan of salvation. The removal of evil from the world would NOT be an evolutionary achievement, nor brought about by the human race itself. Instead God willed a miracle birth to set the disordered, upside-down world right-side up again.⁴¹ Eve's Seed—clearly a single individual—would be tempted in every way, yet not follow Adam into sin.⁴²

The first Adam stood idly by as Eve feasted on forbidden fruit. The promised second Adam, sent by the Father and born of a woman, would oppose evil and everything "not good" about the world. This Seed would be fully human. He would work, worship, and walk among fellow humans. This would be his active obedience to God, restoring among men the image of God that had been lost. To complete his work of obedience he would submit to an undeserved death, paying the penalty announced by God in advance for

³⁹ The object of God's curse is expressed in a singular masculine pronoun both here and where God places enmity between the woman and the one cursed. While both can grammatically refer to the snake (a masculine noun) as representing all snakes, I believe the use of the singular parallels the way the first gospel is expressed. There "seed" is a collective plural when applied both to Eve's offspring and to the snake, yet culminates in a couplet using "he" and "you" to capture the great battle between Christ and Satan.

⁴⁰ The Apostle Paul tells us that the creation (kti,sij) awaits liberation and that it was subject to frustration (mataio,thtij) and wishes to be set free from decay (Romans 8:19-22). The curse spoken on Satan's chosen creature affects more than snakes. All creatures bear the scar of the Fall. Prophets like Isaiah (65:25) speak of the future age in terms that reverse the curse of sin on creatures.

⁴¹ Eve's words in Genesis 4:1 indicate that she believed the intervention of God to be immediate, that her first child was the Promised One. Cain was indeed a gift of grace from God, gotten with God's help, but he was certainly not the incarnate Lord. God's incarnation in the person of Jesus (Galatians 4:4) would come after many births covering many generations. The genealogical chapters of Genesis (5 and 11) introduce a theme that runs through the Old Testament. The wages of sin is death, but God keeps to his promise alive from birth to birth.

⁴² Here we recall the Apostle Paul's contrast of the first and second Adam in Romans 5.

sinners. Eve's Seed would raise his divine/human foot and crush evil at its head in full active and passive obedience to the Creator.⁴³

God's new order in Christ, announced in the colorful language of Genesis 3:15, would then be: (1) God whose plan from eternity was unalterably committed to the welfare of his highest creation, (2) God's only-begotten Son, and the woman's offspring, who by his work would demonstrate to the world that he is the head of every believing human being born to a woman, (3) believers who are members together within the body of Christ, destined for restored glory, and (4) Satan and all creatures—angelic or human—who faithlessly and unrepentantly oppose order and goodness.

Eve, and her husband standing next to her, embraced the good news with God-given faith. A contrite and believing Adam no longer blamed Eve as he had. He now exercised his God-given role of headship by giving his wife a personal name that captured in a single word the role Eve would play in God's plan. He would call her "life," because the hope of humanity lay in the life that she would bring into the world through the miracle of giving birth. Eve, as recorded in Genesis 4:1, would look at her first child as a proof of God's promise. This first child turned out to be a terrible disappointment. A second child died without family. It would be Adam and Eve's third child, named Seth ("substitute" in Hebrew) that would carry on the line of births that Luke traces all the way to Jesus.⁴⁴ God gave our first parents the faith to believe in God's promise.

God didn't stop with words of gospel comfort. He also spoke divine words that opened the eyes of Adam and Eve to the consequences of evil that would render their existence "not good" in many ways. God held the mirror of divine truth to Adam and Eve. He unmasked sin's impact. God countered excuses and evasion and denial. What kind of straight talk did they hear? Gone was their perfect humanity. Gone was the image of God they had once shared. Gone was the straight arrow aimed downward toward creation. Work and service in a sinful world would not be what it once was. Gone was the straight arrow pointed upward toward God. Simple childlike faith in God's Word would struggle against doubt, despair, selfishness and rebellion. Gone, too, was the straight arrow joining male to female in society, also within marriage. Humans would stagger, stumble, and strike out at one another. Sin had made everything crooked.

The only way for sinners to cope with such universal consequences of sin is to listen in faith to what God says through the mouths of his prophets and apostles. God's Word always exposes sin for what it is, a corruption of the perfect order and the perfect good of a "very good" Creation. Unmasking the essence and consequence of sin is a preaching of God's holy law. God did not want Adam or Eve to forget the sin that had destroyed the perfection of the divine image. He wanted them to continue to feel a need for his promise of a Satan-crushing Savior. He wanted them hang on to Christ in faith while living in a sinful world. He wanted them to hope in faith and wait unafraid for the righteous judgment to come. By seeing sin clearly, man and woman, each according to his or her created nature, were invited to confess sin and reach out for the absolving power of God's grace in Christ.

God's preachments of law to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:16-19 are pointed and specific. Note that God preaches specific law to each gender differently. Diversity did not end with sin, when enmity replaced unity. Male consequences and female consequences reveal themselves differently, yet the same Hebrew word *'itzāvōn*⁴⁵ is used to describe them both. The word describes a vexing sorrow, a wistful regret over lost innocence, and a nagging burden that can't be unloaded. Sin's consequences, though differently nuanced for each gender, are equally faith-disturbing, life-inhibiting, and death-delivering.

The joy of being a sorrow-free mother and cherished wife was over. In the perfect world woman had come to Adam naturally and Adam had embraced her with perfect tenderness. The male/female relationship of man as head and woman as helper would survive the infection of sin. Now, however, male indifference would rise from a selfish preoccupation with "manly" things. Women, yearning for responsible headship when it was absent or, alternately, when used as a club, would try to do better by taking on the male role themselves. This is the import of God's words to Eve, "your desire will be for your husband, and he will

⁴³ Recall Jesus' words: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

⁴⁴ The Hebrew words *qānīti 'ish 'ēt yhw̄h* [hw"hy>-ta, vyai ytiynIq!] in Genesis 4:1, may be translated "with the help of the Lord, I have brought forth a man." Hebrew grammar allows a more focused translation (Luther *et alia*), i.e., "I have brought forth a man, the LORD!"

⁴⁵ The word, a noun formation expressing abstraction, is found only in Genesis 3. The noun from which it is built, *'itzēv*, is translated elsewhere in the Old Testament with such words as "trouble," "sorrow," "harsh," "hard," "offense," and "interference." These words well describe the effects of disorder.

rule over you” (3:16).⁴⁶ The Hebrew word for “rule” is not a new one. God used it in Genesis 1:16 to describe the fixed role of the sun and moon to govern day and night. Male headship was as much a reality in the fallen world as sunshine and moon glow. But gone forever was male headship that was uniform and constant. This Eve first learned when she overheard Adam’s unkind words to God that questioned Eve’s worth and her very existence.

We have already discussed how God comforted Eve by giving her the mother’s role in the great drama of salvation. Yet her privilege to conceive and bear children would be bittersweet. Here Moses uses *‘itzāvôn*. It remains an inescapable biological truth that being a mother is limited to the female gender. We observe today how such things as “control of one’s body” and “the right to choose an abortion” and “freedom from sexual harassment” dominate the female political agenda. Birth—at the very center of the female experience—would be a “pain” in many, many ways. Many women would literally pass through the valley of the shadow of death when giving birth. A goodly number of women would die giving birth.

The joyful care of the earth as a producer of food was lost. God laid a curse on Adam’s workplace. The ground would not yield Adam a “salary” without sweat.⁴⁷ Adam and Eve would be sent from paradise. Work, for Adam and all who inherit Adam’s sin, including every woman who stands next to her man, would be *‘itzāvôn*. Infestations of thorns and thistles would stand in the way of gathering an easy harvest. The male of the species would exert himself manfully to master all odds, to dominate a reluctant world, and hoard as much as he could.

The only way for men and women to overcome sin was to confess it and turn to God’s proclamation of salvation as a gift from heaven to earth in the person of Eve’s offspring. Survival would not be accomplished by reordering, ignoring, or reinventing the maleness and femaleness that God imprinted on men and women. Humans would not survive through a preoccupation with birth or the hoarding of food as a hedge against death. Sweat and stress and illness and injury would whittle away the human experience until the human male, as well as the female creature formed from his side, returned to the dust from which they had been formed.⁴⁸ Only in the promised Christ was victory possible.

What God said to Adam and Eve has remained true through history. Men have risked life and limb to put bread on the table. The root cause of most wars is economic. Women have carried out their child-bearing function as chattel, pawns, and sex objects.⁴⁹ Both men and women have struggled to face and explain the specter of physical death. It is not surprising that archaeology reveals how the earliest evidences of man-made religions are fixed on three things, the fertility of the species, the fertility of the soil, and death.⁵⁰ When humans turn away from the gospel and go their own way, they become fascinated with sex, materialism, and death. Listen to the lyrics of modern pop musicians. Read modern literature. Watch modern cinema. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

THESIS SIX—*Sin’s disorder will exist side by side with the “image of God” in the redeemed, yet-to-be-glorified persons of men and women until Christ returns in judgment .*

Genesis 3 reveals the disorderly effects of sin on work and male/female relationships. The next chapter reveals to us the disorderly effects of corrupted worship. Abel had the right order of things in mind. God lavishes grace. In appreciation, mankind returns thanks. Cain had things disordered. Sinners, who are not motivated by faith in the gospel, approach God as a force to be enticed or appeased. Sinners give to God in order to get from God, or, alternately, to get away from God. Cain clearly expected divine favor as a

⁴⁶ In Genesis 4:7 Moses uses almost exactly the same words to describe the working of sin in Cain. Sin strives to rule people. Only the Gospel blocks sin from doing this. Cain’s absence of saving faith placed sin in the master’s role, an “unnatural” thing for a believer. God wanted the gospel, not sin, to have the upper hand in Cain’s life.

⁴⁷ It is important to note that God cursed the ground (3:17) and Satan (3:14). He cursed neither Adam nor Eve. Rather, God spoke the the blessing of the gospel to them. In the gospel they received grace to struggle successfully against evil and its consequences.

⁴⁸ Eve was formed from Adam. She was bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh. Therefore the phrase “dust you are and to dust you will return” applied as much to her as it did to Adam.

⁴⁹ Jesus understood a woman’s special burden and also her special joy. “A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world” (John 16:21).

⁵⁰ Leviticus builds an awareness of sin around the same three problems. God taught Israel the reality of a worship-denying uncleanness through ceremonial laws that dealt with food (Leviticus 11), birth (Leviticus 12) and corruption (Leviticus 13-15). These preachments of law are followed by the great gospel chapter that lies at the center of the *Torah*, the great Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16).

payoff for his act of worship. Eventually Cain fled from the presence of God to a place of aimless wandering. Abel's reward was martyrdom at the hands of Cain.

In Genesis 4 we have the first of many scriptural examples that illustrate our sixth and next-to-the-last thesis. The life of a child of God in this sinful world is not one of glory apart from Christ. Jesus came as a suffering Savior, urging followers to take up their cross and follow him. Glory awaits, but it is not guaranteed to believers this side of heaven. Jesus reigns in glory at the right hand of the Father. That glory will not be completely revealed to us or for us until Christ comes again to judge the world through a perfect and final application of law and gospel. Thus the glory of heaven is not something we should seek or expect in this present world.⁵¹ For this reason Adam and Eve were compelled by God against their will to leave paradise. God made sure they would not reach out for "heaven on earth." The tree of life, eternal life in Christ, will belong to believers only in eternity.

History runs downhill without God's intervention through Word and sacrament. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews says so. By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith Enoch walked with God. By faith Noah built an ark. By faith Abraham obeyed and went. By faith he was enabled to become a father while well past age. By faith Moses kept the Passover and led Israel out of Egypt through the Red Sea. By faith human weakness is overruled by God's strength. Paul was told that his thorn in the flesh was a blessing because God's strength is made perfect in human weakness.

The image of God in Christ is from God and not from us. It is ours through our baptism. It comes to us through the preaching and teaching of the divine Word. Our unity as members of the body of Christ is strengthened every time we partake of his supper. And what is the result? Paul gives God's answer. "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). All of these blessings belong equally to believers regardless of gender, age, race, or social status (Galatians 3:28).

The drowning of the Old Adam, as Luther's Small Catechism reminds us, is to be repeated daily by men and women. The emergence of the "new self" through the in-dwelling of Jesus, the second Adam, is also a daily experience. Being "like God" in righteousness and true holiness means that we will renounce the disorder of our humanity caused by sin as fully and completely as we can in Christ. We will find joy in our **work** for Christ's sake. We will use our minds and hands to "rule" the world around us and thereby gather daily bread for ourselves and our families through honest labor. As Paul reminded the Thessalonians (3:6,7), there is no room for idleness in God's new creation.

In our **worship** of God we will gladly hear the Word. We will accept in repentance the preaching of God's law, and we will embrace in faith our freedom in the gospel. We will see to it that a public ministry exists to administer the sacraments and to teach and preach at home and around the world. And we will **walk together** in love, following in the footsteps of the One who restores our humanity. Jesus said, "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34,35).

True love never sets aside God's will in a misguided attempt to fix the disorder caused by sin. This applies to Christ's image being renewed in us in respect to work, and to worship, and to our conduct as men and women walking side by side. For example, we may not advocate adultery as a cure for a loveless marriage. We cannot approve theft from the rich to lessen the anguish of the poor. We may not accommodate political correctness by approving homosexual "marriage" in the name of love. Nor can we raise the banner of revolution against the powers ordained by God for the sake of a world order more amenable to our tastes and desires.

And, we may not confuse the roles given by God to men and to women as part of his created order, even with the noble intent of furthering the spread of the gospel. It is not always possible to see immediately

⁵¹ In this connection it is good to consider Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:4-11: "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body."

the evil consequences of a wrong means pursued toward a noble end. The means of grace have power apart from the one who offers them. Heretical practice is a deception of Satan who says, “did God really say?” Heresy is devolution. It inevitably bears devolution’s bitter fruit.

In respect to work, worship, and humanity’s unity within diversity, males were created to shoulder the responsibility of headship. Women may complement men in each area and in many ways. They may use their talents to supplement what men lack. For example, they may please God by adding to the income of a hardworking spouse. Men were not created to do the whole job, alone! The same is true for women. No man can bear a child. But a husband is meant to share the burden of child-rearing. Believers, men and women acting together for the common good, will prayerfully find a way in every instance to do what must be done together. At the same time nothing is knowingly to be done to undermine what God created men to be and what he created women to be.

Males, as we assess past history, have made a horrible mess of things by giving free reign to their sinful natures. Women, true to their created roles and in keeping with the infection of sin, have complemented men. They have actively and passively joined in creating humanity’s messes. The single-minded longing on the part of women for man’s place in society at the expense of marriage and motherhood may seem progressively modern, but it runs counter to God’s created order. There is nothing “very good” about male indifference to, or exploitation of, the female half of the human race. Male chauvinism is a gross perversion of male headship. Christians are called upon by the “law of love” to encourage each other to flee from all such disorder and evil. Because sin and its influence will cling to—though not dominate—the best of Christians until they are home in heaven, all Christian endeavors that seek a valid place for men and women will be struggles and will include both success and failure. The “battle of the sexes” will remain as one component of the larger war between our old sinful self and the new self that we have received by the power of the Holy Spirit working faith in the merits of Christ.

What is to be done then? What choices are we to make as we await Christ’s second coming? What must we do here and now until we are finally liberated from sin completely at Christ’s second coming?

THESIS SEVEN—*Holding to the truth of God’s Word is the only sure guide for each of us as men and women in work, in worship, and in our walk together.*

Allow me to make a few suggestions and then suggest that we discuss them openly.

- “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:7-8).

God urges us to pay attention to those who spoke the Word of God in the past. They include the prophets and apostles who wrote Scripture. They also include the saints and martyrs of the Christian Church over the past two millennia. When we do this, we say “no” to the idea that our understanding of truth and morality has evolved and is better today than it was long ago. This doesn’t mean that every aspect of the lives of the believers of the past were perfect. The Bible reveals human weakness in almost every hero of faith. Passages that describe these weaknesses comfort us with the knowledge that we can be weak too. We don’t quote these descriptive passages to condone behavior, but rather to contemplate how often our battles with the Old Adam resemble those of the saints who preceded us.

An important principle of biblical interpretation is that descriptive passages are not prescriptive. Laws given to Old Testament Israel describe how God wanted his chosen people to conduct their lives (1) in keeping with the goodness and order that God established in a perfect world and (2) in keeping with his selection of Israel as his special people as his “glory” and a “light for the Gentiles” until the coming of Christ (Luke 2:32). The inspired Torah (“teaching”) of Moses directed Israel’s worship, its mode of civil government, and even described how and what to eat. Paul calls these laws a “child’s teacher” (Galatians 3:24,25) needed only until the Son of God came to fulfill all things. Moral expectations appear in both the Old and New Testaments because they are an expression of order established by God the Creator, and an exposition of the “very good” that was God’s intent in the beginning. To love the Lord with the whole heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37) is as true today as ever. To love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39) is also a believer’s joy today.

The revealed God of Holy Scripture is still the only God. This means idolatry is wrong. God's name remains holy in itself. It is not to be ignored, trivialized, or put to unauthorized use. We must worship to be human. God wants that worship to be "in wisdom and in truth" as Jesus said to the woman at the well. Parents are to be honored as God's viceroys on earth for our good. Life is sacred. The giving and taking of it belongs to God. Murder is wrong. So, too, is adultery, stealing, lying and wanting things that we can't and shouldn't have. The Christian is faced daily with a struggle in regard to how these broad principles of human behavior are to be applied in specific situations. A lazy soul wants a casebook of "yes" and "no" answers that will make daily contrition and repentance unnecessary. The legalist in us wants criteria by which to mark others as sinners and ourselves as superior. The weakness of our male and female flesh would like ironclad rules to govern what men and women may or may not do in society, the home, and the church.

Mankind cannot save itself by doing this or that (Colossians 2:21). God alone saved mankind. He intervened again and again in the past. At the right time he sent us Jesus. Whenever things devolved in the past, it was God who took the initiative to set things right. We have just pointed out that biblical descriptions do not hand us a "yes and no" casebook. Yet all scripture is for our learning and the narratives God decided to include in his Bible "happened . . . as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). In the Bible we observe human beings as agents of God to restore order and do good in a world that was forever getting worse. By and large God called men to lead in this work. He gave them the responsibility and authority to act on his behalf. And how did God make use of women? God provided the best of men with women walking together in service side by side. On occasion, women overshadowed men when men proved weak or absent in leadership.

Let us survey the biblical record. God called Noah to build the ark and with him his wife, his sons, and their wives. What was Noah? Peter calls him "a preacher (κῆρυξ *kēryx*) of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). God called Abram and Sarah from Ur out of their father's idolatry. What was Abraham? "The father of all believers." What did he do as head of his patriarchal family? He built altars and called upon the name of the Lord. Sarah worshiped alongside him. Later God raised up Moses alongside Aaron and Miriam and the seventy elders of Israel. Whom did God summon to the mountaintop for public worship? God invited Moses, Aaron, Aaron's sons and the seventy elders on behalf of all the people. Appropriate to her gender, however, Miriam led the women of Israel in song when the LORD delivered Israel from Pharaoh. Still later, God found in David a man after his own heart at a time when the priesthood lay in tatters and it was imperative for God to renew his promises. Whom did David use to restore leadership? Whom did David select to beautify the worship in the Temple? King David turned to the priests and Levites. Yet, early in his life David was saved from a career-ending blunder by the wise counsel of Abigail. When Israel and Judah gave themselves over to idolatry, how did the prophet Isaiah describe disorder? "Youths oppress my people, women rule over them...your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path" (Isaiah 3:12). Yet Hulda stood alongside Jeremiah to speak God's truth about the tenor of the times. Finally, what did Jesus himself do? He committed the gospel of reconciliation to twelve male disciples. He also welcomed the support of women who were often more attentive to his human needs in life and in death than were his chosen twelve.

All of God's great interventions in Bible history affirm male headship and the complementary and supplementary cooperation of females in God's work. The writer to the Hebrews asks believers like us to consider those who confessed Christ before our time with the sobering reminder that Jesus himself never changes. Why do many today believe that the church is morally bound to elevate women to the pastoral office? They cannot argue that this honors the pattern of inspired Scripture. Why do others go to the other extreme and shut the door of the church to women. They cannot appeal to inspired Scripture either. The middle ground is the one established at Creation when both men and women were shaped in the image of God to honor distinctive roles within humanity in work, worship, and walking side by side. In so doing they honor the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whose image the human race is meant to bear, neither confusing roles, nor denying unity of purpose and action.

- "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore

put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand” (Ephesians 6:12,13).

A sober analysis of our times leads us to believe Jesus when he prophesied, “There will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21,22). “At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matthew 24:10-12). We don’t know the day of Christ’s reappearing. All that we know for sure is that today is one day closer than yesterday. And we know that the last days mean distress, betrayal, hatred, deception, moral coldness, and increasing wickedness.

Satan the great deceiver is still at work and he will seduce well-meaning Christians in the last days with the same guile that he used in Eden. Satan wishes us to ignore the plain meaning of the Word of God by asking the question “did God really say?” He will repeat that message long enough for doubt to take root. Let us be warned. Eve was perfect and she was deceived. We, who struggle against our sinful flesh every day, should not kid ourselves that resisting Satan will be easy. The Christian church was born 2000 years ago when the polytheism of Greece and Rome and the mystery religions (with their natural cycles of birth-death-rebirth) offered female gods for worship. Not surprisingly, heretics borrowed a little bit from the Bible and added a whole lot from this world. Heretics invariably gave women prominent positions in the heretical societies that they built. They assigned theological significance to female ministry. Marcion surrounded himself with women clergy. The Quintillians of the fourth century had women bishops and presbyters, arguing that “in Christ there is neither male nor female.” The veneration of the Virgin Mary has grown century by century in Roman and orthodox theology and practice. The current Pope is being urged by some to declare Mary, the Lord’s mother, co-mediatrix with her Son. In America Mary Baker Eddy defined Christian Science and Ellen White shaped Seventh Day Adventism. The false prophet Sun Yung Moon has declared the work of Christ unfinished because Jesus never married. He, like all the rest, redefine the role God assigned to men and women, blending truth and error in a provocative and enticing way to deceive many.

- “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak” (1 Corinthians 8:9).

Every decision we make in the church ought to be made with care. We are commanded to preach the Word and administer the sacraments rightly. We are not given a book of rules to show us how to do this. Loving God and our neighbor are the great principles upon which believers are guided to reclaim full use of the image of God. Paul adopted a position of empathy toward those who were different by birth or station. He did not tailor the Word of God or his message to please people, but he tried to “get into the other person’s skin” and see how best to reach him or her. In this sense, Paul became a Greek to the Greeks, and a Jew to the Jews—all in order that the central purpose of Christian ministry, the saving of souls, remain front and center (1 Corinthians 9:22).⁵² Paul insists that Christian liberty is real. He warns us against becoming tangled in legalistic righteousness (Galatians 5:1). At the same time Paul exercised his freedom with extreme caution, lest the weak be tempted to fall.

Scripture teaches us that God created women as “the weaker partner” (1 Peter 3:7). Eyes full of love will not ignore this truth. Nor will the weakness in men misuse this truth to demean and marginalize women. Love cannot behave lovelessly. “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). Responsible male headship—“in the image of Christ”—is not a choice. It is a must! Adam was appointed teacher in the garden. Males are still the ones God relies upon to set the tone in work, in worship, and in the unity and diversity of society. A believing

⁵² Ethnicity seems to be part of the created order too. Paul (Acts 17:16) states that God set the places where each people live. The sin of Babel has resulted in the hardening of ethnic lines through the confusion of languages. The gospel softens both boundaries.

male's pure, Christ-like love for his female counterpart compels him to accept as "very good" the 'ēzēr k^lnēgdō relationship. Does not the Scripture lay the blame for sin's appearance in God's good creation on Adam? It does! Why? Because Adam was responsible to God for sharing the Word of God with his wife and to supervise her application of God's instruction regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by being there for Eve in her hour of temptation. In this Adam failed! Did not God hold Adam accountable because he was silent? He certainly did! Why would any man today thoughtlessly place a woman whom he loves in a headship position where Satan might tempt her as he long ago tempted Eve?⁵³

- "By the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:3).

When I read this passage, I immediately think of what Paul said in the verse introducing his marvelous illustration comparing husbands to Christ and wives to his church. Speaking to all believers—male and female—Paul says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). Service in the name of Christ is the absolute highest calling in life for both men and women. Sin makes chauvinists of the best of men according to the Old Adam. Yet Christ's image motivates men to serve as men, created to be the head, even as Christ is the church's head. Sinful women may harbor a jealous yearning for the task men have been given to do. Yet Christ's image moves women to serve as women, in the same way as the church gladly serves its Lord.

Why should we be surprised, therefore, that the apostle Paul had a place for the brilliant mind of Priscilla, the competency of Phoebe, and the grace of Timothy's mother and grandmother. Paul also did not encourage men to shoulder ministry alone. Paul yielded responsibility to women that complemented his own ministry and that of other Christian men. He especially encouraged women in service that fit their place in God's ordered world. Women were encouraged to teach their children at home. Paul cited older Christian women as the very best teachers for younger women. Goodness and order mean that the headship/complementary relationship of men to women and women to men be a real one, a scriptural one, and one in which men and women are humbly serving Christ and each other continually. Christian women submit to God's Word respecting the men in their lives through prayer, and study of God's Word, and by drowning sinful feelings of resentment and jealousy. Christian men, submit to God's Word respecting the women in their lives also through prayer and the study of God's Word. Men will do so by drowning sinful fears of being threatened in their manhood or by not using their headship as an excuse for loveless, self-serving authority.

- Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself. Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:11-15).

At our very best, all of us will look back on the service we give to Christ and humbly give thanks to God for whatever good we have accomplished in our life. I have said to myself often, "if I leave the church no worse at my death for my presence on this earth, then I will have accomplished much." What are the remedies when we fall short as men and women? God's faithfulness and constancy! So we will not allow ourselves quarrel over words. We will avoid the shame that condemns too quickly, or the laziness that yields too swiftly. Our prayer will be to keep close to the Word. With trembling hands let us then apply God's principles in our ministry, wherever we live, respecting God's warnings and holding on to God's promises.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך לעולם

⁵³ The same general warning applies also to those new in the faith, see 1 Timothy 3:6.