

Women in the Church: Are They Seeking a Bigger Role? (I Timothy 2:9-15)

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It would seem from the question assigned to me as the topic for this paper that it would most logically follow that we must first decipher what role the Scriptures give to women in the church and then, follow with the roles that women are seeking. But let us attack this question from the opposite way. Let us first of all ascertain the roles that women are seeking in the church today. Then let us see the role that the Scriptures give to women in the church for all time. Thirdly, let us refute some of the arguments of those who claim that the Words of Scripture denying to women a role in the church equal to men do not apply today. Finally, let us discuss our own congregations and where and how women may be used in the Lord's service in a God-pleasing manner.

I. What Role Are Women Seeking in the Church Today?

The answer to this question should be fairly obvious from current news reports. For example, the January 6, 1975, issue of *Christian News* quotes a Religious News Service release dated 12-30-74 with the opening paragraph readings "The 'irregular' ordination of 11 women deacons to the Episcopal priesthood in July was the top religion news story of 1974, according to the Religion Newswriters Association." If you at all followed this news story throughout 1974 you noted from the articles in the papers and the newsmagazines that the Episcopalian Bishops generally felt that this ordination of the 11 women deacons to the priesthood was "irregular" not because they felt that the action was unscriptural but that it was "irregular" because the church government had not officially sanctioned such action. It was generally felt that the ordination of women to the priesthood would soon be approved by the governing body of the church.

Women preachers are not a new innovation in the church. The Montanists had women preachers in the early church. Since they were an heretical sect we could hardly call their precedent binding. Although women preachers are a rarity in our country today there are some around. For example, among some of the Pentecostal sects of our nation it is fairly common to have women preachers.

As in almost every denomination today, so also is there in Lutheranism a strong movement to ordain women to the pastoral ministry. "The contemporary movement in Lutheranism to ordain women as pastors originated not with any theological studies but because of the connection of the church and state in certain countries in Europe."¹ In Europe the ordination of women occurred first in Lutheran churches which were in some way supported or regulated by state governments. By a decision of parliament, Norway in 1938 permitted the first women pastors. Until 1956 a woman appointed pastor by the government could be rejected by the congregation according to Norwegian Law. But we must note that it was first in 1961 that a woman was ordained as a pastor of a Norwegian State Church. "In Sweden the ordination of women to the Lutheran ministry was sanctioned by the church assembly in 1958. Shortly thereafter the first such ordination took place."² How is this movement to ordain women as pastors progressing., today in our own country? In March of 1971 *Christian News* published a review of the *Lutheran Ethic* by Lawrence Kersten and quoted the findings of the book in the following way:

Question: Should woman be allowed to become ordained ministers?

Among lay members the following agreed: 73% LCA, 68% ALC, 47% LC-MS, 39% WELS.

¹ David P. Scaer, "May Women Be Ordained as Pastors?" in Herman Otten, ed., *A Christian Handbook on Vital Issues*, p. 342.

² Wilbert Gawrisch, "The Place of Women in the Life and Work of the Church," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, p. 15.

Among clergy the following agreed: 62% LCA, 30% ALC, 8% LC-MS, 0% WELS.³

In their book, *A Study of Generations*, Strommen, Brekke, Underwager, and Johnson have taken sampling of LCA, ALC, and LC-MS laymen and clergy in order to come to conclusions about agreement or disagreement on certain issues among Lutherans. What follows are samplings from their study which demonstrate how Lutherans in our country generally respond to the question of the role of women in the church.

Scale 8 - Biblical Knowledge (Reliability .66)

Mark only those statements which you think are from the Bible. Leave others blank.

#95. Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak

No Response - 3%, No - 72%, Yes - 25%.⁴

Scale 37 - Need For Unchanging Structure (Reliability .78)

#437. It is somehow unnatural to place women in positions of authority over men:

No Response - 5%, Strongly agree - 7%, Agree - 47%, Disagree - 36%, Strongly Disagree - 5%.⁵

Scale 78 - Openness to Change Within the Church (reliability .55)

#708. Women should be able to hold office and vote in congregations just as men do:

No Response - 7%, Agree - 83%, Disagree - 11%.

#709. It should be possible for women to be ordained into the ministry:

No Response - 6%, Agree - 61%, Disagree - 33%.⁶

The summary of the authors concerning the feelings of the various Lutheran bodies about the question of the role of women in the church follows:

The sharpest conflict of opinion centers on the question of the role of women in the church. In the LCA 75% agree that women should be ordained. This compares to 66% in the ALC and 45% in the LC-MS. While 90% of the members of the ALC and the LCA feel women should be able to hold office and to vote in congregations, only 70% of the members of the LC-MS agree.⁷

Quoting from the 1970 LCUSA publication, "The Ordination of Women" David Scaer writes, "Over half of the Lutherans in the world are in churches which now have women clergy on their rolls."⁸ Recent reports show that 22 women are enrolled at Luther Seminary of the ALC at St. Paul and 22 women are enrolled at Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary of the LCA. In 1967 the ALC Council found nothing Biblically wrong with the ordination of women. In 1968 the LCA came to the same conclusion. In the summer of 1970 both the LCA and the ALC conventions endorsed the ordination of women pastors. David Scaer writes: "The press reported that there was little or no theological discussion on the issue."⁹ At its 1969, 1971, and 1973 conventions the LC-MS opposed the practice of ordaining women pastors as being doctrinally contrary to Scripture. But we note the following quote from the "Badger Lutheran!" June 30, 1965, concerning the LC-MS convention in Detroit:

³ Otten, ed., *Op. Cit.*, p. 75.

⁴ Strommen, *A Study of Generations*, p. 367.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 377.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 395.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 272.

⁸ Otten, ed., *Op. Cit.*, p. 343.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 343.

The all-male convention decided after considerable discussion to grant women in the synod's congregations not only the right to attend voters' meetings, to voice opinions, but to vote in areas where the office of the keys or doctrinal matters are not involved.¹⁰

Prof. Wilbert Gawrisch who quoted this in his *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* article noted also that the floor committee chairman at the convention stated that this means that women may not be representatives of congregations and that they may not be delegates to synodical conventions. Where this floor committee chairman's ruling stands in the LC-MS today is beyond my certain knowledge. But I seem to recollect reading about woman delegates to the LC-MS New Orleans convention.

Our WELS, to my knowledge, has no convention rulings on the matter of the ordination of women or women suffrage. This is probably so because we make it a practice not to rule on matters governed by the Word of God. The sample constitution for congregations of the WELS does contain the stipulation that only male communicant members may be voting members of the congregation.

We should also note that as of this writing the U. S. Department of Labor has applied the equal pay act to female teachers in Christian Day Schools supported by the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod. I quote here from the "Open Letter To *Christian News*" written on Dec. 3, 1974 by the Rev. James P. Schaefer and quoted in the January 12, 1975 issue of the *Northwestern Lutheran* (page 11):

Furthermore, if the *equal pay provision* of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 is applicable to the ministry of the church, what about the *equal opportunity provision* of the same act? Having conceded the right of the government to apply one portion of the act (equal pay), how can we deny them the right to demand that women be admitted to the office of pastor (equal opportunity)?

Thus besides a very strong movement in the Lutheran church towards the ordination of women as pastors and towards the granting of women suffrage in congregations and synodical conventions, there may also be governmental pressure towards that end. Finally, since it is so evidently the case that women, in general, are seeking a role equal to men in the church, we would be well advised to renew in our minds what Scripture has to say on this topic.

II. The Role that the Scriptures Give to Women in the Church for All Time

The status of women as believers in Jesus Christ is equal to the status of men. As there is one Savior for all people, so is their one saving faith in that Savior. Regardless of the sex of the believer, the joy of Heaven is there.

Gen. 1:26-27 tells us that both male and female were created in the Image of God. We must note that sin came upon them both. We also note that it is through faith in Christ that both man and woman are perfectly saved.

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all in all (Col. 3:10-11).

"And that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24).

There is, therefore, no difference between male and female in regard to participation in the gifts of Christ.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26). Both man and woman are spiritual equals in

¹⁰ Gawrisch, *Op. Cit.*, p. 13.

God's sight. "The woman shared with man also in the dominion over the creatures. The plural form is used: 'God blessed them and God said unto them...have dominion...over every living thing that moveth upon the earth' (Gen. 1:28)."¹¹

We note from the Scriptures the high place that women have held in God's Plan of Salvation. The Savior was promised to be "the seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15). God sent forth His Son "made of a woman," (Gal. 4:4). The women were the first to see the resurrected Savior.

There is no difference between men and women as far as their faith is concerned. Both are spiritual equals in God's sight and both receive spiritual gifts. But there is a difference between men and women in the roles that God intends each of them to play in the church. This difference is quite closely related to the Scriptural husband-wife relationship in marriage. "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body" (Eph. 5:22-23). "...the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (I Cor. 11:3). This relationship has been explained as a "*kephale* - structure."

Here we have to do with a structure that goes far beyond the relationship between man and woman. Even the relationship of Christ to God, the relationship of the Holy Spirit to Christ, the relationship of the church to Christ are determined by this fundamental principle of being set within and subject to an order that was instituted by God from the beginning. I Cor. 11:2-16 and Eph. 5:22-23 show the wider context in which this ordering and subordering of the woman is placed. Only in I Corinthians 11 the key word subordination is missing. But there the structure is revealed into which the practical structure of being subordinated fits. This basic structure is a '*kephale* - structure.' The man is the head of the woman; Christ is the head of the man; God is the head of Christ. The 'head' is that which is prior, that which determines, that which leads. The head is the power that begins, it is *principium*, *arche*. This being the head differs depending on the structure in which it finds itself. In any case, it involves the kind of relationship for which one can never substitute a poor scheme.¹²

The structure cannot switch poles and remain the way that God planned it. The head must always be the head and the subordinate must always be subordinate according to God's divine order of things.

Thus, the woman is to be subordinate to the man in marriage (Eph. 5:22-23), and in the church. "But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim 2:12).

I Cor. 14:33-40

33. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

34. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

35. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

36. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

37. If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

38. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

39. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

40. Let all things be done decently and in order.

The King James Translation confuses the sense of I Cor. 14:33-40 by its punctuation of verses 33-34. The closing words of verse 33 are to be construed with verse 34 so that the sentence reads, "As in all churches

¹¹ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, p. 524.

¹² Peter Brunner, *The Ministry and the Ministry of Women*, p. 25.

of the saints let your women keep silence in the churches.” It is so construed by the Nestle Greek Text. About this Prof. Gawrisch says:

“God is not the author of confusion but of peace,” is complete in itself. A further consideration which favors taking this clause with the following is the fact that in verse 36 Paul again emphasizes the thought that the congregation in Corinth should not act independently. It should not fail to take its sister congregations into account, “What? Came the Word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?” Paul asks. They owe it to their fellow Christians in other congregations to show them brotherly love and consideration. An insistence upon one’s right to follow an independent course in these matters is unbrotherly. Furthermore, in these things God has spoken. We have previously noted Paul’s reference to the Law. He repeats this thought in verse 37 stressing the fact that these are not just his own opinions. The Corinthians are not to discount Paul’s instructions as mere human judgments. “The things that I write unto you are the commandments *of the Lord*,” Paul emphatically declares. God is a God of order, and therefore, in the life, the work, and the worship of the church the principle is to prevail, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”¹³

Here we have several important reasons for the subservience of women to men in the Christian Church:

1. Verses 33 and 40 - for the sake of good, God-pleasing order.
2. Verses 33b and 36 - because of a respect for God’s Word out of “ecumenical,” brotherly considerations.
3. Verses 34b and 37 - because God’s Law commands it.
4. Verse 35 - because it is a “shame for women to speak in the church” in the sight of God since it is a transgression of His Commandment that the woman be under obedience.

Thus, the role of women in the church for all time is not to be a preaching, (I Cor. 14:34 – *λαλέω* - “to importune one with speeches,” Kittel) but a role of subservience. Men are to take the lead in spiritual matters in any group of mixed company. Where only women are present, a woman will, of course, lead in the worship. Women may also teach and train children in the Word of God. “I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (I Tim. 5:14).

The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands that the Word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2:3-5).

“From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation” (II Tim 3:15). (Lois and Eunice taught Timothy). “Go ye therefore and teach all nations...” (Matt. 28:19-20).

...it is universally acknowledged that woman is the most influential teacher of the human race. If women prove themselves good teachers in the home (Titus 2:3), they thereby yield a greater influence upon the coming generation than the men, including pastors and schoolteachers.¹⁴

In our society with its democratic consciousness and its women’s liberal philosophies these Scriptural injunctions may sound unfriendly and harsh towards women.

¹³ Gawrisch, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 32-33.

¹⁴ Pieper, *Op. Cit.*, p. 526.

...in reality they are the very opposite. In fact, they are expressive of a feeling of tender sympathy and basic understanding. They mean: let a woman not enter a sphere of activity for which by dint of her very creation she is not suited. Let not a bird try to dwell under water. Let not a fish try to live on land. Let not a woman try to exercise authority over a man by lecturing him in public worship. For the sake both of herself and of the spiritual welfare of the church such unholy tampering with divine authority is forbidden.¹⁵

Paul emphasizes the divine authority for his statements regarding the “*kephale* - structure” that exists between men and women in the church in the portion of the Scriptures which are to receive my deepest consideration according to the assignment given to me, I Timothy 2:9-14. Here Paul gives what has been called an interpretive commentary—fully inspired—of his words in I Cor. 14:33-40.

I Tim. 2:8-15

8. I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.
9. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;
10. But (which becometh women professing godliness;) with good works.
11. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.
12. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.
13. For Adam was first formed, then Eve.
14. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.
15. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

The context of these words of Paul to Timothy and to us is this: Verses 1-7 of chapter 2 call for an intercession for civil authorities in the worship services. Verses 8-15 describe how God gave the leadership roles in these worship services to men. Chapter 3:1-13 contains regulations for pastors and deacons. In verse 8 of chapter 2 Paul expresses God’s Will that men do the praying. From the context we must say that men are to lead in the praying in the public worship services.

In the rest of chapter 2 Paul seems to be answering a question, never asked, but which would read something such as: “Since we have been given freedom through faith in Christ what is the woman’s proper place and sphere of activity in the worship service?” In verses 9 and 10 Paul describes how the outward appearance of the woman in a worship service is to reflect the inward piety of her heart. These verses are not stressing a straight-pinned Amish style clothing for women. *κοσμέω* means to put into order; to decorate, deck, adorn. Here we think of women putting their faces on, decorating themselves for public with clothing, and dressing up. This clothing and this adorning was to be in a *κοσμίως* manner. It should be done in a virtuous, modest way. But, it still remains an adorning. The braided hair, and gold, etc., refers to the extravagant, sexy look of Paul’s day in Corinth. Women should not draw attention to themselves in the worship services by their sexy dress but by their abundance of good works displayed in their lives. Further explanation of Paul’s thought may be gained from the following commentators. Kretzmann: “Where true chastity lives in the heart, and not a disgusting prudery, the dress of a woman will express the beauty of a womanly personality, but will never accentuate the charms of sex.”¹⁶

Lenski: “This verse does not refer merely to sex attraction. How many women who are past that age are given to silly vanity of dress? Paul is not insisting on drab dress. Even this may be worn

¹⁵ William Hendricksen, *New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 108-109.

¹⁶ Paul E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, New Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 377.

with vanity; the very drabness may be made a display. Each according to her station in life: the queen not being the same as her lady in waiting, the latter not the same as her noble mistress. Each with due propriety as modesty and propriety will indicate to her both when attending divine services and when appearing in public elsewhere.”¹⁷

The dress of a woman in a worship service should be in keeping with her role in the worship service as God ordained it.

Paul had indicated in verse 8 how the men were to lead in public prayer. Now he adds in verses 11-12 that the women are to be learners in silence and not teachers. They are not to take upon themselves public preaching or teaching which would place them in a position of superiority over men. The Epistle to the Hebrews is speaking about those who preach the Word of God when it says: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17). Thus, a preacher or a teacher is in a position of superiority over those to whom he is preaching or teaching. Paul asserts his apostolic authority in verse 12 to forbid the position of a public preacher and teacher of God’s Word to women. Since the context of this verse is the public worship service this teaching must be considered in that context.

The phrase, “...nor to usurp authority over the man,” is the most important phrase for this discussion. This concept becomes the basis for the answer to every practical question that we may face concerning the role of women in the church. *αὐθεντέω* is a colloquial word from *αὐθέντης* which means, “master.” *αὐθεντέω* refers to a domineering over, a rule over with the sense of an autocrat.

Paul refers to teaching Scripture and not to imparting intellectual secular information to the mind....That position and that the Word itself accords to the man and withholds from the woman, and no woman may step into the place of the man without violating the very Word she would try to teach to both men and women. Her effort to do so would be self-contradictory in God’s eyes despite what the world may say.¹⁸

Paul cannot permit a woman to dominate a man in a worship service because God’s holy Law does not permit it (I Cor. 14:34). That holy law is God’s Will expressed in the Pentateuch, especially in the story of woman’s creation and her fall into sin. (vs. 13) “For Adam was first formed, then Eve.” Gen. 2:18-26 gives us the account of how God formed the woman from Adam’s rib so that man might have a “help meet”. David Scaer believes that “this is not so much an argument to Scripture as it is to creation. The argument to creation is stronger than to Scripture, simply because creation is the first act of God.”¹⁹ Jesus refers to creation in Matt. 19:5-6 when He speaks about the marriage bond being a life-long union between a man and a woman. Paul’s argument back to creation is extremely valid and powerful. He is following his Master’s lead by expressing himself in that way. In I Cor. 11:9 Paul expressed it this way: “Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.”

The second God-inspired reason why woman is forbidden to have dominion over the man is the order of the fall into sin. Paul writes: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression” (I Tim. 2:14).

This does not mean that Eve’s sin was greater than Adam’s. If we can speak of sin being greater we would have to speak about Adam’s sin as the greater. God had directly given the command not to eat to Adam. Adam had relayed it to Eve. Satan directly tempted Eve. Through Eve Satan tempted Adam. What Paul refers to here is that Eve first sinned and then the fall into sin was fulfilled by Adam. “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world...” (Rom. 5:12).

¹⁷ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, etc.*, p. 560.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 564.

¹⁹ Otten, ed., *Op. Cit.*, p. 348.

What God has made may not arbitrarily be changed. In fact, the written Law of God is only a reflection of the plan already established in the creation. Paul's reference to the fall of Eve before Adam suggests that she unlawfully assumed the religious responsibility for that first community and in so doing violated God's established order between the man and the woman.... Women preaching could very well be a graphic representation of the first sin.²⁰

The permanent subordination of woman to man is further shown to us in the account of the fall into sin when God told Eve in Gen. 3:16, "...and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." The words of Christ in Matt. 19:5-6 and the words of Paul in I Cor. 11, 14, and I Tim. 2 are proof that this relationship ("kephale – structure") between men and women does not change with justification through faith in Christ.

In all of this talk of the subordination of women perhaps it would be wise to note the words of the following quotation:

Subordination in nature has been placed there by God not to indicate that someone is more worthy than another or that one should be despised. Subordination is for the sake of function and welfare. The child is subordinate to the parents for the child's welfare, not to punish the child or to benefit the parents. Christ is subordinate to God in carrying out the task of salvation. This does not degrade Christ. The one in the superior or upper position exercises love to those in the lower positions. That's why Paul says that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church. Of course many do not model their family lives after the divine pattern and grief must necessarily ensue. Still the abuse of the divine pattern does not allow abrogation of the pattern because it is defiled by sin. Women pastors abrogate the divine pattern.²¹

This puts Paul's promise and admonition in I Tim, 2:15 into the proper perspective: "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and Charity and holiness with sobriety." Paul is here referring to the woman's subordination by the word, childbearing. (Note: Gen. 3:16 "Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.") This is the position that the Lord designed for woman here on this earth. She is not to usurp authority over a man in the church. This role will not be in effect in Heaven nor will it in any way affect her salvation which is meant for all through faith in Christ.

These are the arguments of Scripture as clearly as I can present them. Let us now turn our attention towards the arguments of those who seek to discredit the words of Scripture to permit a bigger role for women in the church.

III. APOLOGIA

The first of these arguments to be considered is one of Christian freedom. "I am free from all that Old Testament stuff." We have already refuted this argument when we noted how Jesus applied creation as a law binding a couple together in a life-long marriage and how Paul in I Cor. 11 and in I Tim. 2 refers to this "law of creation" as still binding today.

The second argument which is often given as to why these words of Paul refusing a role for women in the church equal to men no longer apply today is that Paul was here only speaking about a custom of the times in Corinth, as the "head covering" admonition in I Cor. 11 was referring to offense caused in the community by not observing a custom of the times. Since, they say, this custom no longer applies to our present day society neither do Paul's words apply to us today.

²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 348-349.

²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 350-351.

The congregation in Corinth was thoroughly Gentile. The Gentiles did not forbid women to lead in the worship as did the Jews. It was rather encouraged and taken for granted that women would lead in the worship of many pagan deities, such as the Canaanite female deities and the Greek goddess, Aphrodite, the worship of whom was common in Corinth in that day. No, not wearing a head conveying would cause offense in Corinth in Paul's day for that was the sign of a harlot. But having women lead in the worship would have not caused offense in that pagan culture. It would have been a commonplace event. Some people believe that there was a desire on the part of women to be pastors in the Corinthian congregation and that that desire can be directly traced to the pagan influences of the priestesses at the temple of Aphrodite. There is little substantial proof for this, however.

We must also note that in I Cor. 11 the basis for Paul's argument for women to have their heads covered in worship services was comeliness, (vs. 13), because it was the custom for virtuous Gentile women to have their heads covered in public. The basis for Paul's argument here in I Tim. 2 and in I Cor. 14 is God's permanent order and will for women in the church based upon creation and the fall.

A third argument that needs to be refuted is the slanderous statement that Paul is just expressing his prejudices against women in this matter.

Anyone who maintains that Paul holds women in low esteem should read the following passages. If they are honestly interpreted, one will have to admit that in many ways no man is ever able to bestow upon a woman the full honor which according to Paul's teaching should be bestowed upon her: 1 Cor. 7:14 "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband." I Cor. 7:4 "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husbands and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife." 1 Cor. 11:7 "...but the woman is the glory of the man." I Cor. 11:11 "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord." Eph. 5:25-33 "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word....So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies...let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." Paul's practical attitude to women kingdom-workers is expressed in this beautiful, concise order: Phil. 4:3 "Help these women."²²

There may be other arguments which seek to refute the Scriptural passages mentioned in this paper. All of them, if the authority and the inspiration of Scripture is permitted to stand, will not affect the conclusion that in the church, a woman is not to "usurp authority over the man." One final note on this section needs to be recorded. We know from the record of St. Paul's writing concerning adiaphora in Romans 14 and I Corinthians 14 how strongly he opposed binding consciences to adiaphora. We also know how strongly he opposed the Judaizers with their insistence upon a binding Old Testament Ceremonial Law for believers. In Galatians Paul spoke so beautifully about the freedom of the Christian. Would Paul, and the Holy Spirit Who inspired him, now be binding consciences in "all churches" (I Cor. 14:33) to a custom of the day? If so, then the Word of God is not infallible and it does contradict itself!

IV. The Practical and God-Pleasing Use of Women in Our Congregations

When we speak of the role of someone in an organization we are generally referring to what they do in the organization. That is what we are speaking of here when we speak of the role of women in the church. How may a woman exert herself in doing the Lord's work in the church? As shepherds of a flock of Christ's own how may we use women to further the work of the Lord in our own congregations?

²² Hendriksen, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 113-114.

We have the basis for this discussion presented in the other sections of this paper. We could summarize it all and end the discussion with the statement, “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man.” But let us continue this discussion for the sake of bringing into sharper focus some of the matters mentioned in the rest of this paper.

It is obvious that women are not to teach or to preach the Word of God to men. But who is a child that the Scripture commands a woman to teach and who is a man? When does a boy become a man? Timothy’s mother and grandmother taught him as a child. When and where would it have been against God’s Will for them to do this? Our Christian common sense must enter the picture here. If Timothy had not been their child and grandchild, respectively, and if he had reached an age of man-hood (High School age? Seventh grade? Puberty?) it would have been an abrogation of God’s Will for these women to teach and to preach the Word of God to him; if he was a part of a group of people to whom they were speaking in a worship situation.

Thus, several things enter the picture, don’t they?

The ages of the males to whom the women are speaking is a consideration to be judged by the rule that a woman is not to usurp authority over a man. The content of what the women are speaking is another consideration. A secular college female professor teaching a secular subject to college age males is not abrogating God’s Will. But a female college professor at one of our institutions teaching most secular subjects—typing, shorthand, etc, might be excluded here—would be abrogating God’s Will because we do firmly believe that even secular subjects such as science, English, history, and languages should be taught in the light of the Scriptures.

A consideration would also be the circumstances of the place where the woman is speaking. Paul’s concern for the role of subservience of women in the church does not nullify Christ’s command to all believers to “Go ye therefore and teach all nations,” Remember, the women told the disciples about the empty tomb and Priscilla seems to have been more active than her husband, Aquila, in instructing Apollos since her name is mentioned first in Acts 18:26 in the Nestle Greek text denoting that she took the lead in this. Another proof passage here is the woman at the well in Samaria who told her neighbors about the Savior. We must make a differentiation here, as do the Scriptures, between evangelism work, such as personal witnessing, and public preaching and teaching.

I do not believe that women may vote in a congregation or that they may seek to influence opinion at a congregational meeting without seeking a larger role in the church than that which God designed for them.

The question of women voting in our congregations is best answered by Erling Teigen in a review of Peter Brunner’s booklet, *The Ministry and the Ministry of Women*. This review was first published in *The Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. XI, No. 4. The review was reprinted in the August 28, 1972 edition of *Christian News*, and consequently in *A Christian Handbook on Vital Issues*.

The command to silence does not extend to the woman’s participation in the temporal affairs—if there be such—of the local congregation. Women could conceivably exercise the voting franchise in the temporal affairs of the congregation.

However, the problem of practicality rears its ugly head. The very form that the ministry takes in our churches today, along with its governance and jurisdiction makes such a franchise impossible. Were it possible to separate the functions of administration of the temporal and administrative jurisdiction over the pastoral officer as we have it in the church today, the suffrage of women would at least be conceivable. However that is not possible. As we have it in our church governments, in all of its varieties, the participation of the laity in the governing of the local congregation exercises control over the ministry at just about every juncture. And for that reason, the franchise cannot be practically, or Scripturally exercised by the woman. Were one to attempt to separate the temporal and spiritual functions of a congregation so that women could exercise the franchise in the temporal affairs of the congregation; one would finally be bound by

an organization so unwieldy, that the best it could do would be to hinder the work of the pastor and all involved from carrying out their God-given command.²³

Needless to say, women holding congregational offices would be even more offensive to God's Will according to I Tim. 2 than women voters.

In Romans 16:1 Paul calls Phoebe "a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." Women may in some auxiliary capacity be employed in the work of the church.

Thus women teachers in our schools and deaconesses in our congregations are also servants of the church, doing some work that lies within the office of the ministry, and which they do under the supervision of the pastor. But the full office of the ministry may not be committed to them, nor should we expect the "weaker vessel" to assume the great responsibility of this office.²⁴

These women should therefore be called by the congregation and, working under the supervision of the pastor in their auxiliary roles, they should receive the respect of the members of the congregation due to full-time workers and servants in the Lord's Kingdom.

Women organists must be under close supervision of the pastor. A man would be better in this position since the organist is, to a degree, in the eyes of some people, leading the congregation in worship.

I have strong reservations about having a woman direct a choir which has male singers in its midst.

All other opportunities for women to work in the church should be considered according to the Scriptural principle that the woman is not to usurp authority over the man.

Perhaps we could close with this quote from Peter Brunner's booklet, *The Ministry and the Ministry of Women*: "Only where the woman in her concrete practical relationships lives what she is by virtue of the creaturely existence given her in the creation is she a woman as God meant her to be and still wants her to be."²⁵

²³ Otten, ed., *Op. Cit.*, p. 339.

²⁴ Edward Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, p. 269.

²⁵ Peter Brunner, *Op. Cit.*, p. 27.

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Items for Further Discussion

Do you agree with the following lists taken from Peter Brunner's booklet, *The Ministry and the Ministry of Women*, which contain things that he feels a called woman worker in the congregation may do under the supervision of the pastor, or may not do?

Pp. 36-37: Things that a properly trained and called woman may do under the supervision of a pastor:

1. the Christian instruction of the catechumens, also confirmation instruction, above all the training of groups of members, also the introduction to the interpretation of the Scriptures that takes the form of Bible study;
2. baptizing those who have been approved by the pastor of the congregation, and dispensing of the cup at the Lord's Supper;
3. home visitations and visits to the sick and the care and counseling that is involved, in fact, individual counseling, particularly with women, and also in hospitals and prisons;
4. devotions in houses such as retreat centers, hospitals, prisons, and charitable institutions;
5. assisting in the training of other official orders such as catechists, congregational helpers, deacons, and deaconesses;
6. cooperating in the maintenance of correct doctrine through theological research.

Pp. 37. Functions of the Pastoral office which women may not be given

1. preaching in the worship services of the congregation;
2. leading the services of worship;
3. the administration of the sacraments in the worship services;
4. the decision as to who is to be admitted to the Lord's Supper; the imposing of the degree of excommunication and its revocation;
5. the granting of absolution in the confessional;
6. the acts of confirmation and ordination;
7. jurisdiction over the supporting ministries and the assistants in the local church, the *episkope*;
8. the exercise of the office of diocesan bishop.

In the Talk About The Savior Evangelism Program used in the WELS, is God's Will being abrogated when a woman does the talking when a man is present who could very well give the presentation?