

# Theses on The Role of Women in The Church

## Abbreviations

Citations from the Lutheran Confessions are taken from *The Book of Concord*, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959). The following abbreviations are used:

AC--Augsburg Confession

Apol--Apology of the Augsburg Confession

Ep--Epitome of the Formula of Concord

FC--Formula of Concord

LC--Large Catechism

SA--Smalcald Articles

SC--Small Catechism

SD--Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

Tr--Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

Citations from Luther are from *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols. (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House and Fortress (Muhlenberg) Press, 1955-85), abbreviated *LW*.

In recent years various women's issues have been the focus of attention and debate not only in connection with many of the structures and institutions of our Canadian society but also within the church, including Lutheran Church-Canada. The Council of Presidents, as such, requested that the Commission on Theology and Church Relations "review the LCMS document, 'Women In The Church,' and ...formulate a clear statement on the role of women in the church" (Resolution 90:1.07). Recent conventions of Lutheran Church-Canada have thus encouraged the CTCR "to complete its task in a timely fashion" (Resolution 93:1.03), especially in light of various overtures submitted to synodical conventions that, on the one hand, would reaffirm our Synod's present position on women's suffrage, or, on the other hand, would request that our Synod return to male-only suffrage.

In response to these directives and concerns, the CTCR presents to the members of Lutheran Church-Canada this document: "Theses on the Role of Women in the Church."

**Thesis 1** – Our church's teaching and practice on the role of women in the church, as on any other issue, must be determined by the Word of God alone and not by the world's philosophies, practical considerations, cultural pressures, human opinions, or church customs. (Ps. 119:105; Matt. 28:20; John 8:31; 17:17; Gal. 1:8; Eph. 2:20; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; SD Rule and Norm, 3-8)

**Concerning Biblical Authority** – Any discussion of the role of women in the church must take into account two divergent views which are at variance with the fundamental principle of the Reformation – "Scripture alone." On the one hand, feminist theology, as a product of the historical-critical methodology, rejects the Scriptures as the authoritative basis for the church's teaching and practice. Feminist theology considers the biblical witness concerning the role of women as a promulgation of male anti-women bias. It claims that because they were written by men the New Testament writings have weakened and ignored the so-called evidence of women's central place in leadership positions in the early church. It asserts that the different roles and functions of men and women as formulated in the Scriptures are culturally determined, and it seeks to remove what is perceived to be sexist and patriarchal language in the Bible. While it is beyond the scope of our task to analyze in greater detail feminist theology, suffice it to say that such is not biblical let alone Christian.<sup>(1)</sup>

On the other hand, while feminist theology rejects the authoritative basis of the Scriptures, traditionalism rejects the Bible as being the *sole* authority of the church's teaching and practice. To seek to maintain certain outward forms and structures, to limit the role of women in the church on the basis of church traditions or the opinions of the church fathers or customs from the past is also at variance with this principle of "Scripture alone." While church traditions and the writings of the church fathers do shed much light on the role of women in the church, such must always be subordinated to the testimony of the Scriptures. Yet as the church fathers dealt with this issue they served as expositors of the Scriptures, and we join them in saying, "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105 RSV). Where the tradition of the church is in agreement with the Scriptures we also maintain the tradition.

**Thesis 2** – God has established a certain definite order concerning human relationships. Specifically, God has assigned at creation distinctive identities and functions to men and women which are not interchangeable. Moreover, these identities and functions are not nullified by Christ's work of redemption and are to be maintained by Christians and reflected in the church (Order of Creation). (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18-25; 1 Corinthians 7; 11:3-16; 14:26-40; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7; AC XVI.5; Apol XVI.5; SC IX)

**Concerning the Relationship of Men and Women** – The creation account itself sets down the divinely established functional differences between men and women. The woman is man's counterpart, a special gift from the Creator. The man joyfully takes to himself the woman whom God has made specifically to be his helper, companion, and partner for the fulfilment of their solemn responsibilities before God. In the Old Testament these roles are exhibited by the prophets in the analogy of God as "husband" and His people Israel as His "wife." These roles are reaffirmed by the New Testament writers as this analogy is augmented with that of the "Bridegroom," Jesus Christ, and His "Bride," the church, the new Israel.

The 20th century emphasis on emancipation of women (and men) from definite roles and liberation from what is perceived to be unjust male domination of the social order has blurred and virtually eliminated functional differences of men and women, especially husbands and wives. While there is no justification for the abuse of women by men, or of men lording it over women, the abuses that exist in our society (and every society for that matter, due to humanity's sinful nature), do not justify the abdication of the responsibilities of male and female, or the prideful rejection of the roles God intended for each of the sexes.

**Thesis 3** – God has ordained that in the marriage relationship the man is to be the head of the woman and that the woman is to be subordinate to the man. (1 Cor. 11:3-16; 14:34-35; Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Pet. 3:1-7)

**Concerning Headship and Subordination** – The biblical teaching concerning headship (Greek *kephale* - "head, ruler, leader")<sup>(2)</sup> and subordination (Greek *hupotasso* – to place in order under, to subordinate, to put in subjection"), while established by God at creation concerning the relationship of husbands and wives, is amplified and defined by that relationship which exists between Christ and His church. In Ephesians 5 and 6 St. Paul deals with relationships between various categories of believers in which one is to be subordinate to another – husbands and wives (5:22-33), parents and children (6:1-4), and slaves and masters (6:5-9). He prefaces these instructions by pointing out that such submission results from their "reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21), and in so doing they thus "live a life worthy of the calling [they] have received" (Eph. 4:1) and a "life of love" (Eph. 5:2).

In Eph. 5:22-33 the apostle states that just as Christ is in authority over the church and so to be honored, the husband has also been placed in a position of authority and leadership in the home and is to be honored by his wife. The husband, it should be noted, is not told to make his wife submit to him. Rather, submission for the sake of the love of Christ and obedience to God's order is set before the wife. The Christian wife supports her husband, cooperates with him, and follows him in his responsibility to care for those who belong to his household. The headship of the husband, far from implying a tyrannical authority or domineering leadership, is to be one of service and self-sacrifice for the good and well-being of his wife, "just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25). Husbands and wives are not interchangeable members of a partnership arrangement; rather, they are joined together as one body. Such a union cannot continue to exist and grow unless the different roles and functions of husbands and wives are recognized. In both cases men and women are to exercise their respective duties out of submission to Christ who is "head over everything for the church" (Eph. 1:22).

Significantly, subordination of women to men is not applied by the Scriptures to secular society in general. The fact that a woman may be over a man (such as a woman foreman, professor, police officer, judge, or premier) does not violate this concept of headship and subordination. The biblical material deals specifically with the relationship of men and women in the home (physical marriage) and the church (spiritual marriage).

In 1 Corinthians 11 St. Paul thus discusses this headship-subordination relationship of men and women also in connection with their spiritual life and service. The problem in Corinth was that women were stepping outside, or at least questioning, that relationship by "pray[ing] or

prophesy[ing] with [their] head[s] uncovered" (11:5). The apostle opposes this behavior because such an action repudiated the relationship between husbands and wives established by God at creation. The head covering was thus a custom which functioned as an acknowledgment of the principle that "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man" (11:5).<sup>(3)</sup>

**Thesis 4** – All Christians, who are redeemed by Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, whether men or women, have the same status before God (Order of Redemption). The Order of Redemption, far from setting aside the Order of Creation, sanctifies and exalts it. (Rom. 3:22-24; 8:16-17; Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 2:19-22; 5:21)

**Concerning the New Creation in Christ** – In Gal. 3:28 St. Paul writes: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This passage, in particular, is speaking about the new life we have in Christ. In 3:27 the apostle states that by being "baptized into Christ" all "have put on Christ;" that is, become partakers of His righteousness and His work of salvation. In Holy Baptism all are clothed with the garment of Christ's perfect righteousness. In God's eyes they are thus all alike and any distinctions and differences between them are wiped out and of no account. So Luther says: "For in Christ Jesus all social stations, even those that were divinely ordered, are nothing. Male, female, slave, free, Jew, Gentile, king, subject – these are, of course, good creations of God. But in Christ, that is, in the matter of salvation, they amount to nothing."<sup>(4)</sup> Again he says: "[W]hatever a male does as a male, getting married, administering his household well, obeying the magistrate, maintaining honest and decent relations with others; or if a lady lives chastely, obeys her husband, takes good care of the house, and teaches her children well – these truly magnificent and outstanding gifts and works do not avail anything toward righteousness in the sight of God."<sup>(5)</sup>

"This [however]," as Lenski says, "does not involve a physical mutation. Christians of Jewish or of Greek descent retained their descent, free men and slaves kept their social positions, men and women kept their sex. The gospel changes nothing in the domain of this world and this natural life. . . [For] Paul is here speaking of the spiritual domain, of God's household in which all believers are equally sons of God."<sup>(6)</sup> So, too, Luther writes: "In the world and according to the flesh there is a very great difference and inequality among persons, and this must be observed very carefully. For if a woman wanted to be a man, if a son wanted to be a father, if a pupil wanted to be a teacher, if a servant wanted to be a master, if a subject wanted to be a magistrate – there would be a disturbance and confusion of all social stations and of everything. In Christ, on the other hand, where there is no Law, there is no distinction among persons at all. . . [A]ll are one; for there is one body, one Spirit, one hope of the calling of all, one and the same Gospel, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, one Christ, the Lord of all."<sup>(7)</sup>

No one, as such, is baptized to be either a man or a woman. Rather, each one is baptized into Christ. All share the blessings of Christ's redemption equally and fully. This does not mean, however, that the individual characteristics and differences of believers are abolished by Christ's work of redemption. The things established by God at creation are not set aside by Christ. Formula of Concord Article I, for example, notes that the relationship between men and women was ordained by God before the fall into sin. Sins associated with this relationship need to be forgiven, but the relationship itself, since it is created by God, does not stand in need of redemption.

Gal. 3:28, therefore, reveals how believers, whether men or women, appear before God. It does not speak to specific functions of women in the church nor does it deal with how things are to be ordered in the church. It is, as such, a complete misunderstanding, misuse, misinterpretation, and misapplication of this passage to use it in support of the practice of ordaining women into the office of the public ministry.

In fact, throughout the New Testament it is as members of the new creation in Christ that men and women are called to exercise those role relationships in the divine institutions of marriage and the church. St. Paul thus writes: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10). And again: "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" (Eph. 4:22-24).

**Thesis 5** – By virtue of their baptism into Christ, all believers, men and women, are to render spiritual sacrifices as members of the Body of Christ (Priesthood of All Believers). (Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Peter 2:5, 9)

**Concerning Priesthood and Sacrifices** – Any discussion of the role of women in the church must take note of the biblical teaching on the priesthood of all believers or the priesthood of the baptized. Since, as the Formula of Concord says, other good, useful, and pure books. . . [that] are in accord with the [Scriptures] . . . are to be accepted and used as helpful expositions and explanations" (SD Rule and Norm, 10), this teaching on the priesthood of the baptized is best understood by noting what Martin Luther has written in his three monumental works of 1520.

In his "To The Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate" he says: "[W]e are all consecrated priests through baptism, as St. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9, 'You are a royal priesthood and a priestly realm.' The Apocalypse says, 'Thou hast made us to be priests and kings, by thy blood' (Rev. 5:9-10)."<sup>(8)</sup> And again he writes: "If we are all priests, as was said above, and all have one faith, one gospel, one sacrament, why should we not also have the power to test and judge what is right or wrong in matters of faith? . . . Therefore, it is the duty of every Christian to espouse the cause of the faith, to understand and defend it, and to denounce every error."<sup>(9)</sup>

Likewise, in "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" Luther says. "If they were forced to grant that all of us that have been baptized are equally priests, as indeed we are, and that only the ministry was committed to them, yet with our common consent, they would then know that they have no right to rule over us except insofar as we freely concede it. For thus is it written in 1 Peter 2:9, 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a priestly royalty.' Therefore we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians. But the priests, as we call them, are ministers chosen from among us. All that they do is done in our name; the priesthood is nothing but a ministry."<sup>(10)</sup> And further he says: "Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and the sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called."<sup>(11)</sup>

Also, in his "The Freedom of a Christian" Luther writes: "Not only are we the freest of kings, we are also priests forever, which is far more excellent than being kings, for as priests we are worthy to appear before God to pray for others and to teach one another divine things. These are the functions of priests, and they cannot be granted to any unbeliever. Thus Christ has made it possible for us, provided we believe in Him, to be not only his brethren, co-heirs, and fellow-kings, but also his fellow-priests."<sup>(12)</sup>

Since an individual Christian is a member of the priesthood of the baptized, he or she thus has priestly tasks to carry out. In his first epistle St. Peter writes: "[Y]ou also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). These spiritual sacrifices that all Christians are to offer include: our bodies (Rom. 12:10); monetary gifts (Phil. 4:18); praises to God (Heb. 13:15; 1 Peter 2:9); sharing with others (Heb. 13:16); a repentant heart (Ps. 51:17); prayer (Ps. 141:2); proclaiming the Gospel (Rom. 15:16); etc. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession reminds us that these spiritual sacrifices do "not merit the forgiveness of sins or reconciliation, but by (them) those who have been reconciled give thanks or show their gratitude for the forgiveness of sins and other blessings received" (Apol XXIV.19).

**Thesis 6** – The New Testament provides many examples of the priestly service that women rendered to the Lord and His church. (Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:1-3; 24:1-11; Acts 9:36; 18:24-26; Rom. 16:1-13; Phil. 4:2-3, Col. 4:15; 1 Tim. 3:11; 5:3-16)

**Concerning the Service of Women in the Early Church** – Not only were women the recipients of Jesus' ministry (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 7:36-50; 13:10-17; John 4:7-30), but they also served Him and the disciples (Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:1-3). Interestingly, in Luke 8:1-3 three groups are distinguished – "Jesus," "the twelve with Him," and "some women." The women "served" them from "their own resources:" that is, provided financial and material support. The Greek word *diakoneo* ("to minister, to serve"), from which the English word "deacon" is derived, is used to describe what service these women rendered to Jesus and the Twelve.

In the New Testament church we also note women participating in many and varied activities – including prophesying (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5), performing charitable services (Acts 9:36; Romans 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:15; 1 Tim. 5:3-16), and serving as missionary workers (Acts 18:24-26; Rom. 16:6, 12; Phil. 4:2-3). This service of women is highlighted in particular by St. Paul's reference in Rom. 16:1-2 to Phoebe as a *diaknon* ("servant, minister"). He also calls her *prostatis* ("helper, patron, protector"); that is, one who probably by virtue of her wealth and social position was able to provide for, support, and assist not only the church in Cencrea but also the apostle Paul himself. In addition, the service of women is also highlighted by frequent references to Priscilla (Acts 18; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19). In the book of Acts we see that she, along with her husband Aquilla, is engaged in teaching the great orator Apollos the Christian faith. Although it is impossible to determine from the New Testament all the specific tasks these Christian women assumed and performed, there is no doubt that they played a very significant and important role in the life of the early church.<sup>(13)</sup>

**Thesis 7** – The office of the public ministry is distinct from the universal priesthood of all believers. This office has been instituted by Christ for the purpose of publicly exercising the Office of the Keys in the church; that is, to forgive and retain sins by the preaching and teaching of the Word of God and the administration of the sacraments. (John 20:21-33; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4; AC V; XIV; XXVIII.5; Tr 60-72; SC IX.2-3; LC I.158-163).

**Concerning Church Offices** – As we consider the role of women in the church, we must examine briefly the church offices mentioned in the New Testament. While all who are baptized into Christ are endowed with a variety of gifts and have various tasks to perform as members of the Body of Christ, whether men or women, not all have a specific office entrusted to them. In Ephesians 4 St. Paul writes: "It was he [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). So, too, in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 he speaks of the various gifts and works of service that Christians have and do.

At first glance it might seem that the New Testament thus presents us with a dazzling array and a wide variety of God-given offices for the church. Careful attention, however, to four factors offers a much simpler and clearer picture.

First, while the offices of apostle (Greek *apostolos* – "envoy, ambassador, representative"), prophet (Greek *prophetes* – "proclaimer"), evangelist (Greek *euangelistes* – "proclaimer of good tidings"), and teacher (Greek *didaskalous* – "teacher, expositor") are spoken of separately or in a narrow sense, they are also referred to jointly or in a much wider sense. In fact, there is such a close interrelation between these offices that one and the same man could hold them simultaneously<sup>(14)</sup>. The prime function of those who held these offices was the proclamation of the Gospel—the apostle discharged this task on the basis of being an eye-witness to the risen Lord (Acts 1:21-22), the prophet did so by orally transmitting the message to fellow believers for their comfort and edification (1 Cor. 14:3), the evangelist did so by speaking the Gospel to those who had not yet heard it (Acts 8:5, 26-40), and the teacher did so by expounding upon the written Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16).

Second, in Ephesians 4:11 the Greek words *poimemas* and *didaskalous* ("pastors and teachers") are joined together in reference to this one office. Those who have been entrusted with providing pastoral care for God's people, His flock, will do so by feeding them with "food" from the Scriptures.

Third, in the New Testament, the Greek words *episcopos* ("bishop, overseer") and *presbuteros* ("elder") are also used interchangeably with reference to this one office of pastor-teacher. In Acts 20:28 St. Paul, in speaking to the Ephesian elders, says: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [bishops]. Be shepherds [pastors] of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." Likewise, St. Peter writes: "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds [pastors] of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers [bishops] – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God

wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:1-3). The specific functions—"devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (1 Tim. 4:13)—were of primary importance in fulfilling the duties of this office. It is this office of apostle-prophet-evangelist-pastor-teacher-bishop-elder that has been instituted by Christ for the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments (AC XXVIII.5, 8, 12; Apol XXVIII.13; Tr. 31, 60) and entrusted by Him to the church until "the Chief Shepherd appears" (1 Peter 5:4).

Fourth, the only New Testament office distinct from the above-mentioned offices is that of deacon, which probably had its origin in the situation at the church in Jerusalem as described in Acts 6:1-7. While not called "deacons," their task is called "service" (Greek *diakonein*). Later in the New Testament church a distinct office of deacon (Greek *diakonos*) did emerge (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13)<sup>(15)</sup>. This office of deacon, being established by the church for the purpose of providing servants, ministers, helpers, and workers for the congregation and especially for the bishop-elder-pastor-teacher, was open to both men and women (Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Tim. 3:11).<sup>(16)</sup>

Two church offices thus appear in the New Testament: one instituted by Christ—bishops who are also called elders and who are the pastors, teachers, and spiritual leaders of the congregation; and the other instituted by the church—deacons, who are called and appointed to serve the pastor and the congregation<sup>(17)</sup>. This is not to say that the church does not have the right or the freedom to create various offices to suit its needs. The example of the New Testament church indicates that the church may create such offices as are needed to carry out its primary task of preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments. If, however, the Scriptures are the authoritative basis for our teaching and practice, then what has been said about the offices of bishop-elder and deacon is significant as we consider the role of women in the church. At the same time it must be noted that here the Scriptural data serves as guide rather than prescription, and the office of deacon is described, not prescribed.

As we have seen, a deacon in the New Testament church could be either male or female. This undoubtedly has some bearing on whether women may serve on a board of deacons (commonly called elders in our congregations today). Much depends on the tasks assigned to them. If, for example, the responsibilities of deacons are limited to assisting the pastor in caring for the spiritual welfare of the members of the congregation, in visiting the sick and shut-ins, in making calls on members and non-members, etc., then qualified women may also be appointed or called to this office. If, however, the tasks of deacons also include assisting the pastor in those chief functions and duties of the pastoral office – distributing the Lord's body and blood in the Sacrament, reading the Scripture lessons at divine services, or even preaching during a pastoral vacancy or when the pastor is on holiday; then only qualified men, as we shall see, should be called to this office.<sup>(18)</sup>

**Thesis 8** – The creational pattern of male headship, taken in conjunction with the teaching and example of Christ and the apostles, requires that women not hold the position of the authoritative teaching office in the church; that is, the pastoral office (1 Cor. 14:26-40; 1 Tim. 2:1-15).

**Concerning Male-Only Pastors** – Most prominent in current discussions on the role of women in the church are the two scriptural references in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2. Before we



take a look at these passages in greater detail, it is important to note a few general biblical principles concerning the pastoral office.

First, the pastor who is called to publicly preach the Word of God and administer the sacraments serves as Christ's representative in the congregation. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession says: "For they do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the church's call, as Christ testifies (Luke 10:16), 'He who hears you hears me.' When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments they do so in Christ's place and stead" (Apol VII and VIII.28). As representatives of Christ, who is a male, pastors are themselves to be men. Second, since the church is described in the Scriptures as the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23, 25-26; Rev. 21:2, 9), the Bridegroom, Christ—and the one called to represent the Bridegroom—must be a man. Third, as the husband is the divinely appointed head of the earthly household (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7) and as the church is also called a household or family (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5; 4:17), so the pastor who is the divinely appointed head of God's spiritual household must be a man. St. Paul, for example, in detailing the qualifications of bishops, says that the bishop is to be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6), and goes on to say: "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" (1 Tim. 3:4-5). These general principles lie behind the apostle's words which limit the pastoral office to qualified male members of the Body of Christ.

In 1 Cor. 14:26-40 St. Paul writes in part: "As in all the churches of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church" (14:33-35). What precisely, however, does this "silence" and "not speaking" mean and imply?

First, the context of this passage indicates that the word "church" (Greek *ecclesia* – "those who are called out, who are assembled") is to be understood in the sense of the congregation gathered together for divine services. St. Paul's concern is in avoiding disorder in the divine services and so insists that the congregation at Corinth reflect the will of God who created order out of chaos. To that end he says that women should remain silent. Moreover, this is not his mere personal opinion or appropriate only to the Corinthian church but "is the Lord's command" (14:37).

Second, that the apostle is not commanding absolute silence on the part of women is evident from Eph. 5:19-20 where he enjoins all the members of the church at Ephesus to "[s]peak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (5:19). Accordingly, he is not saying here that women may not verbally participate in the divine service. In addition, the word for "silence," which he also uses in 1 Tim. 2:11-12, occurs as well in Acts 11:18; 21:14; and 22:24 where total silence is not implied.

Third, in 1 Cor. 14:34 St. Paul uses the Greek word *laleo* for "speak" – a word that frequently means "to preach" in the New Testament (Mark 2:2; Luke 9:11; Acts 4:1; 8:25; 1 Cor. 12:19; Phil. 1:4). He does not use the Greek word *lego* which is a more general term that refers to any kind of speaking. Thus, the claim that the apostle is forbidding any kind of speaking on the part of women or to mere idle chatter is unwarranted.

Fourth, it must again be remembered that St. Paul's command for women to remain silent and not to speak is given within the context of his discussion on orderly divine services in the congregation. Whatever, therefore, he says here can be applied only indirectly, if at all, to the whole question of women's suffrage. The command that women keep silent and not speak in the church is thus a command that they not teach publicly in the congregation; that is, take charge of the public proclamation of the Gospel in the divine services of the congregation. This the Lord God Himself has reserved for qualified male members of the church.

In 1 Tim. 2:11-15 we read in part: "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" (2:11-12). While the thrust of St. Paul's words are similar to that in 1 Corinthians 14, he does make it more explicit – a woman is not to teach or have authority over men. Again, however, we need to examine carefully what this means.

First, the apostle's instructions are directed to Timothy in the context of the congregation coming together for divine services. His words should not, therefore, be applied indiscriminately to situations outside that context.

Second, the Greek word for "teach" that is used here, *didaskein*, means the formal, public teaching of the Christian faith. In fact, throughout 1 Timothy the apostle uses the word "teach" in this sense; for example: "false teachers" (1:3, 7); overseers who "are able to teach" (3:2); Timothy himself who is to "attend to the public reading of the Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching" (4:13); and even Paul himself who is a "teacher of the Gentiles" (2:7). St. Paul is not stating, as such, that Christian women are not to teach under any circumstance. After all, the New Testament indicates that women did teach in a context other than the gathering of the faithful for divine services; for example: Apollos is taught by Priscilla (Acts 18:26); Timothy himself was taught by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15); and younger women were to be taught by older women (Titus 2:3-5). The restriction in 1 Timothy thus pertains to that teaching of God's Word publicly; in other words, women are prohibited from holding the pastoral office.

Third, the question now arises as to the relationship between this teaching and the exercising or usurping of authority over men. Some have separated St. Paul's instructions in these verses from each other and have used them to formulate a code of rules concerning the role of women in the church. As such, this passage is taken to mean that women should never, under any circumstance, teach in the church and that they must always, in every instance, submit to men by never making a decision that may impact upon men. Although the Greek word for "authority," *authentein*, occurs only in this one instance in the New Testament, it should be noted that the words "teach" and "exercise authority" parallel each other. The kind of teaching St. Paul is referring to is thus tied directly to exercising authority. In the New Testament teaching is regarded precisely as the exercise of spiritual authority (Matt. 7: 28-29; 21:23; Titus 2:15). That St. Paul combines the office of teaching the Christian faith with the exercise of authority is evident also from 1 Tim. 1:3; 3:5; 4:11-13; 5:7, 21; 6:2, 17. When the apostle forbids a woman "to have authority over man" (2:12), he is relating this prohibition to the teaching office of the church. The authority thus forbidden women is the pastoral office; that is, one "who labors in preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17). We cannot, therefore, divorce the phrase "authority over

a man" from the pastoral office and then apply it in rather arbitrary ways, nor can we simply take the dictionary meaning or commonly understood meaning of "authority" as "the power to act and make decisions" and then proceed on that basis to exclude women from all congregational meetings, committees, or offices that have the power to act or make decisions. The only power or authority that the church has is the power to forgive and retain sins by the preaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments, and it is the called pastor of the church who has been entrusted with this authority. So the Augsburg Confession states: "[T]he power of keys or the power of bishops is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer the sacraments" (AC XXVIII.5). And further: "This power of keys or of bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching the Word of God and by administering the sacraments" (AC XXVIII.8).

Fourth, the theological basis for St. Paul's teaching on the silence of women in the church and forbidding them to teach and exercise authority over men is the order of creation. Based as it is on Genesis 2 and 3, the apostle's teaching in 1 Timothy is an exegetical interpretation of creation and the Fall and a theological statement concerning gender roles in the office of pastoral leadership in the church. In view of his apostolic authority, St. Paul's words must be seen as a binding pronouncement on all Christendom for all time which the church is not at liberty to ignore, defy, or set aside. A woman cannot, therefore, hold the office of the public ministry. This office is to be filled by qualified men only. For a woman to assume this office is contrary to God's Word because it is a woman who does so and not because women have inferior gifts and abilities.<sup>(19)</sup>

**Thesis 9** – Church government or polity is not divinely prescribed in the New Testament. Church organization is an *adiaphoron*; that is, a matter that is neither commanded nor forbidden in the Scriptures. The church is thus free to create, adopt, or adapt any form of organization and structure. The determining factor in church organization is what will best serve the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. (AC XXVIII; FC X)

**Concerning Church Government** – Although the Lutheran Confessions do speak about the function and purpose of church organization—to facilitate the cause of the Gospel, they leave the form of such organization open. No binding statements are made about constitutions, styles of government, and the like. Some sections assume an episcopal or highly centralized and authoritarian form in which the churches are ruled and governed by bishops (Apol XIV). Other sections describe congregations acting with more autonomy or a decentralized and democratic form (Tr 65-67; Ep X.4). That the church must have order is affirmed by St. Paul (1 Cor. 14:40). How all this is arranged, however, is a matter of Christian freedom or of human decision. Moreover, the right and privilege and freedom to organize and reorganize and determine what forms and regulations and structures best serve the cause of the Gospel must be preserved. No one should attribute a divine character to human-created ecclesiastical institutions (AC XXVIII.19). No one should confuse human ordinances and constitutions and bylaws in the church with those ordinances that come from God Himself (Ep X.3). Although such human ordinances in the church are good and useful and proper and, perhaps, even necessary, they must not be regarded as divinely mandated, let alone necessary for salvation (Apol XV.3). The Large Catechism puts it simply and clearly: "[E]verything in the Christian church is so ordered that we

may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and through signs (the sacraments) appointed to comfort and revive our consciences as long as we live" (LC II.55).

That church government and all that relates to it is an *adiaphoron* is affirmed by Lorenz Wunderlich in his essay on this topic where he says: "As a matter of fact, much, if not most, of the business procedure of board and membership meetings, of conventions, centers in an area which in itself is an *adiaphoron*. The elections of officers and committees, official procedure, the adoption of a budget, the external mechanics of the financial and missionary program of the Church, the envelope system, the publication of reports, financial or otherwise—all of these items are per se matters of indifference. . . Such arrangements as congregational meetings, constitutions, the officers of the church, the Sunday school, the Christian day school, the organizations within the congregation are per se *adiaphora*. Synod, membership in synod, the officials and commissions of synod, the essayist of synod—all these, and many more, purely human arrangements and devices are strictly speaking, *adiaphora*."<sup>(20)</sup>

The voters assembly in the congregation is, as such, not commanded by God. Whenever we think of the churches in the New Testament making decisions by nominating and electing and voting, we are reading into the Scriptures that which is not there, which is not clearly stated, and which is not necessarily even implied. Rather, as the 1956 convention of the Missouri Synod affirmed: "The fathers of our Synod . . . established the system of voters' meetings now in vogue among us in order to regulate and administer the congregation's affairs"<sup>(21)</sup>. This fact is significant as we consider the issue of women's suffrage. While casting a vote might indeed be said to constitute the act of exercising authority, contrary to some who claim that it is the assembly and not the individual voter who exercises authority, such authority to act and make decisions is not what St. Paul is talking about when he says that women are not "to exercise authority over men" (1 Tim. 2:12). It should again be pointed out that the only authority Christ has given to His church is, as our synodical catechism explains it: "What special authority has Christ given to His church on earth? Christ has given to His church the authority to forgive sins or to withhold forgiveness. . . How does the church publicly exercise the Office of the Keys? The Christian congregation by the command of Christ calls pastors to carry out the Office of the Keys publicly in His name and on behalf of the congregation. The pastoral office is a divine institution."<sup>(22)</sup> Since church government is an *adiaphoron*, the exercise of suffrage by women does not fall under the prohibition set forth in the Scriptures. The CTCR thus affirms and concurs with the following statement of the Missouri Synod's 1968 CTCR report: "We find nothing in Scripture which prohibits women from exercising the franchise in voters' assemblies. Those statements of Scripture which direct women to keep silent in the church, and which prohibit them to teach and, to exercise authority over men, we understand to mean that women ought not to hold the pastoral office."<sup>(23)</sup>

In addition, it is not the various elected or appointed officers such as treasurer, secretary, trustee, etc. who are the bishops of the congregation but, rather, the pastor. Leaders in the church, as the writer of Hebrews says, are those "who [speak] the word of God" (Heb. 13:7) and who "keep watch over you" (Heb. 13:17). We cannot simply take the common understanding of the word "leader" and impose and apply it indiscriminately upon the biblical text. "Women may (thus) hold any office and serve on any committee of the congregation which enhances the work of the priesthood of all believers. Women also have the privilege to chair congregational committees,

since a 'chair' does not 'have authority over men' any more than the committee *per se* would have such authority in the New Testament sense."<sup>(24)</sup>

In determining whether a woman may serve as "elder" or chairman of a congregation, the question of pastoral oversight must be addressed, and the following factors need to be addressed. There are times in which the one holding the pastoral office must be publicly called to account for his actions or teaching. Since such an act pertains to the public exercise of the office of the keys, those exercising authority over the one in the office must be male, in keeping with the headship principle. In general such duties fall to the "elders" of the congregation. If a congregation's constitution assigns this task to the elders, then the elders must be male. Now, while the general or usual responsibilities of the office of congregational chairman might not involve the exercise of pastoral oversight, there may be occasions in which congregational chairmen can only with difficulty extricate themselves from the responsibility of holding pastors accountable for the faithful stewardship of their office. In such cases the chairman is not merely residing over church council and congregational meetings, but he is also assuming a distinctive function of the pastoral office by exercising oversight over that office itself, and hence it is appropriate that the chairman be male.

Since Synod is not a divine but a human institution, what has been said above is also applicable to the seminaries and college of our Synod and to the various offices, boards, and committees of Synod; namely, there is no biblical or confessional basis to exclude women from serving in those office positions that are "diaconate" in nature. In fact, the post-apostolic church and the church of the Middle Ages recognized the validity and service of women theologians<sup>(25)</sup>. The only prohibition concerning the service of women in the church is that they not hold the office of pastor-teacher-bishop-elder and/or perform those functions that are distinctive to that office.

**Thesis 10** – Christian women, as well as men, are to serve our Lord according to the gifts and abilities with which He has blessed them and in that station in life in which He has placed them (Prov. 31:10-31; Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 3:5-9; 7:17; 10:31; 12; Gal. 6:10; Col. 3:17; 1 Peter 4:8-11; AC XVI.5; SC IX; Large Catechism, I.103-178, 199-221).

**Concerning the Role of Women** – The primary concern when considering the role of women in the church is how individual Christian women (and men) serve in that office God has entrusted to them. In the domain of the home, a woman is called by God to specific divinely instituted offices that a man cannot fill—the office of wife and mother. On the other hand, there are two offices in the home that a woman cannot hold; namely, that of husband and father. In the domain of society, a woman may be called by God to many and varied positions that are not divinely instituted *per se* and, therefore, not limited to men or women; for example: teachers, police officers, bank presidents, custodians, etc. In the domain of the church, a woman may be called by God to many and varied offices of a "diaconate" nature that are also not divinely instituted *per se* and thus open to both men and women; for example: organist, Sunday School teacher, trustee, professor, committee chairman, etc. On the other hand, the one divinely instituted office in the church—the office of the public ministry—is limited to qualified men.

Concerning the Christian's calling or vocation or office or station in life, Martin Luther says: "It is pure invention that pope, bishop, priests, and monks are called the spiritual estate while

princes, lords, artisans, and farmers are called the temporal estate. This is indeed a piece of deceit and hypocrisy. Yet no one need be intimidated by it, and for this reason: all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all one body, yet every member has its own work by which it serves the others. This is because we all have one baptism, one gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for baptism, gospel, and faith alone make us spiritual and a Christian people."<sup>(26)</sup> Again he writes: "A cobbler, a smith, a peasant—each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops. Further, everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his own work or office so that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, just as all the members of the body serve one another."<sup>(27)</sup>

No one's work or office or talent or calling, as such, is to be despised or coveted. Some Christian women do not do church work; they all do—and not only those women who have a particular office entrusted to them or are members of a women's group, but also those Christian women who change dirty diapers at home and wash the dishes or who carry out their duties as an employee at an office or a factory. The work of the Christian woman must always be seen in light of her calling in life.

Whatever work Christian women (and men) do, therefore, it is not to cultivate favor, win praise, gather merits, attain status and honor, exert power, or appease God. It must not be used to realize their fondest dreams, to seek personal fulfilment, to make ends meet, to derive satisfaction, to pursue happiness, or to justify themselves. Christ, after all, does all these things for us by the work He has done. Because He has achieved all this for us, our work has another purpose: "[W]orks should be done freely and for no reward, to the benefit and advantage of our neighbor, just as the works of Christ were done freely for us and for no reward."<sup>(28)</sup>

The CTCR thus concurs with the conclusion of the Missouri Synod's 1985 CTCR report: "Since the life of every Christian is to be characterized by obedience and submission on some level, any demand for 'rights' and 'power' is inappropriate. The Commission believes that a more precise understanding of the Biblical teaching about the service of women in the church will move further reflection on the topic to its appropriate level—how all members of the church can serve our Lord and one another within the order He has established. On this level there is no thought of inferiority or superiority, of rule and domination, but only of our Savior's words: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them' (John 13:16-17)."<sup>(29)</sup>

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Accepted January 1999

Commission on Theology and Church Relations

#### Footnotes

1. "Though in general Christian feminists are united by an attitude to the biblical tradition itself which, to say the very least, is considerably less than slavish, we can nevertheless distinguish three broad approaches different enough to explain occasional signs of mutual suspicion between their respective protagonists. One approach, at first sight perhaps the most moderate, comes to the text in a way which seeks to show that,

though much biblical symbolism (particularly that of the Father-God) may appear sexist at the level of surface analogy, real textual meaning operates at a deeper level, and is essential 'sexually inclusive.' A second approach, probably the most common, simply proposes that the Bible presents a mixed bag of 'sexist' and 'non-sexist' elements, and claims the right to draw on those parts of the biblical tradition which can be judged to be supportive of the feminist view, and to ignore those parts thought from a modern feminist standpoint to be inimical to it. . . . The third view is that which dismisses the entire biblical and monotheist tradition as irredeemably sexist, but which nevertheless believes in a religious dimension in life, and seeks to preserve this by creating a new mythology ('telling our stories' is an essential feminist activity) and by asserting God as 'immanent mother,' a term understood as being over against 'transcendent father.' These three approaches to Scripture correspond with more generalized feminist attitudes to the Christian tradition: first, the 'reformist' view . . . which seeks to explain the Church's alleged 'sexism' as the result of its own misunderstanding of its heritage and seeks to assuage feminist discontent by adjustments in its practices; secondly, a more radical approach, which believes in the need for sweeping readjustments in its theological and symbolic understanding of God and of the nature of humanity; thirdly, the approach epitomized by the Goddess movement, which seeks for, and according to a well-known feminist within the Church may be well on the way towards achieving, a new stage in mankind's religious understanding" (William Oddie, *What Will Happen To God? Feminism and the Reconstruction of Christian Belief* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 97-99).

2. Although the word *kephale* has traditionally been understood to mean "head" in the sense of "having authority over," some claim that it means "source" or "origin." The reason for this shift in meaning is apparent from the following claim: "The New Testament contains no text where Christ's headship to the church connotes a relationship of authority. Likewise, the New Testament contains no text where a husband's headship to his wife connotes a relationship of authority" (Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 248-49). There is, however, no linguistic basis for proposing that *kephale*, when used of a person, means "source." Even if the meaning of "source" or "origin" were adopted, we would still not be able to understand it without the additional nuance of authority or leadership. There is, as such, no basis for asserting that the New Testament texts which speak of Christ as the head of the church or the husband as the head of the wife can rightly be understood apart from attributing the concept of authority to the one designated as "head."
3. While this principle is indeed to apply in the church, we should note that it is only from 11:17 on that St. Paul deals with the "coming together" of the congregation for divine services and with regulations pertaining to them. By omitting reference to a place for this praying and prophesying on the part of men and women, the apostle is, in effect, saying, "Wherever and whenever it is proper and right for a man or a woman to pray or prophesy, this headship-subordination relationship is to remain intact." "It is evident, then," as Lenski says, "that women, too, were granted the gift of prophecy even as some still have this gift, namely, the ability to present and properly to apply the Word of God by teaching others. And they are to exercise this valuable gift in the ample opportunities that offer themselves. So Paul writes 'praying and prophesying' with reference to the woman just as he does with reference to the man. The public assemblies of the congregation are, however, not among these opportunities . . . At other places and at other times women are free to exercise their gift of prophecy. In the present connection Paul has no occasion whatever to specify regarding this point. We may, however, think of Lois and Eunice who instructed Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15); of Priscilla, who was more able than her husband, who taught Apollos (Acts 18:24-26); and of other cases. The teaching ability of Christian women today has a wide range of opportunity without in the least intruding itself into the public congregational assemblies" (R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1946), 437).
4. LW 26:354.
5. Ibid., 355.
6. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians to the Ephesians and to the Philippians* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1946), 189.
7. LW 26:356.
8. LW 44:127.
9. Ibid., 135-36.
10. LW 36:112-13.
11. Ibid., 116.
12. LW 31:355.
13. It has been claimed that the Junias mentioned in Romans 16:7 was not only a woman but also an apostle. The text itself reads: "Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and fellow-prisoners, who are notable among the apostles, and who have been in Christ before me." "The passage is unclear in three ways. (1) It cannot be definitely established that Junias was a woman. The name may be a contraction of a man's name, Junianus. Of course, if this is true, then the text is irrelevant for the question before us. (2) Even though some scholars claim confidently that the verse means that Andronicus and Junias are outstanding apostles, it is also possible that the text is saying that they are 'outstanding in the eyes of the apostles.' (3) Even if we grant that Paul is speaking of a woman and he designates her as a distinguished apostle, what does he mean by the word 'apostle' here? It is by no means clear that he is assigning Junias the same position that he assigns to himself, the twelve, and James (1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19). The word 'apostle' in Paul could be used in a non-technical way to refer to 'messengers' or 'representatives' (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). In any case, the verse is too ambiguous to be used to establish the notion that there were female apostles in the technical sense" (Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 221).
14. Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy are also called "apostles" (Acts 14:14; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6). Barnabas, Saul (Paul), and others in Antioch are called "prophets and teachers" (Acts 13:1). Paul calls himself "an apostle and teacher" (2 Timothy 1:11). The apostle Peter refers to himself as a "fellow elder" (1 Peter 5:1). Silas is called both an "apostle" and a prophet" (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6; Acts 15:32). Timothy is told to do the work of an "evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5). Peter is charged by Christ to "shepherd (pastor) my sheep" (John 21:17).
15. "The fact that two offices are referred to by 'overseers' and 'deacons' is assured by our passage and by Phil. 1:1. The fact that deacons held the minor office and did not teach is also certain. What the deacons actually did is nowhere stated in detail. To say that they performed the same work as the *episcopoi* with the exception of the teaching is not provable. They were not the overseers, did not act as pastors and spiritual leaders of the flock. The best we can say is that they assisted the overseers by performing the minor services and attending to incidental matters such as collecting and distributing alms, looking after the physical needs of the sick, keeping the place of worship in order, etc. Thus there were also women deacons (v. 11); Phoebe was one of these, and she is referred to as early as Rom. 16:1" (R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1946), 592). John N. Collins suggests that the bracketing of the two titles in Phil. 1:1 indicates that the *diakanoi* were agents of the *episkopoi*. Concerning 1 Tim. 3:8-15 he notes that the placing of the passage about deacons following that about overseers indicates that, if the two offices are not coordinated, it at least suggests that the deacon is the assistant of the overseer. (John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 235-37).
16. St. Paul's mention of "women" (Greek *gunaikas*) in 1 Tim. 3:11 has been understood to refer either to wives of deacons or to women who held the office of deacon. Three factors support the latter position: 1) the wives of bishops are not singled out and they would occupy an even more influential position than the wives of deacons; 2) this whole section of 1 Timothy deals with various offices in the church and the parallel construction and list of qualifications in verses 8-10 leads to a new category of offices in verse 11; and 3) the post-apostolic church understood

it as such by establishing the female diaconate. In addition, others named as "workers in the Lord" who may well have been deaconesses are Tryphena and Tryphosa (Rom. 16:12) and Euodia and Syntyche, of whom Paul says "have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel" (Phil. 4:3). Significantly, the apostle begins this letter with the words: "To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1).

17. Although the common translation of *presbuteros* is "elder," the New Testament usage of this word is not readily transferable to a lay "elder" in congregations today. There is one passage which, as has been understood in the past, does refer to elders who do not labor in preaching and teaching. This view, however, is not easily supported as there are no other similar or supporting passages in the New Testament. The passage in question is 1 Timothy 5:17: "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and doctrine." Here, however, St. Paul is not talking about elders who merely assist the pastor. Rather, the apostle's emphasis is on remuneration and honor due the pastor (bishop-elder) based on his hard work and laborious effort in preaching and teaching over against those pastors who are rather lackadaisical in their task.
18. While the female diaconate was a very significant feature in the early church, not only did such women not hold the office of preaching and teaching the Word and administering the Sacraments, but they – unlike certain male deacons – were not permitted to even assist the bishop-elder-pastor-teacher in the distinctive functions of that office in the divine services in the church. The remark of Tertullian is representative of this understanding and practice: "It is not permitted to a woman to speak in church. Neither may she teach, baptize, offer, nor claim for herself any function proper to a man, least of all the sacerdotal office" (Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins*, 9.1).
19. What, however, if a woman feels called by God to the pastoral office? Does the church have the right to ignore and reject such a call and prohibit her from serving in this office? In response to such questions, it should be noted that the very concept of an "inner call" to the pastoral office is not biblically based, nor does the church have the right to recognize the legitimacy and/or demand the necessity of such an "inner call." And "inward desire," a "strong feeling," and some "inner compulsion," etc. are subjective criteria. While the Bible nowhere promises or requires such an "inner call" from God in order to determine who will be pastors, it does provide guidelines for selecting those who will serve in this office (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Martin Chemnitz thus says: "To desire the office of bishop is not to thrust oneself into ecclesiastical functions without a legitimate call; but if one has learned and understands the fundamentals of Christian doctrine and is somewhat endowed with the gift of teaching—when he offers his service to God and the church, he thereby seeks nothing else than that God would declare through a legitimate, or regular, call whether He wants to use his service in His church. And he ought to be so minded, that, if a call does not follow his request, he does not cunningly work his way in" (Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 28). The Augsburg Confession affirms this when it says: "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call" (AC XIV). Likewise, the Treatise says: "Where the true church is, therefore, the right of electing and ordaining ministers must of necessity also be" (Tr 67). This biblical, confessional teaching concerning the call into the office of the public ministry is also reaffirmed by C.F.W. Walther who says: "(I)t is likewise the congregation—and it can only be the congregation—by which, namely, by its election, call, and commission, the ministry of preaching, which publicly administers the office of the keys and all priestly offices in the congregation, is conferred on certain persons qualified for the same" (C.F.W. Walther, "The Theses on the Ministry," in *Walther and the Church*, ed. Wm. Dallmann, W.H.T. Dau, and Th. Engelder, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), 75).
20. Lorenz Wunderlich, "Adiaphora," *The Abiding Word*, vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 698, 706.
21. Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, *Proceedings of the Forty-Third Regular Convention* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 568.
22. *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 220, 223.
23. "Woman Suffrage in the Church," Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, 1968, 3.
24. "Women In The Church," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, September 1985, p. 46.
25. Among these women theologians were: Charito who was associated with Justin Martyr's school at Rome and martyred with him; Marcella who demanded detailed explanations of the Scriptures from Jerome; Melania who was famed for her learning and founded a monastery in Jerusalem; Theodosia who led a circle of students of theology in Constantinople; Olympias who engaged in frequent correspondence with John Chrysostom; Macrina, sister of Gregory of Nyssa, who was well-known and regarded for her theological mind and teaching ability; Lioba, sister of St. Boniface, who explained spiritual matters to princes and bishops; Hilda of Whitby who trained five bishops at her abbey; Egeria, a noble woman from France, whose travel diary contains the best information we possess on the early church's liturgical life; Proba whose poetic work on biblical history was a popular school textbook; Eudoxia, wife of the Roman emperor Theodosius II, who produced a great literary work on the Christian faith; and Hildegard of Bingen who wrote hymns, plays, and books and who corresponded with popes, emperors, kings, and theologians. One area, however, was consistently reserved for men, that is, the office of teaching and preaching God's Word and administering the Sacraments.
26. *LW* 44:127.
27. *Ibid.*, 130.
28. *Ibid.*, 301.
29. "Women In The Church," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, September 1985, 48-49.
30. The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod Commission on Theology and Church Relations, "Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice" (St. Louis: 1985), 29-30.