

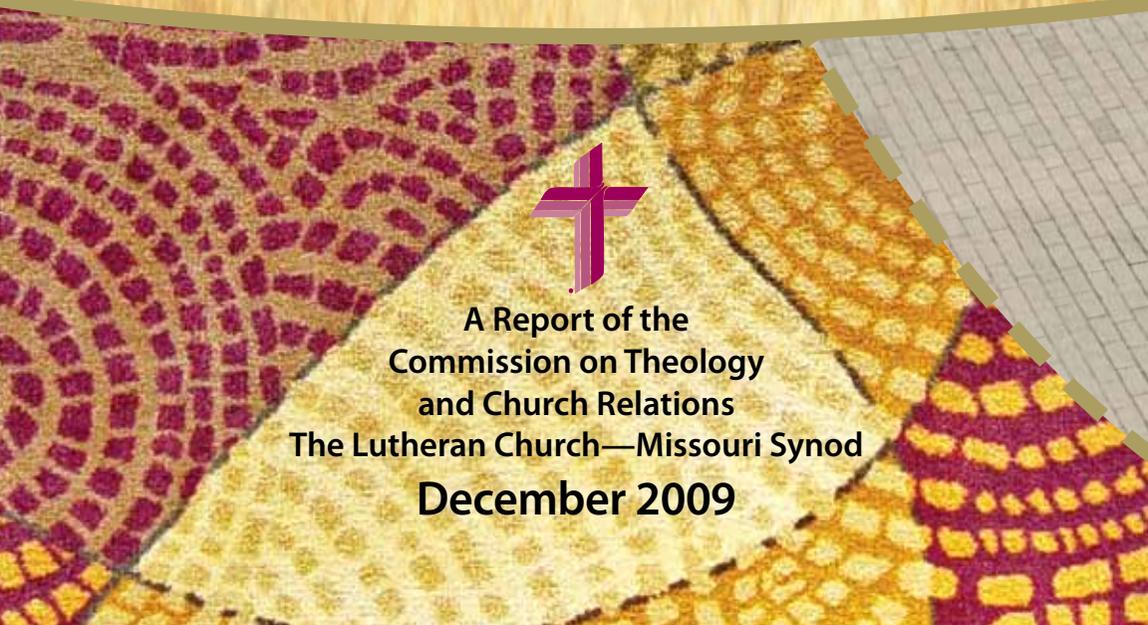


THE CREATOR'S TAPESTRY

Scriptural Perspectives
on Man–Woman Relationships
in Marriage and the Church



A Report of the
Commission on Theology
and Church Relations
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
December 2009





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Abbreviations:

AC	Augsburg Confession
AE	<i>Luther's Works</i> . American ed. 55 vols. St. Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955-1986.
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
Ep	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
ESV	The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyrighted © 2001
KJV	King James Version, public domain
NIV	The Holy Bible, New International Version, copyrighted © 1973, 1978, 1984.
LC	Large Catechism of Martin Luther
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

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The Creator's Tapestry

Scriptural Perspectives on Man–Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church

Preface

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has prepared the present document in response to a 1995 synodical convention request that the Commission “prepare a comprehensive study of the scriptural relationship of man and woman” (Res. 3-10).

The Commission has completed a number of significant assignments since 1995 that address certain aspects of the scriptural relationship between man and woman specifically referenced in 1995 Resolution 3-10.¹ Thanks to a grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, the CTCR was able to assemble individuals with various expertise and a common interest in this topic for a series of four consultations on the relationship of man and woman. This process enabled the collection and discussion of a wide variety of valuable insights and opinions.

The Commission recognizes that this document does not fully address many issues that can and should be discussed regarding a Christian understanding of the relationship of man and woman. It does not provide thorough answers to many specific questions and concerns, including some of those raised by members of the CTCR and its consultation groups.

Without in any way denying the importance of such concerns, the Commission determined that it could not address all of them fully in this study. This is a foundational document. Its purpose is to provide the scriptural basis for the Christian understanding of man and woman. In this document

¹ For a list of documents prepared by the CTCR since 1995 which address various topics or questions pertinent to the relationship of man and woman, see the following. Most are available on the CTCR website at www.lcms.org/ctcr (“Reports and Opinions”). Please note: *Biblical Revelation & Inclusive Language* (1998); Response to expressions of dissent on woman suffrage (2002) and the ordination of women (2002, 2003) [see 2004 *Convention Workbook*, 75-77]; Response to Questions of BHE/CUS on Lay Teachers of Theology (2003); Women in Combat (2003); Response to Minnesota South District request on “The Service of Women in Congregational Offices of Executive Director/President or Assistant Director/Vice President (2004); CTCR report on *Authentein* (2004); *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices-Guidelines for Congregations* (2005 [published text of 1994 report of the CTCR]). See also CTCR’s 1987 report on *Divorce and Remarriage*, its 1985 report on *Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice*, its 1981 report, *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective*, and the 1968 report on *Woman Suffrage in the Church*.

we have attempted to address questions raised in 1995 Resolution 3-10.² It is our prayer that it will help to build consensus on the biblical starting point for addressing additional questions before us.

The Commission intends to continue the work begun here by providing additional resources to address specific areas of concern under the general topic of “Man and Woman in the Contemporary World.”

Among the questions and concerns which could be addressed are the following:

- the influence of culture on the Christian understanding of man and woman;
- the study of passages and arguments often cited in support of both an “egalitarian”³ view of marriage and the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry;
- the understanding and value of such ideas as “order of creation” and “headship”;
- violence and oppressive behavior toward women in society, home, and church;
- general and specific roles/responsibilities of men and women in variable contexts (society, home, church);
- the relationship of men and women outside the context of marriage;
- the significance of Jesus’ relationship with women;
- the Christian understanding of such contemporary issues as pornography, online relationships, “hooking-up,” and so forth;
- continuity and discontinuity between such theological questions as ordination of women and ordination of practicing homosexuals.

Such concerns must be respected and cannot be ignored. The Christian faith has a beautiful vision of human relationships, particularly the relationship of men and women in Christ. That vision is one to be shared with each new generation.

Introduction

Imagine an eye-catching tapestry hanging on a wall. Its maker uses two kinds of threads: warp threads and weft threads. Warp threads are stretched on a loom, and weft threads are interwoven through them. The creator of the tapestry is able to take these two different kinds of threads and weave them together into magnificent patterns.

² See the Appendix for a copy of 2007 Res. 3-10.

³ An “egalitarian” view may be contrasted with a “complementary” view of marriage. The first assumes that the Bible’s command to be submissive within marriage is identical for the husband and the wife, so that the husband is not understood to be in a position of authority or leadership any more than the wife. In the complementary view the command for a wife’s submission does entail leadership or “headship” on the part of the husband. The complementary view is developed in this report.

The biblical perspective on man and woman resembles a patterned tapestry, woven with multicolored threads both alike and different. Within the Creator's design, man and woman share a common human nature. They also differ in significant ways. In their sameness yet difference they interrelate beautifully—most intimately within the one-flesh union of marriage. The Creator “weaves” one man and one woman into a pattern that produces a rich harmony to His glory and their good.

The physical and social sciences can provide helpful perspectives on the relationship between man and woman that Christians can readily affirm. Recent research, for instance, indicates that there are significant ways in which males and females have essentially equal abilities and tendencies. There are also strong tendencies among men and women to have differences in such things as the emphasis each group gives to power versus values, justice versus relationships, and analytical versus process-oriented thinking.⁴ Above all, Christians want to hear what God's Word has to say and pray that the Holy Spirit will weave our relationships as men and women into a God-pleasing tapestry.

From beginning to end

As we consider the biblical perspective on man-woman relationships, we confront a difficult question: How do we organize a wide array of biblical materials on a huge topic like this? The Bible is a library of books written by many authors, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and spanning different times and places. We have chosen to follow Scripture's overall story summarized in the creeds of Christianity. They speak of God's dealings with His creatures from beginning to end. In these creeds we confess the God who begins, rescues, and restores His own creation through His Son and by His Spirit. Thus, we want to consider the topic as follows:

First Article: God Creates Man and Woman

Second Article: God Redeems Man and Woman

Third Article: God Renews Man and Woman

This credal outline is more than a convenient way to organize the biblical data. Theological reasons underlie this arrangement. First, the creeds focus our attention on what the Creator does. Second, the very terms “man” and “woman” designate a created distinction—without which we could not even speak of man and woman in relationship to each other. In the beginning God created man and woman in relation to each other. This is also true of our personal story. Before baptizing us, God created us. He knit us in our mothers' wombs as a male or female. By beginning with creation, we acknowledge the foundational nature of God's first actions.

⁴ Barbara Brunworth, “Men and Women in the Contemporary Culture: The Intersection of Theology and the Social Sciences” (CTCR Archives). Unpublished essay, presented to the CTCR December 4, 2006, 15–19.

Tragically, God's good creation underwent a cataclysmic change. Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, rebelled against their holy Maker. This rebellion has had devastating effects on all creation, including the relationship between man and woman. Thanks be to God that He did not abandon them to their plight. Out of His boundless mercy He reconciled all sinners to Himself through Jesus of Nazareth, His Son in human flesh. In this way, God also reconciled man and woman to each other in Christ. Baptized into Christ, they are together members of Christ's one body, the church.

By the power of His Spirit, God renews His created and redeemed men and women for life in various callings. The Scriptures focus significant attention on relationships within marriage and the church in the present time, but Christians also live in the hope of Christ's second coming and the bodily resurrection from the dead.

Big picture and details in reading the Scriptures

A scene in the comic strip "Calvin and Hobbes" features Calvin sitting in class, raising his hand. "Miss Wormwood," he says, "I have a question about this math lesson." "Yes?" the teacher asks. "Given that, sooner or later, we're all just going to die, what's the point of learning about integers?" Ignoring him, the teacher says, "Turn to page 83, class." Calvin, depressed, looks down at his book and says to himself, "Nobody likes us 'big picture' people."

Calvin makes a good point. It is important to see the big picture. On the issue of man-woman relationships, we need to be big picture people who see the entire tapestry. We affirm the coherence and unity of the scriptural writings. Therefore, we let Scripture interpret Scripture. The perspective of each book fits together in a unified whole. Calvin's teacher, however, is also right. God speaks in the details. It is important to pay attention to the particulars of a passage, much like taking a magnified look at individual strands of the tapestry.

A faithful reading of God's Word requires, above all, that we always approach it with humility and reverence. As sinful human beings, we are all naturally prone to impose our own preconceived ideas and sensitivities upon the Bible. Understandably, we also tend more readily to accept some texts but view others as less important, even pitting one passage against another. May the Holy Spirit give us—both men and women—hearts and minds willing to receive all that the Scriptures teach, even when we find something difficult to accept or understand. May He also help us to discover the joy and delight of studying God's Word and following God's design for our relationships to each other.



FIRST ARTICLE: GOD CREATES MAN AND WOMAN

“I believe that God has made me and all creatures....”
Luther’s *Small Catechism*

Genesis 1

The biblical account of the creation of man and woman is itself part of an exquisite tapestry that pictures God’s goodness and wisdom toward His creatures. In the beginning everything had its distinct place and purpose which contributed to the harmony of the whole. Through His creative acts, God revealed that He is a God of order, not of chaos. Day upon day, God declared the works of His hands “good”—resounding testimony to how much He loved and esteemed all that He made. Consider how the Creator, by His Word, made from nothing all things in six days and arranged them in a very orderly and symmetrical way.

Day 1: light separated from darkness, called “day and night”

Day 2: an expanse separating waters above from below, called “heaven” [sky]

Day 3: gathering of waters and appearance of dry land (“earth and seas”), and vegetation on earth

Day 4: lights in the sky to give light, separating day from night, marking seasons

Day 5: fish in waters and birds in sky

Day 6: living creatures on the earth and human race, male and female.

Let us make man

With ascending complexity and beauty, God’s creative activity reaches its high point on the sixth day: the creation of the human race—male and female. After creating the land animals, God said:

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth (Gen 1:26).⁵

⁵ English Standard Version (ESV); used hereafter, unless otherwise noted.

Important details of this beautiful passage are worthy of note. First, the Hebrew noun *adam* (translated “man” above), occurring here for the first time in the Bible, is used as a “collective”—a singular noun referring to a category of creatures. That *adam* functions as a collective is shown by “them” in the words immediately following: “let *them* have dominion.” This detail is important because it shows that the word *adam* in this passage has a generic sense denoting “the human race.” It embraces the first man and woman from whom the rest of humankind would descend.⁶

Significantly, God said “let there be” for other creative actions in Genesis 1. Here—in sharp contrast—God says, “*Let us* make . . . in *our* image, after *our* likeness” (emphasis added). Now God takes deliberate counsel to create the human race, that is, there is reflection among the Persons of the Trinity. The human race does not come into existence by accident, nor is a human being just another earth creature. Humankind is the pinnacle of the Creator’s magnificent work, indeed, His showpiece—amazingly—in the entire universe. The majestic Creator of this cosmic expanse made the tiny speck called “man” “a little lower” than Himself and crowned him as a king with great honor. Psalm 8 declares:

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him [man] a little lower than God⁷ and crowned him with glory and honor. You gave him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Ps 8:3-9)

Genesis 1:26 intimates that the Creator is none other than the Triune God whom we worship and confess. The Christian Church has traditionally understood verse 26 this way and with good reason. Genesis 1:2 mentions “the Spirit of God” hovering over the waters, and God creates through His Word. The words “let us make”⁸ indicate that the Father is speaking to His Son (the Word) and the Holy Spirit. The implicit Biblical teaching regard-

⁶ Gen 5:2 states: “Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and he named them Man [*adam*] when they were created.” See also Gen 6:1.

⁷ ESV text reads “lower than the heavenly beings.” “[L]ower than God” is offered as an alternate reading in the ESV margin.

⁸ When God speaks, He uses the first person plural, “let us make.” When the narrative recounts what God did in the third person, it does not use a plural form and write “they created man in their own image.” That would express polytheism. Instead the text uses the singular, “God created man in *his* own image.” When speaking of the true God in the third person, the Old Testament employs the masculine singular verb form, “he did” or “he said”

ing the Trinity here is more clearly revealed later in the Scriptures (see, for example, John 1:1-3).

Created in God's image

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:27-28).

That God created human beings—male and female—"in His image" means that among all God's creatures they are in a category by themselves. They are, indeed, the crown of His creation. God made the human race in His "image," according to His "likeness."⁹ Both of these expressions emphasize that humanity was created *unlike* the animals, birds, and fish. There are different "kinds" of animals but only one human race patterned after its Creator. God created only one human race, one *adam*: "...in the image of God he created *him*"—one humanity that derives from one common ancestor, whose personal name is the same word, Adam (*adam*). Every individual human creature, male or female, belongs to this one humanity and, therefore, is created in God's image.

How was humanity patterned after its Creator? How did human beings resemble God? On the basis of Genesis 1 several things can be said. The Creator wanted to have a special, unique communion with these particular creatures that He did not have with His other creatures. He made humans to be His companions, creatures who would know Him, live in righteousness and holiness before Him, and look to Him as the Giver of every good gift (see also Eph 4:24 and Col 3:10). God spoke to His human creatures in an extended conversation (Gen 1:28-30). By conversing directly with them, the Creator shows that the human creatures are capable of relating to Him and responsible to Him for what takes place. Because they alone were made in God's image,¹⁰ they were not simply another category of earthly creatures

(see CTCR *Biblical Revelation & Inclusive Language*). There is only one God, one Creator, not many gods and goddesses.

⁹ The term "image" is a strong concrete word that can denote a statue, for example, a statue/image of a god or king. It is often used to refer to idols. The English translation "image" can be a little misleading in that we can use it as a verb, one "images" A to B. The original Hebrew word *tselem* and the Greek word *eikōn* do not convey the verbal idea. The terms simply mean that one is a "replica" or "resemblance" of another. The other word "likeness" (Hebrew *demuth*) is usually used in a weaker more abstract way that denotes "similarity." Both "image" and "likeness" can be used interchangeably. Genesis 1:27 and 9:6 use only "image," while Gen 5:1 uses only "likeness."

¹⁰ With the Fall into sin, the fellowship with the Creator was completely lost. Yet the distinction from animals still remains even after the Fall. The Creator continues

but were given dominion over the birds, fish, and land animals. Although the word “image” itself does not mean “to rule over,” this unique status given the human creatures resulted in their having dominion over the animals. In order to exercise this dominion as responsible stewards of the earth, they were given wisdom and the capacity to make judgments.

Created male and female

Although God indeed created humanity in His image, the human race was at the same time clearly *unlike* Him. In God there is no sexual differentiation,¹¹ but He created man in a duality as “male and female,” and He continues to do so. This fundamental distinction precedes all other distinctions of ethnicity, nationality, language, culture, and customs—which are mentioned later in Genesis (for example, Gen 10).

A person’s sexual identity is a given and not a matter of human choice. It is not simply a social construct or the invention of society. A human being is not an independent soul or mind that just happens to be encased in a male or female body. An individual’s sexual identity and the sexual distinction between male and female are wonderful gifts of God established at creation.

The sexual difference within humanity serves a good purpose in God’s grand design. It enables human creatures to be fruitful and multiply and fill

to knit every human creature in the mother’s womb and thereby still creates every human creature in His own image, in distinction from animals. Although human nature is thoroughly corrupted by sin, it is still human nature, not animal nature. Genesis 9 reveals that human beings even after the Fall are still made in God’s image, which has been ruined by the Fall and is restored by God’s saving activity. After the flood God repeated His original mandate to Noah and his sons to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (see also Gen 8:17). God granted them permission to kill animals for food, but He prohibited the shedding of human blood: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for *God made man in his own image*” (Gen 9:6; emphasis added). Whereas animals may be killed for food, Adam’s descendants remain created in God’s image even after the Fall. To murder a human being made in God’s image is to offend God Himself. James 3 also shows that human beings remain created in God’s image after the Fall. “For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people *who are made in the likeness of God*. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so” (James 3:7-10; emphasis added). James warns against misusing the tongue to curse people. Animals can be tamed but no one can tame the tongue. With the tongue we can bless God but we can also curse people. When we do that, James reminds us, we are cursing humans (*anthrōpous*, literally, “men”), who, in contrast to animals, are made according to God’s likeness. In the original Greek, the verb “are made” is a perfect tense, emphasizing that people remain in God’s likeness. To curse humans who are made according to God’s likeness is also to offend God Himself. What James says applies to the way we Christians treat everyone, including non-Christians, in the business world, politics, school, the marketplace, and in all walks of life.

¹¹ It was commonly thought in the ancient Near East that there were gods and goddesses who procreated and filled the heavens with additional gods and goddesses. The biblical writers inspired by the Spirit strongly opposed such a notion. Sexual differentiation does not exist within the Creator. The Creator does not procreate, filling the heavens with baby gods and goddesses. Sexual procreation belongs only to creatures.

the earth. Precisely through this sexual difference, male and female together can procreate, which makes possible the continuation of the human race. In His wisdom, the Creator has thus provided for the care of His creation. Psalm 115 confesses one of the chief purposes of the Creator’s work highlighted in Genesis:

The heavens are the LORD’s heavens, but the earth he has given to the children of man (Ps 115:16).

God made His human creatures male and female so that together they might enjoy one another’s companionship, multiply, populate the earth, and rule¹² over it. Both male and female have received this task, responsibility, stewardship, and privilege. They are the Creator’s representatives and are accountable to Him for how they exercise the responsibilities entrusted to them.

Genesis 2

We have viewed with amazement and wonder God’s creation tapestry pictured broadly in Genesis 1. Now we are invited to step forward for a closer look. In Genesis 2 the Scriptures give us a close-up, in zoom-lens fashion, of God’s creation of the human race as male and female on the sixth day. Taken together, these two chapters present a coherent and complementary portrait of our Creator’s majestic work.

As we look closely at Genesis 2, we cannot leave unnoticed the warmth and personal nature of the Creator’s touch—reflected in the very name by which He reveals Himself and does His work. Genesis 2 calls the Creator not just “God” (*Elohim*) but “the LORD God” (*Yahweh Elohim*). “The LORD” is the conventional English rendition of “Yahweh,” God’s personal name in the Old Testament.¹³ In Genesis 1, He reveals Himself by the generic title “God/Deity,” the God of transcendent power, but in Genesis 2 He also discloses Himself to us in His personal name, “Yahweh” (“the LORD”).

The creation of the man

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature (Gen 2:7).

The transcendent and all-powerful Creator of the universe reaches down and as a master artisan forms the first man from the ground. The man

¹² Genesis 1 uses two verbs to emphasize the task. One verb (Hebrew *radah*) conveys the general sense of “ruling over, having dominion over.” It can denote a dignified and honorable exercise of royal authority, used of a king ruling over his people (1 Ki 4:24; Ps 72:8). The other verb (Hebrew *kabash*) has the more narrow meaning of “subdue.” It designates the activity of intentionally bringing the earth under human control.

¹³ Note that all capitals are used for “The LORD” when it translates the proper name *Yahweh*. “Lord” without capitals is used to translate the Hebrew word *Adonai*.

was carefully fashioned from the same earth he was later to till (Gen 2:5). The Hebrew text shows the connection: “The LORD God formed the *adam* [the man] of dust from the *adamah* [the ground].” Or, as we might capture it in English: “The LORD God formed the earth-man of dust from the earth.” In the Creator’s deft hands, the ground He had created becomes the raw material from which the man is shaped. The verb translated “formed” denotes to “shape, forge” and often refers to the work of a potter. The language connotes the great care that God devoted to the creation of His creatures, both animals and human beings (see Gen 2:19). Into the man He had formed, however, the Creator Himself directly “breathed...the breath of life.” Through this intimate act of his Creator, “the man [the *adam*] became a living creature.” Unlike the creation of the animals (Gen 1:20-25; 2:19), God’s own breath makes Adam a breathing and living creature.

The first man stands on the earth from which he is made and for which he is to care (2:5). We have seen that in Genesis 1 the Hebrew word *adam* (ESV “man”) was used generically to denote the human race: “Let us make man [human race—*adam*] in our image, after our likeness. And let *them* have dominion over” the other animals. Now in Genesis 2 the word *adam* designates the first human creature. This *adam* was not an androgynous creature; a kind of male and female packaged in one and later split in half. Rather, the word *adam* here refers to the first male from whose side will be created the first female. Because the human race descended from this first man, the word designating the human race (*adam*) appropriately became his personal name “Adam.” The opening verses of Genesis 5 show this connection:

This is the book of the generations of Adam [*adam*]. When God created man [*adam*], he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man [*adam*] when they were created. When Adam [*adam*] had lived 130 years, he fathered a son (Gen 5:1-3).

Adam, therefore, became the one through whom the human race began and to whom it is ultimately tied. In this sense, he may be regarded as the representative of the entire human race (cf. Romans 5). God gave His word to this man standing before Him in the garden. He gave Adam the command to live in obedience to Him, setting a boundary for his freedom: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’” (Gen 2:16-17). The man was held responsible and accountable to God for obedience to the Creator’s word given prior to the creation of woman. The subsequent narrative in Genesis 3 indicates that even this prohibition was meant for the good of God’s human creatures. The Creator is good and so are His prohibitions.

The answer to the man's aloneness

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18).

Against "the background of all the stately cadences"¹⁴ in Genesis 1 pronouncing God's creation "good," we now hear a different word from God: "It is *not good* that the man should be alone." The Creator desired to make a world in which everything would fit properly and correspond to His intent. Before the final "very good" of the sixth day, the Creator Himself says that something was "not good": the man's aloneness—which Adam himself realized after naming God's creatures (2:20). To this profound need, for which the man himself was able to give no answer, God responds: "I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18).

Understood within the context of God's desire that His creation of the man be completely good, "helper" takes on special meaning. The Hebrew word translated "help" (*'ezer*) is itself a fairly general word that is used in a variety of contexts in the Scriptures and means to "assist and support" another. The word implies that two individuals share the same goal but that the strength or wherewithal of the one to be helped is inadequate in some way. The one needs the help of the other. The word does not imply that the helper is inferior to the one being helped. In fact, the Scriptures often speak of God as our "helper," signifying that God places Himself in the service of our needs. Nor does the word imply that the helper is superior. The two parties can be equal, as is the case here (Gen 2:8; see also Josh 10:3-5). The word focuses on the assistance and support provided by another. To the man's aloneness, God will bring a companion devoted to his good, not just a person to keep him company.

The creation of the woman

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man (Gen 2:21-22).

The answer to the man's aloneness came to him in a way far beyond what he could envision or would have been able to design. He would soon discover in awe what was embedded in God's promise to make a helper "fit for him" (literally, in Hebrew, "like-his-counterpart"). The man who had just actively named the animals now became completely passive, immersed in a deep sleep induced by God. Then like an expert surgeon, the Creator took out one of his ribs and sewed up his flesh. Since this partner must be

¹⁴ *Human Sexuality*, 14. Online at http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/Human_Sexuality1.pdf.

“fit for him,” the Creator appropriately took a rib from his side, the bone closest to his heart.¹⁵ That rib God “made” (or as the Hebrew says, “built”) into a woman. As an expert builder God constructed the woman. Then God “brought her to the man” (2:22), prompting the man to cry “with joyous astonishment”¹⁶ and delight:

“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:23).

These words, the first recorded words uttered by the man, stand in sharp contrast to what he will say about his wife later in Genesis 3:12. Here he gladly and fully receives her as a precious gift, another human creature like himself, made of his own substance—“bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” as he put it. Both the man and the woman bear God’s image and live in fellowship with Him.

God created this “helper fit for him” in a distinctive way. Unlike the creation of the man directly from the earth, God created the woman from the man. God had given Adam the responsibility of naming the other creatures. Now Adam names his fellow human being “woman, because she was taken out of man.” This English translation captures the Hebrew text: “she shall be called *ish-shah*, because she was taken out of *ish*.” The name corresponds to his prior exclamation: “This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” Adam rejoices as much in their difference as in their sameness. Through God’s gift of the woman, the man is enabled to grow in his understanding of himself as a man. “She is the mirror in which the man will come to know himself as man. The man and woman have been created toward fellowship, and neither can come to know the self rightly apart from the other.... [they] know themselves in relation to one who is other than self.”¹⁷

The institution of marriage: husband and wife

The creation of man and woman, in the Creator’s design, now leads to (“therefore,” Gen 2:24) the creation of marriage.¹⁸ The Creator joins one man

¹⁵ “She was not taken from his head to rule over him or from his feet to be trampled on by him. She was taken from his side to be his companion, from under his arm to be protected by him, from near his heart to be loved by him.” Attributed to Augustine, this statement may be of more recent origin. (See http://www.archive.org/stream/bathfablesonmora00wils/bathfablesonmora00wils_djvu.txt which suggests something similar from “The Bath Fables.”). Augustine does say of the creation of the woman from the man: “the fact that a woman was made for the first man from his own side shows us clearly how affectionate should be the union of man and wife.” *City of God*, Book 12, 27.

¹⁶ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d., reprinted by Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 90.

¹⁷ *Human Sexuality*, 14-15.

¹⁸ See *Human Sexuality and Divorce and Remarriage*, online at http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/Divorce_Remarriage1.pdf.

and one woman in what he intends to be a union not to be ended until death. This union is a good gift established by the Creator Himself and designed by Him to be the foundation for society and the continuation of the human race. The creation narrative now closes with these words:

Therefore a man [*ish*] shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife [*ish-shah*], and they shall become one flesh. And the man [*adam*] and his wife [*ish-shah*] were both naked and were not ashamed (Gen 2:24-25).¹⁹

We can now see most clearly the aptness of the tapestry metaphor for picturing the relationship of man and woman as God intended. In the most intimate way, man and woman are intertwined and interwoven in marriage like the warp and weft threads of a tapestry. They are joined together in a one-flesh union that is a profound unity of persons created by God Himself. This truth is strongly affirmed by Jesus when He said, "So they are no longer two but one flesh." What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt 19:6). God joins them together as the husband and wife give themselves wholly to each other and become one flesh. Neither two males nor two females can become one flesh, but only a male and a female.

Sexual intimacy of husband and wife is a good gift from our Creator, not only for procreation but also for human companionship and enjoyment. It is an expression of their deep love for one another. Perhaps no book of the Bible displays the goodness of sexual intimacy and the unity of husband and wife more profoundly than The Song of Songs in the Old Testament. With rich poetry and compact imagery, the book exuberantly sings of the passionate love between the man and the woman.²⁰

Man and woman, therefore, belong to and are dependent upon one another. First, the man was created. Later, the woman was made from the man's side as a companion for him. The woman subsequently gives birth to a man. A man leaves his father and his mother and "holds fast" to his wife, caring for her. Paradoxically, their difference gives birth to their interdependence. As the apostle Paul so eloquently stated centuries later: "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God" (1 Cor 11:11-12; see also 1 Cor 11:7-10).

¹⁹ Genesis 2 describes the creation of the first man and woman and at the same time the creation of the first husband and wife. In fact, the same Hebrew words for "man/human-male" (*ish*) and "woman/human-female" (*ish-shah*) also denote "husband" and "wife." She is his "woman" (*ish-shah*) and he is her "man" (*ish*). Also in Greek the terms for "man/human-male" (*anōr*) and for "woman/human-female" (*gynō*) can mean "husband" and "wife." Throughout Genesis 2-3 and often elsewhere, when the Scriptures speak of "man and woman," they are also referring to "husband and wife."

²⁰ See, for example, Song of Songs 1:2-3, 15-16; 2:16; 4:10; 6:3; 7:10. This book is also rightly understood as pointing to the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, Christ and the Church (see Eph 5:31-32). See Christopher W. Mitchell, *The Song of Songs* (St. Louis: CPH, 2003), 20-23.

SECOND ARTICLE: GOD REDEEMS MAN AND WOMAN

*"I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me,
a lost and condemned person . . ."*
Luther's *Small Catechism*

Genesis 3 and the Fall

The creation narrative in Genesis closes with the seemingly insignificant fact that man and woman were both naked and not ashamed (Gen 2:25). The first couple lived together in a state of holiness and innocence. As a consequence, they lived in complete harmony with God and each other. As Luther reminds us, God uses this "little statement" to show "how much evil followed after the sin of Adam."²¹ The sudden and ominous intrusion of the serpent into the picture immediately following this perfect scene signals a horrific tragedy about to happen. The unraveling and shredding of the Creator's tapestry is about to begin.

The serpent's deception

The serpent's demonic spin on the LORD God's original command is introduced: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen 3:1 KJV).²² God had indeed generously provided for food by saying "You may surely eat of *every tree* of the garden" except one tree (Gen 2:16). The serpent, however, perversely twists God's general permission and single prohibition into a general prohibition: "Ye shall not eat of *every tree* of the garden." He insinuates, "If there is an exception, then in fact you may not eat of every tree"—as if the one exception cancels out God's lavish generosity and permission. By this subterfuge, the serpent frames the question to instill doubt in God's Word and His generous provision.

The LORD God had given the prohibition to the man before the woman was created (Gen 2:17). After creating the woman, both are to live in accord with God's Word and will. The woman's response, however, goes beyond God's Word and will:

We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, "You [plural] shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you [plural] touch it, lest you [plural] die" (Gen 2:2-3).

²¹ AE 1:139-40.

²² Notice how the serpent just calls Him "God" instead of using God's personal name Yahweh, "the LORD God." The serpent subtly creates a distance between Yahweh and the woman.

The deadly slippage has begun. The Tempter, camouflaged in a snake, has the woman's ear. She tries to correct the serpent but adds to, and subtracts from, God's Word. From her lips, "the LORD God" becomes the distant and impersonal "God." She diminishes God's generosity by omitting "every" from the original permission (God had said "you *may eat of every tree*"; Gen 2:16). And she makes God look overly rigid by adding "neither shall you touch it" to the original prohibition.

And now comes the demonic spin in its most deadly form, loaded with ambiguity and saturated with half-truths: "You [plural] will not surely die. For God knows that when you [plural] eat of it your [plural] eyes will be opened, and you [plural] will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:4-5).

We note carefully the subtleties and half-truths. The devil hints (plural of "you" again!) that the woman should make sure they both eat of it. Then the first half-truth (the clever art of telling a lie by telling part of the truth): "You will not surely die." Well, of course, they did not physically die—not *that* day. Adam lived 930 years. And, another half-truth: "Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Well, yes, their eyes were indeed opened (3:7), and they did become like God in knowing good and evil, as God admits in 3:22. Conspicuous by its absence, however, was any hint of the sudden and precipitous descent into sin and its consequent separation from the LORD God who had been so good to them.

Failed in their callings to each other and to God

The sad account continues:

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden (Gen 3:6-8).

Caught in the satanic web of deceit, the woman and her husband failed in their responsibilities toward each other and rebelled against their Creator. By listening to the voice of the serpent instead of God's Word, the woman ate the forbidden fruit and became the first to sin. She then gave the fruit to Adam and, without protest, he also ate.

Though Eve's sin is apparent, Adam's should not be minimized. Rather than warning his wife not to eat, or interceding for her with the Lord after

she had eaten, he ate willingly, in clear defiance against God, without protest. In the end, neither Eve nor Adam can be excused. Their hands reached for what their hearts truly desired—the only thing God had denied them. Created in “God’s likeness,” they desired to wrest from God a prerogative belonging only to Him: to decide what is good and what is evil. In wanting to become “like God” ironically they were no longer like Him. Having thoroughly corrupted God’s image, they fled from Him in fear and hid in shame.

The original harmony lost

The first indication of “how much evil” followed Adam’s sin was the torn relationship between the man and his wife.²³ When the Lord sought out His rebellious and fleeing creatures, He spoke first with the man, to whom the responsibility for obedience was originally given. Adam tried to excuse himself by shifting the blame to the woman (in whom was his earlier delight), and even to God Himself: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate” (Gen 3:12). When the Lord held the woman to account, she cast blame on the serpent, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Gen 3:13). And so, creatures who covet divinity and reject accountability to God begin the blame game—an insidious trend that has wreaked havoc on the man-woman relationship ever since. God’s splendid tapestry had now become tattered and unsightly.

God’s righteous judgment

The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you [singular], ‘You [singular] shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you [singular]; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Gen 3:14-19)

²³ AE 1:139.

The righteous God will not be mocked, nor will He be hoodwinked by Satan's schemes (2 Cor 2:11). God's pronouncement of judgment begins with Satan. The day will come when Satan will receive in full what he deserves. As he deceived the woman and led her into sin, so through her seed (offspring) his head will be crushed. This judgment is accomplished through Jesus, the seed of the woman, who crushed Satan's power through His death and resurrection.

To the woman, part of God's judgment is that pain will accompany childbirth. Furthermore, the LORD God said to her: "Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16).²⁴ With the perfect harmony of marriage destroyed, competition and conflict now corrupt the husband and wife relationship. The painful effects of sin will be evident in her vocation as mother and wife.

God's judgment was also addressed to the man. The "ground" (*adamah*) from which Adam (*adam*) was taken is cursed. Only with difficulty will the ground cooperate, however hard he struggles to reap its produce. It will grow thorns and thistles so that by the sweat of his brow he will have to fight the ground until the day he physically dies. Adam's sin, as he was duly warned, would ultimately lead to physical death. Like a drumbeat, "and he died" becomes the repeated refrain in the history of Adam's descendants (see Gen 5). Tragically, the individual judgments imposed on the man and the woman, and the burdens they bore, affected them both by virtue of their one flesh union.

Against the dark backdrop of God's righteous judgment, the Genesis 3 narrative contains rays of light and hope for humanity's future. In addition to the first Gospel promise, God lovingly provides garments to cover their shame. Adam gives the woman an honorable name: Eve (which means in Hebrew, "the mother of all the living"). Whereas Adam is the origin of the human race, Eve is the mother of the human race. They will remain together as husband and wife, still able to have children. They will continue to know the joy of love, though now tempered by the brokenness of sin.

Salvation in Christ

Through Adam's rebellion sin and death entered into human history and spread to the whole human race (Rom 5:12). Yet from the very beginning the LORD God was intent on re-weaving His tapestry so that human relationships, including man-woman relationships, would reflect His original design. Already in the garden, the Lord promised that the woman's seed

²⁴ Two interpretations of Gen 3:16 are found in Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1987) 81-82: That she will physically desire her husband, even though he "rules her" (oppressively) or that she will desire to dominate her husband, but instead he will rule over her (compare Gen 4:7).

would crush the evil one's head. Faithful to this promise, He chose Abraham and promised that through him and his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3; 22:18; Gal 3:16-18). In Moses and the Prophets, God repeated His promise and showed forth His work of redemption throughout the history of ancient Israel.

The Incarnation

When "the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman" (Gal 4:4) to rescue human beings from their plight. The God of Israel entered into the history of Israel. The Second Person of the Trinity took to Himself our human nature and made it His own. Incredible as it sounds, the Creator of the human race became a member of the human race (John 1:14). He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. The Son of God became the true obedient Israel, the seed promised to Adam and Eve, and later to Abraham.²⁵ He became Israel's righteous messianic king, of the house and lineage of David.

The public ministry of Jesus

Baptized by John, Jesus of Nazareth entered His public ministry as Israel's messianic king. Through His Son's public ministry, God the Father inaugurated His end-time saving reign promised and foreshadowed centuries earlier. Now God's kingly reign was invading the world in the One whose name meant "Savior" of sinners (Matt 1:21). He lived up to His name. Jesus, at a very personal level, brought the kingdom of God to both men and women. He healed the sick—a man named Bartimaeus and Peter's mother-in-law. He raised the dead—Lazarus and Jairus' daughter. He drove out demons—from Mary Magdalene and a man blind and mute in a synagogue. He forgave sinners—a paralytic in Capernaum and a woman stigmatized as "sinful." He publicly conversed with and dined with sinners—a Samaritan woman and a tax collector named Levi. To assist in carrying out His ministry, Jesus called 12 men to be His disciples. Luke points out that a number of women also "were with him" and "provided for them out of their means" (8:1, 3).

The last Adam

Once again we see the warmth and engagement of a God who reaches down to love those whom He has made, but in a way no human mind can fully grasp. In the words of St. Paul, "Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom of God . . . how inscrutable his ways!" (Rom 11:33). The Word through whom the first Adam was made became the *Last Adam* Himself (1 Cor 15:45), the origin and representative of the new human race. He lived a perfectly obedient life so that He might reverse and undo the disobedience

²⁵ See the explanatory diagram in the CTCR's *The End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism*, 1989, 14 (online at: <http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/endtme-2.pdf>).

of the first Adam and his descendants. Just as sin and death came into the world through the first Adam, so through the Last Adam came righteousness before God and eternal life (Rom 5:12-21). Apart from Christ, no man or woman is righteous before God, because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). By His grace and because of Christ’s all-sufficient work, God has forgiven His wayward creatures—a gift which we personally receive through faith. As St. Paul expressed it in another place, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Cor 5:19).

Regenerated and renewed

Men and women, especially in their relationship to each other, desperately need the power of Christ’s rescue and restoration in their lives. Sin makes people “stuck” on themselves—often obsessively so. This ugly sickness has the potential to sap the life out of once healthy relationships and to tear people apart, sometimes irreparably. This bondage to the sinful self must be broken, and Christ alone can do it.

Through Holy Baptism, sinners are joined to Christ and His death and resurrection. “The old self” was crucified with Christ “so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (Rom 6:6). As a result we are now dead to sin and alive to God in Christ (Rom 6:11). By Baptism, God regenerates and renews us by His Spirit (Titus 3:5). We have been born anew by water and the Spirit (John 3:1-8). Everyone in Christ is a new creation. Baptism means death to practices that make love grow cold and undermine a trusting companionship. In the language describing the baptismal life, Paul writes to the Colossians:

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old man with its practices and have put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all (Col 3:9-11).

Through daily repentance, Christian men and women, whether single or married, whatever their place in life, become more like the One who created them.

Image of God

In the towering confession of Christ in Colossians 1:15-20, Paul speaks of the incarnate Son of God as the visible image or mirror of God the Father. To see Him is to see the Father (John 14:9). To see Him is also to see the image of what men and women are and will be in Christ. As the apostle reminds us, God is conforming us “to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom 8:29; cf. 2 Cor 3:18). Finally, on the last day Christ will come again in glory and “transform our lowly body to

be like his glorious body” (Phil 3:21). Baptism unites us with Christ through whom God restores His image in us. Through this precious treasure God also places us in His family of believers, with whom we are one in Christ:

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews and Greeks, slave and free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1Cor 12:12-13).

We are adopted children of God, with the same Brother and the same heavenly Father.²⁶

Reconciled to God and each other

The New Testament everywhere teaches that God has not only reconciled us to Himself but also to each other as baptized Christians. St. Paul calls the Gospel he proclaims the “message of reconciliation,” with specific reference to the relationship of Jew and Gentile. Christ has broken down the wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile “that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility” (Eph 2:15-16). Note Paul’s language: God has created “one new man.” The word “man” denotes humanity: one new human race, one huge new person. In this new humanity created by Christ, the old divisions between Jew and Gentile no longer separate.

The New Testament applies this reconciliation of Jew and Gentile also to male and female. Men and women in Christ are at peace with God and, therefore, with each other. They belong to Christ and are members of His one body, the church, “co-heirs of the grace of life” (1 Pet 3:7).

The apostle Paul presents this exalted vision of oneness in Christ that transcends human differences in his letter to the Galatians:

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise (Gal 3:23-29).

This paragraph is a tightly written unit of thought. Apart from Christ and faith, the Jews were held captive, enslaved to the law. Now that Christ and

²⁶ See Gal 4:5-7, Heb 2:11-17, and John 1:12-13.

faith have come, they are no longer under the law. “In Christ Jesus,” says Paul, “you are all sons of God, through faith.” All the Galatian Christians are now free as mature “sons of God.” This “sonship” is the same for everyone—both Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female. All who are baptized have “put on Christ,” like a new garment. Each man and woman has been given a new identity before God as a child of God clothed in Christ, the Son of God.

Paul makes his argument with mounting rhetorical force. He first insists that the old division between Jew and Gentile no longer counts in the Galatians’ position before God. He then states that the Greco-Roman division between slave and free no longer divides Christians before God. And to top it all, he proclaims that not even the created distinction between male and female determines their standing in God’s sight.

The apostle’s emphasis on the unity of the church is made crystal clear in this one little sentence: “You are all one in Christ Jesus.” This oneness is paradoxical, for it does not change our gender, stations in life, or ethnicity. Rather, our oneness in Christ influences how we are to live out these differences in life.



THIRD ARTICLE: GOD RENEWS MAN AND WOMAN

The Holy Spirit “calls, gathers, and enlightens the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.”

Luther’s Small Catechism

To the Christians at Ephesus, St. Paul wrote:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (4:1-3).

In the chapters that follow these words the apostle reveals, like new handiwork unfurled, how God by His Spirit forms the new life in Christ. We are God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,” says the apostle (Eph 2:10; cf. Ps 143:5, 10). In this creative work, God conforms us to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29), not on some abstract spiritual plane but in everyday earthly callings (e.g., as citizens, governing authorities, children, parents, employers and employees, and wives and husbands). Though seemingly mundane callings, they are the very places in daily life where God does his work in and through His sanctified people.

Jesus said, “You are the light of the world . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven” (Matt 5:14-16). Several New Testament epistles contain a “table of duties”²⁷ that unfolds what life “in the Lord”²⁸ looks like in our varied callings. The words “table” and “duties” may connote to some today a catalog of suffocating rules intended to stifle healthy relationships, not enrich them. To regard them this way would be to misunderstand seriously the content and intent of these scriptural sections. In them, God is actually inviting us to know and experience the restoration of His original creation through Christ, now made possible by the Holy Spirit’s power—including especially God’s creation of man and woman in their relationship to each other. When the pattern of life set forth in these instructive words forms us, we have the high privilege to “adorn [literally, ‘decorate’] the doctrine of God our Savior” (Titus 2:10) so that those outside the church may have “nothing evil to say” (Titus 2:8; cf. v. 5).

²⁷ The tables or, “household codes,” can be found in these passages: Eph 5:22-6:9; Col 3:18-4:5; 1 Tim 2:8-15; 6:1-10; Titus 2:1-10; 1 Pet 2:18-3:7.

²⁸ See the use of this phrase in the ethical sections of Paul epistles (e.g., Eph 5:8; 6:1; Phil 4:1-2; Col 3:17).

Restoring God's Design in Marriage and Family

Ephesians 5

From the earliest centuries of the Christian era, believers have looked to Ephesians 5 (and its parallel in Col 3:18-19) for the Christian perspective on man and woman in the marriage relationship, and rightly so. Nestled in this chapter is the most sustained and exalted discussion in the New Testament of God's design for Christian marriage which is intended to mirror the relationship between Christ and His church.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Eph 5:21-33 NIV)²⁹

In discussing the relationship between husbands and wives, the apostle begins by encouraging wives to submit themselves to their husbands. Paul introduces us here to a word that the New Testament writers use often to describe various human relationships—all of them God-pleasing. Here are some representative examples:

- Jesus submits to his earthly parents while growing up (Luke 2:51)

²⁹ The NIV is quoted for ease of reading. The ESV renders the verb “submit” as a participle in v. 21, which completes the previous sentence beginning at v. 18: “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

- Christians submit to political authorities (Rom 13:1,5; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13)
- The church submits to Christ (Eph 5:24)
- Servants submit to masters (Titus 2:9; 1 Pet 2:18)
- Younger men submit to elders in the church (1 Pet 5:5)
- The church submits to its faithful leaders (1 Cor 16:16).

In Ephesians 5:21, Paul encourages Christians to submit “to one another out of reverence for Christ.” The expression “to one another” can be interpreted in two different ways. It might mean “everyone to everyone.” In this case, every Christian should be willing to yield to every other Christian. As Paul says elsewhere, “in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Phil 2:3). Or the expression might mean “some to others as appropriate” (see also Gal 6:2; Luke 12:1; Rev 6:4). In this case, the expression would be applicable for wives to husbands, children to parents, and servants to masters. In either case, Paul’s encouragement in Ephesians 5:21 is addressed to Christian readers in general and does not set aside the specifics of the relationship between husband and wife that begins in Ephesians 5:22.³⁰

The original Greek verb for “submitting to” is appropriately translated “subject yourself to” another. The word (*hypotassō*) is a combination of the Greek preposition *hypo* (“under”) and the verb *tassō* (“to arrange”), signifying an ordered place or arrangement. Foreign to this good and common word in the Scriptures are negative thoughts of inferior human ability or worth, of lesser intelligence or competence. Still more foreign are ideas of oppressive bondage or coerced servitude—as if to make of someone a mere doormat or slave. Rather, viewed in its full biblical context, and particularly when it describes Christian conduct in life’s callings, the word signifies willingly yielding to the other, “an attitude of looking to another; of putting first the desires of another, of seeking another’s benefit.”³¹

The apostle adds that wives are to submit to their husbands “as to the Lord,” or as he puts it in Colossians, “as is fitting in the Lord” (Col 3:18). A Christian woman’s devotion to the Lord Jesus determines why and how she will relate in a God-pleasing way to the husband God has given to her. Such submission, however, must not be understood in the unqualified sense of subservience. All too frequently situations arise where wives, too, must “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29)—obedience requiring, for instance,

³⁰ Daniel B. Wallace suggests that Eph 5:21 acts as “a hinge” between 5:15-20 and 5:22-6:5, noting, “the participle [translated “submitting” ESV] belongs equally to both.” *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 650-651.

³¹ 1985 report of the CTCR on *Women in the Church*, 31. The call to “submission” in the NT indicates “that the general rule demands readiness to renounce one’s own will for the sake of others” and so it is an aspect of *agapē*. Gerhard Dellling, *hypotassō*, in Gerhard Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (hereafter TDNT) 8:45. See 27-28 below.

that they not endanger their own lives or their children because of a husband's violence.

Christ loves His bride, the church, with a self-sacrificial love, and because He is her Savior He presents her to Himself "brilliant in purity"³² (ESV, "in splendor"; v. 27). Just as the church gladly and wholeheartedly submits to and serves Jesus Christ her "head," so also the wife submits herself to her husband as her head. Hence, the church models *for her* the kind of relationship she seeks to have and enjoy with her husband. Depending on Jesus as her Lord and Savior, she is freed to regard her submission to her husband as an expression of willing devotion to Christ. Hers is a high and honorable calling, for when she subjects herself to her husband she reflects for others to see—in a way beyond our power to grasp fully (Eph 5:32)—how the church subjects herself to Christ.

The Apostle Paul calls the husband "the head" of the wife as Christ is "the head" of the church (Eph 5:23). It should be noted that the Greek term translated as "head" (*kephalé*), when used metaphorically, denotes the ruler or leader of another—not, as is sometimes claimed, a source (e.g., the head of a river) or a culminating point (e.g., bringing matters to a head).³³ For example, earlier in Ephesians Paul uses the term "head" to refer to Christ as the ascended Lord of all: "And he [God the Father] put all things under his feet and gave him [the risen and ascended Christ] as head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:22; see also Col 2:10). The analogy of Christ's relationship to the church as "head" implies that authority belongs to the husband's headship. When paired with "body," the term "head" denotes what leads the body (see also 1 Cor 12). The character and exercise of this authority, however, needs to be understood carefully. He is not to dominate, rule harshly, exploit, or embitter her life (Col 3:19). The strength of his love determines the husband's conduct as head of his wife. As Christ, the Head of the church cares for all the members of His body, so also the husband, as head, is to care for and value his wife as himself.

Paul's directive to wives to submit to their husbands is a challenging one. Just as challenging is Paul's directive to husbands: "love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25; see also Col 3:19). The word used for "love" here is the well-known Greek word *agapé*. Contrary to what one may expect, the command to show *agapé* is addressed here only to the husband. This *agapé* love denotes something much more profound than emotional or romantic love. A person does not "fall in" or

³² *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (hereafter BDAG), rev. and ed. by Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 332.

³³ For a detailed discussion of the semantic issues regarding *kephalé*, see Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 139-45.

“out of” this love (*agapê*). Distinctive to the character of this love—which mirrors the love of God—is that it is not motivated by the object of affection (cf. Deut 7:6-9; Rom 5:6-8). Rather, it is a self-sacrificial act of the will (Eph 5:28, “husbands *should* love their wives”), the nature of which Paul eloquently unfolds for all Christians in 1 Corinthians 13 (see also John 13:34-35).

Paul points to Christ as the most profound example of *agapê* love. Christ showed his love for the church by willingly giving himself up on the cross for her (Rom 5:6-9), despite her faults and blemishes. Indeed, He did this “so that he might present [her] to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be without blemish” (Eph 5:27). The Lord Jesus models *for the husband* the kind of relationship he seeks to have and enjoy with his wife. The husband gives himself in selfless commitment to his wife for her well-being and not for any personal gain. Such love nourishes and cherishes the person with whom he has been made one (Eph 5:29). In a word, he should love her just as Christ loved the church.

When a husband exercises his headship with *agapê* love after the example of Christ, he will do so as one “gentle and lowly in heart.” We recognize that Christ, as the head of the church, calls the church to follow Him. But unlike some of His contemporaries who laid burdens on others impossible to bear, Jesus is the kind of Lord or Leader whose “yoke” is easy and light. We remember well His words: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Mt 11:29). Christians therefore sing, “Christ be my leader by night and by day, Safe through the darkness, for He is the way. Gladly I follow, my future His care, Darkness is daylight when Jesus is there.”³⁴

Paul goes on to say that the husband should love his wife as his own body, just as Christ loves the church as His own body. Paul even says, by quoting Gen 2:24, that Christ and the church become one flesh. In like manner, by loving his wife, the husband loves himself, his own flesh. Paul then concludes: “let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Eph 5:33).

1 Corinthians 7

The “one flesh” unity receives tangible expression in the sexual relationship of husband and wife, a subject Paul expressly treats in 1 Corinthians 7. Although the apostle seems to be addressing problems not in every respect like ours today,³⁵ his counsel remains as pertinent as ever:

But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own

³⁴ *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 861.

³⁵ Paul’s response to the Corinthian slogan “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman” (1 Cor 7:1) suggests that some of the Corinthians may have been influenced by a Platonic soul-body dualism that disparaged the body and encouraged asceticism.

husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Cor 7:2-5).

In the backdrop of this advice lies Paul's deep concern about the sexual immorality taking place among the Corinthians—sexual crudities of a kind “not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife” (1 Cor 5:1). Some men consorted with prostitutes and, what was even worse, regarded their conduct as morally of no consequence. They claimed to be Christians but acted as if the human body is unimportant—as if to say that what you do with your own body is your own business. Some most likely said that the Christian life is, after all, about the inner soul, not the body. Others, no doubt, argued that when it comes right down to it, the body is spiritually irrelevant. Paul's response to such conduct was sharp and to the point:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute. Never!... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1Cor 6:15, 19-20).

Through the benefits of Christ's redemptive work given in Holy Baptism, the physical body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. Because we are now owned by God, we are called to glorify Him in our body. This is the godly response to the twisted temptations of Satan, such as pornography, foul language, marital infidelity, and sexual immorality. In keeping with God's original design, and with His help, Christian men and women in mutual love and respect seek to honor Him by regarding each other *as persons* whose bodies have been created and redeemed by Him.³⁶

1 Peter 3

God intends that the lives of Christian men and women in their relationship to each other will become to their neighbors and friends a vivid testimony to the transformative power of the Gospel of His dear Son. As the maker of a tapestry yearns for more than merely “a private showing,”

³⁶ See *Human Sexuality*, 14-17.

God desires that the new life He has created in us be displayed for others to see. Echoing the words of Jesus (Matt 5:16), Peter writes: “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:12). In this context of witness and mission to the world, Peter talks about the potential for a loving Christian marriage to reveal the love of Christ and the church, and so submits his “table of duties.” The section speaking about husbands and wives must especially have come like an encouraging breath of fresh air to the early Christians, who evidently were suffering public ridicule from pagan critics:

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives—when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening (1 Pet 3:1-6).

Like Paul, Peter urges wives to submit to their husbands, even those who are not Christians. Textured with the imperishable threads of a quiet and gentle spirit, the respectful submission of wives to their unbelieving husbands has the potential of drawing them to the Lord. Peter lifts up the matriarch Sarah to illustrate how a wife’s respectful relationship to her husband is an adornment highly pleasing to God. In sharp contrast to outward displays of self-importance, a wife’s holy conduct becomes a model of the new life into which all Christians have been baptized.

Husbands, too, receive a strong exhortation from Peter:

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel,³⁷ since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered (1 Pet 3:7).

Whereas Paul emphasized that husbands are to *love* their wives, Peter now calls on them to *honor* their wives and asks each of them to regard his wife “as a fellow heir of the grace of life.” To neglect honoring and respecting his

³⁷ “The weaker vessel” here probably signifies the general gender difference of physical strength, not that women are “weaker” in other ways (e.g., intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, etc.).

wife can imperil the husband's relationship to the Lord. As fellow heirs of "the grace of life," their marriage will surely be strengthened as they deepen their relationship with God through worship and prayer.

In his Large Catechism Luther said of the relation of children to their parents: "Not only has [God] commanded us to love parents but to honor them...it is a much higher thing to honor than to love. Honor includes not only love, but also deference, humility, and modesty directed (so to speak) toward a majesty concealed within them"(LC I, 105-106). Surely, what Luther said of children can also be said of husbands toward their wives. Husbands are to honor them, for they, too, as a dear spouse have "a majesty concealed within."

In every way husbands are to relate to their wives as fellow Christians who have received eternal life through God's undeserved favor revealed in Jesus their Savior. This means that each man must be kind and considerate toward his wife. In an age when women are often exploited and abused under the strength of men, both physically, mentally, and spiritually, Christian husbands are called to bear witness in word and action to the redeeming and restorative power of Jesus Christ. As they bestow both love and honor on their "fellow heir of the grace of life," God's tapestry is unfurled for display.

Reflecting God's Design in the Church

1 Corinthians 11

When St. Paul heard of a series of problems in the congregation that he founded in Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 1:11), he wrote the Christian men and women there a letter to help them understand and reflect God's design for their life together in Christ. He loved them dearly (2 Cor 2:4) and for this reason was concerned about unsettling trends there. One such development was revealed in their gatherings for worship: a discrepancy between God's created design for men and women in marriage and the way they related to each other in public worship. Paul expresses his concern like this:

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. For man was

not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God (1 Cor 11:3-12).

In a context of commendation (see 1 Cor 11:2), Paul expresses his desire that the Corinthians understand this: that even in the sacred time of worship when Christians engage in activities enlivened and empowered by the Holy Spirit, they are to honor the created distinction between husband and wife.

The individual strands of Paul's good counsel above fit into a *general pattern* given to us by God: "...the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." At a first glance, we may think that Paul is lining up some kind of power structure, an organizational chart with God at the top, woman at the bottom, and man as Christ's co-mediator in the middle. This hierarchical understanding of "headship"—a superior over an inferior—will not mesh with God's design, for even Christ has a head. Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Son, willingly submitted Himself to God his Father for the sake of His body the church. As Martin Franzmann explained, "Christ is 'subordinated' as the freely obeying, loving Son who seeks the glory of His Father..."³⁸ The relationship between God the Father and Christ demonstrates that submission to a head must not be seen as something servile or degrading but as a calling to willing and joyful service (Heb. 12:2; 1 Cor 15:28). It also reveals that the position of headship does not justify treating a person in a demeaning or oppressive manner.

What prompted Paul's discussion was a very practical issue. Like men, women in worship were being led by the Spirit to pray and prophesy.³⁹ Some in the congregation evidently reached the conclusion that in worship it was no longer important for them to reflect the Creator's original design that the husband serve as head of his wife, and that she serve in respectful submission to her husband. It is possible that some women were trying to make a statement by deliberately removing their veil when praying and prophesying (see the reference to "contentiousness" in 1 Cor 11:16).

In ancient cultures, as in varying degrees also today, customs of dress and public conduct were powerful indicators of inner attitudes and convictions (note the term "custom" in 1 Cor 11:16). Manners mattered. Recent

³⁸ Martin H. Franzmann, *Concordia Bible with Notes* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 309.

³⁹ After all, the prophet Joel had announced this very thing (Joel 2:28-29). Paul refused to quench the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19-21). As he says a little later to the Corinthians, "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13).

studies have shown that the veiling of women in Greco-Roman culture signified marital status, modesty, and chastity.⁴⁰ Today this practice has no such meaning in most western societies. Paul's response to behavior in Corinthian worship assemblies indicates that manners do indeed matter, but not merely for propriety's sake. In the context of the time-bound custom of headcoverings reflecting marital status and chastity, Paul articulates the timeless truth that a Christian wife is to show respect for the authority of her husband.⁴¹ Here Paul's counsel rests on God's design in creation for the relationship of husbands and wives, not on human custom and practice of the day. God desires that Christian behavior in worship would uphold the created design rather than subvert it. The Creator's design, presented in Genesis 1 and 2, is reiterated by Paul:

For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head (1 Cor 11:7-10)

Paul seeks to raise the sights of both husbands and wives to God's tapestry designed for their good and His praise. Redeemed by Christ, Christian men and women share equally in the hope of glory (Rom 5:2; 2 Thess 2:14). Created by God, they are distinguished from one another. Created as "the image and glory of God," the man testified of his loving headship by respectfully not covering his head or wearing long hair, both of which were cultural signifiers.⁴² Created as "the glory of man,"⁴³ the woman testified of her loving submission to her husband by wearing a veil.⁴⁴ The distinctive

⁴⁰ See, e.g., the work of Bruce Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 77-96 (esp. footnote 1 and its listing of newly published studies). See also Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 121-41.

⁴¹ For example, justification was expounded in Galatians in the context of the debate over circumcision. See James W. Voelz's discussion of culture-bound assertions with temporary authority versus underlying theological concerns with enduring authority. See *What Does This Mean?* (St. Louis: CPH, 1995), 436-37.

⁴² Bruce Winter writes, for example: "The adult male inhabitants of Roman Corinth did not wear their hair long, for to do so indicated their denial of their masculinity—they were parading as homosexuals" (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 132).

⁴³ Woman was taken out of man and was created for man, to answer his aloneness and be a helper fit for him. She therefore exists as a testimony that brings "glory" and honor to the man. Paul does not say that woman is the "image" of the man, since that would not be true. She is not a mirror image or replica of the man. Neither does Paul deny that woman was also created in the image of God (see Gen 1:26 and 5:1-2; cf. "God creates man and woman" above, 8ff.).

⁴⁴ In 1 Cor 11:10, the ESV translates the Greek word *exousia* (literally, "authority") with "symbol of authority." BDAG (353) points out that various opinions are held regarding the meaning of the term. Some think Paul chose the term for the veil because it meant

purpose and origin of each justified neither masculine suppression nor feminine rebellion, but served as testimony to the beauty of their intended relationship.

Mutual gratitude and thankful recognition of their interdependence in marriage mark the new perspective in Christ:

Nevertheless, *in the Lord* woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. (1 Cor 11:11-12)

In the Lord, Christians affirm that the interdependence of men and women in marriage does not erase the uniqueness of each. Nor does the uniqueness of each erase their interdependence. In His creative excellence, God has richly bestowed on both men and women His gifts which they are called to use in ways that each one is uniquely able to do.

1 Corinthians 14

After Paul's poem exalting the beauty of genuine, godly love in 1 Corinthians 13, he addresses practical ways to "pursue" such love (1 Cor 14:1). Chapter 14 shows that when love is the "aim" (RSV), the Church is clearly proclaiming the Word of God's love without disorder or confusion. Language which is not understood fails the test of love because it does not build up the church, nor does it enhance Gospel outreach (1 Cor 14:1-25, esp. 14:12, 23-25). Disorderly, confusing speech and practices are also inconsistent with the God of peace (1 Cor 14:26-33a).

Lastly, Paul discourages confusion in the relationship of men and women in public worship. Paul writes:

As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? (1 Cor 14:33-36)⁴⁵

figuratively "means of exercising power." Others think that as a term for the veil it conveyed the sense "symbol of womanly dignity." Whatever the term's precise meaning, the custom of wearing of the veil in that time and culture was an appropriate way of signifying the created relationship of wife to husband.

⁴⁵ We have discussed this text in earlier documents; e.g., see *Women in the Church* (32-33). See also note 1.

In many ways the church at Corinth was Paul's "wayward child,"⁴⁶ engaging in practices that departed from his teaching and from church-wide practice. With a pastoral heart, he again takes up a sensitive matter having to do with conduct in public worship assemblies. Paul says, "[Women] are not permitted to speak but should be in submission." This is a challenging passage which is understood in various ways among Christians. The LCMS has consistently understood that the verb "to speak" means "to speak with the church's authority."⁴⁷ The issue was women stepping forward to engage in official proclamation (preaching) before the assembly.⁴⁸ This Paul does not permit, and for reasons not merely of custom or even good order. He regards such conduct as inconsistent with the Word of God and its teaching regarding man/woman relationships (1 Cor 14:34, 36) as well as inconsistent with the pursuit of godly love. It is loveless for men to abdicate the responsibility of leadership in the public ministry of Gospel proclamation and for that responsibility to be usurped by women.

The chapter which begins with the words, "Pursue love," closes with the appeal, "All things should be done decently and in order" (1 Cor 14:40). Bracketed this way, the chapter reminds us that good order and the mutuality of Christian love are woven together in a congregation blessed by God.

1 Timothy 2

Not only in Corinth, but elsewhere in the early churches founded by the apostles the relationship of man and woman was an issue of importance. For example, some people wanted "to forbid marriage," apparently advocating some form of enforced asceticism (1 Tim 4:3). Consequently, the matter of proper male-female relationships merited specific apostolic instruction. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul devotes one whole chapter to instructions intended for "the household of God, the church of the living God," and therefore these instructions are not limited to only that time or place (1 Tim 3:14-15; cf. "in every place" in 1 Tim 2:8).

⁴⁶ Franzmann, 288. Paul's rhetorical question in v. 36 suggests the congregation's excesses contained an element of defiance or thumbing its nose at the broader church.

⁴⁷ Concerning "to speak" in 1 Cor 14:34, see *Women in the Church*, 32-33. Also, Henry P. Hamann states: "*Lalein* ["to speak"] is not really contrasted with the idea of order. The contrast in the Greek sentence marked by the *ou gar . . . alla* ["for not . . . but"] sets in opposition *lalein* and *hypotassesthōsan*, speaking and being subordinate. A speaking is involved which is the opposite of being subordinate, speaking with authority, teaching, preaching with the implicit demand for obedience." Henry P. Hamann, "The New Testament and the Ordination of Women," in *Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective*, Second Edition, ed. Matthew C. Harrison and John T. Pless (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 17-18.

⁴⁸ The verb "to speak," as Paul uses it here and in many other places, designates official proclamation to a group (Rom 15:18; 1 Cor 2:6-7; 2 Cor 12:19; Eph 6:20; Phil 1:14; Col 4:3-4; 1 Thess 2:2, 4, 16; Titus 2:1, 15). As Paul's counsel elsewhere shows, however, Paul does not command the absolute silence of women in public worship assemblies (e.g., 1 Cor 11:4-6; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). See also 44-46 below and also *Women in the Church*, 33.

Once again for Paul, conduct and demeanor distinctive to the daily life of men and women in whom Christ lives will also be reflected in their public worship life. In this regard Paul advises Timothy to teach:

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; likewise also the women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works (1 Tim 2:8-10).

Paul underscores the spiritual leadership role that men have in both home and church. Both male and female are called to fight against their sinful natures. Men, too often inclined towards violence and discord, are instead to lift their “holy hands”—which represent the whole sanctified life—to God in prayer.⁴⁹ Women, too often inclined to emphasize physical, external adornment of their bodies, are commanded to show forth the beauty of good works. Evidently, such instruction was a regular part of apostolic tradition taught also by others (see 1 Pet 3:2-6).

Paul thought it necessary to address another aspect of public worship, this time with Genesis 2-3 as the basis for his instruction:

Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through child-bearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control (1 Tim 2:11-15).

Such instruction may sound offensive to some modern ears, reflecting attitudes demeaning and dismissive of women. Surely we can trust that Paul, “a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth” (2:7), seeks by this biblical word to honor God and adorn the church’s life with what pleases Him. With reverence, we are invited to give Paul a patient and understanding ear.

The Scriptures presuppose that all Christians, men and women, are to be students of the Word of God. In 1 Timothy 2:11-15, Paul is addressing a more specific situation. Within the church’s public worship service, says Paul, women are to learn God’s Word “quietly with all submissiveness.” An individual woman is not subject to every man in the church. Like every other believer, she is to place herself willingly under the authority of the

⁴⁹ For an example of the wrong use of one’s “hands,” see what Paul says about his former life in 1 Tim 1:12-15.

Word of God as it is believed, taught, and confessed in the church.⁵⁰

Paired with a woman learning with all submissiveness is the prohibition that woman may not “teach” or “exercise authority” over man. In the Pastoral Epistles, the term “teach” (Gk: *didaskō*) has a technical sense denoting public and authoritative transmission of scriptural and apostolic teaching. It is the kind of teaching done by Paul (1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11), Timothy (1 Tim 4:11, 13; 6:2; 2 Tim 4:2), Titus (Titus 2:1), and the overseers and elders (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17; 2 Tim 2:2, 24; Titus 1:9). Concerning the exercise of authority, that is, the *spiritual* authority of the church as established by God (AC XXVIII),⁵¹ the entire church possesses the Office of the Keys from God, but only certain men (i.e., pastors) may publicly exercise it on behalf of the entire church. Women are not to exercise the unique authority of the pastoral office. Only men may be pastors and hold other church offices that are charged with assisting the pastor in carrying out his pastoral authority.⁵²

Men and women together thus give honorable witness to the Creator who made them for each other in the beginning. Paul does not base his instruction on a false notion of intellectual inferiority or mere accommodation to time-bound cultural norms. He grounds his instruction on the original creation and fall recorded in Genesis 2-3: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” The very sequence of the original creation of Adam and Eve indicates the creator’s will. To this Paul adds an example to avoid. Listening to Satan rather than the Word of God, Eve instead gave in to the serpent’s deception (see 2 Cor 11:3) and became a transgressor.

Nothing here, however, implies that women bear a greater guilt before God or are more easily deceived than men, an erroneous deduction made by some of Paul’s contemporaries in Judaism and by many in the Christian tradition. On the contrary, Adam, who was not deceived by the serpent, willfully disobeyed the Word of God. Paul attributes the entry of sin into the world to Adam (Rom 5:12-21). Furthermore, Paul’s sternest and most explicit warnings in the pastoral letters are against false teachers who are male, not female (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17-18; 3:5-9).

⁵⁰ While the (male) pastor exercises the responsibility to teach and preach the Word of God, a woman is not subject to him as a man (his individual authority), but only to the authority of the Word of God as he rightly proclaims it. See C.F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry* (St. Louis: CPH, 1987), Thesis 9.

⁵¹ The Greek word, occurring only here in the NT, is *authentēin*. See the CTCR’s report on this word at <http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/041505%20AUTHENTEIN%20FULL%20TEXT.doc>. Recent research has shown that the most defensible translation of the term is “to exercise authority over.”

⁵² See previous CTCR reports, *Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice* (1985), *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* (1994), *The Service of Women in Congregational Offices of Executive Director/President or Assistant Executive Director/Vice-President* (2004), and *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices with Guidelines for Congregations* (2005), all online at www.lcms.org/ctcr.

Far from denigrating woman, Paul goes on to speak of her high calling. With a possible allusion to Eve as “the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20),⁵³ the apostle says “she will be saved through child-bearing” (1 Tim 2:15). Here he affirms the vocation of motherhood as God-pleasing within the new creation. “Through child-bearing” here should not be understood as “the means of salvation but as an important God-ordained role of women established in creation that is not set aside through redemption.”⁵⁴ Paul commends marriage and motherhood later in this epistle (1 Tim 5:10, 14), even though marriage was disparaged by some (1 Tim 4:3). Motherhood is a wonderful way through which God continues to act as our Creator and bestows on women a unique honor.⁵⁵ As the Lutheran Confessions remind us in their commentary on this verse (1 Tim 2:15), “Thus the duties of a woman please God on account of faith, and a believing woman who faithfully serves in these duties of her calling is saved” (Ap XXIII, 32).

In conclusion, the English Standard Version appropriately gives 1 Timothy 2 the section title “Prayer for All People.” At the outset Paul makes known his overwhelming desire that the church—men and women—pray for all people, “that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Tim 2:2). This is pleasing to “God our Savior who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all . . .” (1 Tim 2:3-6). The Apostle’s instructions are given so that the church will adorn its public life with godliness and dignity, and the Gospel of God’s Son will be preached and believed without hindrance.

Summary Reflections on Man and Woman in the Bible

We have considered key scriptural texts that speak to the man-woman relationship using the framework of the creeds, which confess the creating, redeeming, and sanctifying work of the Holy Trinity. The Triune God makes humanity in His image. He makes a single humanity composed of many very different persons, originating in the first man and first woman.

⁵³ As some exegetes, ancient and modern, have pointed out, Paul may also be alluding to Gen 3:15. That is, the woman’s Seed will win salvation for both men and women.

⁵⁴ Charles A. Gieschen, “Ordained Proclaimers or Quiet Learners? Women in Worship in Light of 1 Timothy 2,” in *Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective*, Second Edition, ed. Matthew C. Harrison and John T. Pless (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 86. Paul makes it clear that salvation is through “faith” and not “child-bearing” by mentioning “faith and love” (1 Tim 2:15).

⁵⁵ What is said here about a mother’s calling does not imply that childless or unmarried women cannot be saved or occupy a place in life less pleasing to God. See *Human Sexuality* regarding the single state, 8-9, and with regard to childlessness, 18-20.

Humanity (the tapestry) is personally created in God's likeness, reflecting Him as His beloved companions, relating and responsible to Him, given a dominion to exercise rightly from the One who holds all dominion. Humanity is personally created as male or female. This is a gift, not a choice, so that we might "be fruitful and multiply." The very act of the first creation of man and woman shows the intention God has for His individual persons to dwell in community with one another. Thus the tapestry's pattern is clearly seen—different persons interwoven together into the whole, beautifying and strengthening the other. This is true for the marriage God gives. This wholeness and harmony are also what God intends to be true for all humanity.

The Triune God redeems humanity despite our fall into sin and separation from Him and from one another. What is true for our first parents is true for us all. In sin, we add to and subtract from God's Word, losing it as we seek to "improve" it, and—more importantly—losing the One Whom we no longer hear or heed. The fall from Him is the fall from life, the loss of the eternal life He intends, and the demise of the life even now which would meet our deepest needs. So it is that even the two who are one flesh tear apart from one another: she is deceived by the Tempter's lies to forget the Word of God which was intended to bless her and her husband; he blames God and also attacks the one who is, in effect, his own body.

The destruction is so complete that only a new Adam, a new Man, can repair it. He comes in the person of Christ, the person of the Word made flesh. He takes on our human flesh to restore the torn flesh that is reflected in the violent and destructive ways God's persons-made-for-community treat one another. This is true not only in wars with "the enemy and stranger," but even in violence and hate between the two-person unity of man and woman. It is His flesh—the flesh that is torn, suffers, and dies—which, in stunning paradox, heals the torn flesh and tapestry of humanity. So also, it is only by such forgiving, selfless, submissive love, that man and woman find their personhood and their community with one another fully and graciously restored, in marriage and in every relationship made whole by Christ.

That restoration begins as the worn and dirty tapestry of humanity is washed, sanctified, and renewed in the waters of Baptism. By the power of Word and Spirit, male and female persons become fully the persons God intended. Beginning here and completed in the resurrection, embodied males and females find that we have been made living stones and holy priests. Whatever our place in life, we have new dignity, and in every place in life it shows its effects. Man and woman now find God's original earthly intentions to be more beautiful than our wildest dreams, for we come to know the goodness of serving one another according to who we are as persons, united in the community Christ creates, whether in the home or the church. Submitting to one another, we also submit always to Christ and so accept in faith the particular responsibilities He gives to us here and now, as

father or mother, husband or wife, brother or sister, employer or employee, citizen or governor, pastor or parishioner. Structure becomes wholesome, not hierarchical in any power-grabbing sense. Order remains, but people are newly transformed in the way of Christ's holiness. Such is the transformation reflected in the tapestry that God is weaving in His people. This is what the Bible says of the embodied persons—male and female—whom God has made and longs to redeem and renew.

In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis observes that God became human not simply to improve His human creatures, but to produce something new—creatures who are His very sons and daughters. “It is not like teaching a horse to jump better and better but like turning a horse into a winged creature.” Christ’s work, says Lewis, is “not mere improvement but Transformation.”⁵⁶ In the language of the Apostle Paul, God’s sons and daughters in Christ are not upgraded versions of the old: “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God...” (2 Cor 5:17-18a). “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 2:4-5). The new life we live as men and women has its source in Christ Jesus. May He conform our relationships to the Creator’s tapestry.



⁵⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 167, 169.

MAN AND WOMAN IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Scriptural Affirmations and Implications

The goodness of man and woman: individuality in community

At the end of the sixth day, Genesis 1:31 declares that all God had made was “very good.” The very good stands apart after five days of creation had been declared “good.” God pronounces His creation of man and woman on the sixth day “very good,” for they perfectly reflected His very image. Despite the subsequent fall into sin and the total loss of our “likeness to God” with respect to righteousness, holiness and purity, it is still true that creation—humanity included—is judged to be “good” in some sense. Fallen man and woman are “good” not because we are in any way righteous, but because we reflect God in other ways specific to human nature. Both Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 refer to the image or likeness of God, even in fallen humanity, and so condemn the taking of human life and any cursing of human beings. From this comes an understanding reflected both in early orthodox teachers and our Lutheran Confessions:

- That human righteousness has been totally lost after Adam, so also the image of God’s righteousness in all people is lost and must be restored by new birth.
- That in terms of natural abilities (for example, reason, intellect, speech, and physical abilities that distinguish man from the rest of creation) the image of God continues, although marred, deformed, and debilitated by sin.⁵⁷

One more aspect of goodness from the image and likeness of God is still clearly reflected in humanity, despite our fallen nature. Man is created not merely as the male, Adam, but as “male and female.” Genesis 1:26-27 makes reference to humanity both in the singular, “man” and “him,” and in the plural, “male and female,” “them.” Both in our individuality (or “personhood”) and relationships, particularly the relationship of male and female, essential aspects of the goodness of God’s creation of humanity are revealed.

⁵⁷ See footnote 10 above. Franz Pieper refers to orthodox theologians employing a wider and proper sense of the image of God, with the wider sense continuing after the Fall, although he prefers only a narrow usage. *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 1 (St. Louis: CPH, 1950), 518. Ep. VI, 2 offers creation in God’s image as cause for the law written on the human heart, something that continues after the Fall. Luther also preferred a more constricted use of image, but was unwilling to condemn Augustine’s contention that the image of God, more broadly conceived, continues after the Fall. “Lectures on Genesis,” AE 1:60.

Individual personhood, therefore, must be distinguished from the fullness of *humanity*. Every individual is fully human, but an individual alone cannot express the fullness of humanity. St. Augustine argued for peace and unity in society in the remembrance that all men were created from one man, and “this fact should teach mankind to preserve a harmonious unity in plurality.”⁵⁸ Or, as C. S. Lewis put it: “Jointly the two become fully human. ‘In the image of God created he *them*.’ Thus, by a paradox, this carnival of sexuality leads us out beyond our sexes.”⁵⁹

Our creation as male and female therefore tells us that “We are created not for life in isolation but for community, a community which binds those who are different.”⁶⁰ God’s “very good” work of human creation continues to be seen in this beautiful fact that from the beginning, we are made not to stand alone, but together. As individuals, we were made not to be isolated tangled threads, but to be part of a divine tapestry reflecting His beautiful design.

This determines how Christians understand human personhood. In contemporary society personhood is often understood autonomously, in isolation from relationship. “I am my own person,” is our declaration, by which we intend to assert a measure of independence from accountability to others. Such a perspective does not acknowledge that individual identity is thoroughly connected to relationships. Especially within marriage, but also in our other relationships, to make autonomous personhood the ideal is dangerous.⁶¹ To the contrary, our creation as male and female shows that while each individual is unique and fully human, personhood is not distinct from, but dependent upon relationships. I am not some autonomous person against the world—I am a person who is always united in relationship to other persons as son or daughter, father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister, coworker, friend. I am not and cannot be a human person apart from my relationships. Individuality cannot be separated from community.

The procreative paradigm

The human individuality-community connection is clearest with respect to our nature as male and female. In the unique combination of male and female persons there is a completed humanity which is able to procreate and pass on the image of God (albeit in a marred and corrupted sense). Moreover, in our male and female uniqueness, humanity exhibits two very different types of individual personhood which are able to live with one another in a community that is enriched, not diminished, by our differences.

⁵⁸ *City of God*, Book 12, 27.

⁵⁹ See also C.S. Lewis: *A Grief Observed* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), 40ff., quoted in Gilbert Meilaender, *Things that Count* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 1999), 57.

⁶⁰ *Human Sexuality*, 7.

⁶¹ See below, pages 46-48.

"[T]he fellowship for which we are created is a fellowship of those who are different and who yet are joined in a personal community of love."⁶²

If we are to draw implications from creation as male and female for a proper understanding of the complementarity of human individuality and community, we are compelled by Scripture's story to highlight marriage, as this document does. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen 2:24 NIV). Both our Lord Jesus and His apostle Paul draw the proper understanding of marriage from Genesis 2:24. Marriage requires a loosing of the bond with father and mother for the sake of a new bond: the faithful union of man and woman which culminates in their becoming one flesh. From this text, Jesus identifies divorce as a sign of sin in its failure to observe that what God has joined, man must not separate (Matthew 19:1-9). From it, Paul insists that husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies since the two are one flesh (Eph 5:29-31). When God blesses a marriage with the birth of a child, the child is in every sense the "one flesh" of his or her mother and father. There, in the little child, we see the most obvious earthly result of the goodness of individuality in community.

Implications beyond the paradigm

The goodness of individuality in community goes beyond procreative marriage itself. A childless couple is also able to exhibit, richly and beautifully, the blessings and goodness of individuality in community. Every marital union of faithful, committed love will make known God's intention that all individuals are called into community. Godly marriage takes us beyond our individual identities, so that we give ourselves to another. Indeed, the childless couple may more easily model a life of service to others than couples whose commitment to their children makes it more difficult to engage in generous love toward the wider communities of church and society.⁶³

Similarly, the single person, who lives respectfully and honorably in relationship with the other sex as "brother or sister," also reflects the goodness of individuality and community. Our Lord commends the chaste single life as a blessing "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 19:10-12) and He Himself models it. St. Paul also both commends and models single chastity (see 1 Cor 7:8, 32-35) as a means to free an individual to please the Lord without distraction. Consider the difference between these biblical perspectives toward singleness and the prevalent perspectives of a sinful world. Singleness in our society is frequently viewed as an opportunity to live "for myself" without responsibility toward others (sexual or otherwise) or as a mark of personal failure for not having attracted someone. God's

⁶² *Human Sexuality*, 7.

⁶³ *Human Sexuality*, 18-19.

Word views singleness as an opportunity and calling for service to Him and His world.

What is clear is that individuals, whether male or female, married or single, are called to exercise their individual spiritual gifts in a way that pleases God and benefits others (1 Cor 12:7, 27; 1 Pet 4:10). Similarly, they are freed and empowered by God's grace to exercise their individual responsibilities in daily life in church, employment, and society in ways that benefit the whole (Eph 6:1-9; Col 3:22-4:1; 1 Pet 2:13-22).

All this is indeed true of every individual Christian and must not be minimized, but neither should we ignore specific responsibilities God has given us as male and female. Older men and women should be treated as fathers and mothers, respectively. Younger men and women should treat one another as brothers and sisters—all of which is done in sexual purity (1 Tim 5:1-2). Christian individuals will approach their everyday life with an understanding that God's Word addresses what human experience recognizes as typical masculine and feminine traits. So men will take seriously the biblical counsel not to neglect prayer and to discipline their tendency toward anger and competitiveness. Women will not ignore the warning to avoid dress and conduct that are immodest or irreverent (1 Tim 2:8-10).⁶⁴ Notice that, in such ways, sexual identity remains intact, but it is disciplined by Christian morality and responsibility.

Disrespect toward individual identity

When individuality in the context of community is not rightly understood or practiced, one or the other suffers. A single-minded pursuit of community—ecclesial, marital, societal, or otherwise—will minimize the individual person and his or her needs, gifts, and abilities. In the name of marriage, frequently the wife's individuality has been stifled as her needs are ignored and her potential gifts to marriage, family, and wider society are scorned or unappreciated. The same is true in the church, where institutional concerns can overwhelm and undermine individual needs and gifts. In particular, our Synod, in keeping with Scripture and historical church practice, rightly does not ordain women to the office of the ministry. At the same time, some within our Synod have wrongly ignored, minimized, and devalued the gifts and talents of women. Women who have lectured on various topics such as abortion, teaching techniques, or theological issues have sometimes been vilified as violating "the order of creation" and refusing to accept their "proper place." The rights and responsibilities of women—as full members of the priesthood of believers—to serve God in various earthly vocations, not just the family, have been ignored or implicitly denied. There is a legitimate frustration that women's theological questions, concerns,

⁶⁴ This does not suggest that these temptations are exclusive to one sex and unknown to the other.

and insights have sometimes been treated disrespectfully or as illegitimate. Right practice with respect to ordination to the pastoral office does not legitimize or excuse wrong or abusive practices elsewhere.

The Bible's clear direction regarding responsible male leadership in the home and male ordination to pastoral ministry may not be assumed to mean that only men can exercise any kind of leadership or authority in home, church, or society. Some view this as an inconsistency, but it is not. In Baptism every believer is called to service in his or her vocations within the various spheres of life. The body of Christ requires that its individual members exercise the wide variety of their gifts, whether that individual is male or female (1 Cor 12:7). Therefore our church has affirmed the calling of women teachers, deaconesses, professors, and missionaries. We have endorsed such organizations as the Lutheran Women's Missionary League and the Women's Leadership Institute. We have affirmed the freedom of congregations to grant women's suffrage and have opened to women various lay leadership positions in congregations, districts, and Synod. We have recognized and encouraged the leadership of women in business, government, the professions, and other sectors of society.⁶⁵

Such leadership of women is not inconsistent with Scriptural teaching. On the contrary, it exists in the very context of our church's life and teaching which upholds and promulgates the divinely ordered responsibility of pastors and husbands. When women serve in this way they are enhancing the work of the priesthood of all believers, serving as members of the body of Christ, and not usurping pastoral authority or violating the "order of creation." Scripture provides numerous examples of such service, for instance Priscilla's instruction of Apollos (Acts 18:26) or the teaching Timothy received from his mother and grandmother (2 Tim 1:5).

This also helps to address the circumstance of single women in the church.⁶⁶ Paul's advice to wives which urges them to endorse and encourage their husband's spiritual responsibility obviously does not apply to unmarried women (1 Cor 14:35). However, single women are encouraged to seek spiritual counsel from their pastor or those who assist him in ministry. Moreover, a single woman, like a single man, is reminded by the Word of God that she has a special opportunity for service to Christ (see 1 Cor 7:32-35). The church ought not place unbiblical restrictions on those whom God has uniquely enabled to provide "undivided devotion to the Lord" (1 Cor 7:35). Even as Paul joyfully commended numerous women for their work in the Lord among the Christians of Rome (see Rom 16:3-16), so today the God-

⁶⁵ See 1969 Res. 2-17; 1986 Res. 3-09; 2004 Res. 3-08A and *Women in the Church*, 44-47; and *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices with Guidelines for Congregations*.

⁶⁶ The circumstance of a Christian woman married to an unbelieving or unchurched man is similar to that of a single woman with respect to the concerns of this paragraph.

given individual gifts and talents of women are a blessing for the church to celebrate and utilize.

The breakdown of community in the name of individualism

The gifts of the Holy Spirit given to individuals, both male and female, are intended for service to God and His church. The tapestry of a Christian marriage provides living witness to the intention of God for men and women to complement one another in service to Him and His people. As a couple lives in chaste, life-long fidelity and love, exercising their individual gifts and responsibilities in complementary ways, forgiving one another and maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, a tapestry of the beautiful marriage of Christ with His Church is portrayed (see Eph 4:3; 5:21ff.). Thus, a Christian marriage becomes a living witness and testimony to the love of Christ and His bride, the church.

Sadly, unrestrained individualism is a very real danger to God's beautiful tapestry of marriage. Statistics become dated as soon as they are published, but three aspects of current North American marital life are inarguable: (1) the high rate of divorce; (2) the prevalence of sexual relationships outside of marriage (with consequent results: widespread abortion and increasing numbers of children growing up in single-parent households);⁶⁷ and (3) the ongoing attempt to redefine marriage as any legal romantic bond between two persons (e.g., "same-sex marriage"). Each of these indicators may be viewed, at least in part, as marks of individuality taking precedence over community (in specific, the marital/familial community, but also societal community). This is not simply nor even primarily a religious observation, but is an assessment by researchers at secular universities, who sometimes describe the trend as "secular individualism."⁶⁸

Consider divorce. Some divorces are unavoidable—for instance, where a spouse abandons the marriage, or persists in stubborn infidelity, or physically drives away the other spouse through abuse. Yet, divorce always involves sin on the part of one or both spouses. Such sin represents a triumph of selfish individualism over the well-being of the spouse and their marriage and family, and it occurs at a significant cost to society.

⁶⁷ The U.S. divorce rate has been declining modestly in recent years, yet it remains significant. Despite questions about how to interpret divorce data, even conservative estimates suggest that at least one third of marriages end in divorce. Moreover, the decline in divorce is misleading, since a growing number of couples live together apart from marriage. It is much more likely for such relationships to be dissolved than it is for marriages to end in divorce. See David Popenoe, "The Future of Marriage in America," Rutgers National Marriage Project, <http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/SOOU/TEXTSOOU2007.htm>. The percentage of children born to unmarried mothers in the U.S. currently is 39.7%. See the National Center for Health Statistics, May 2009; at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db18.htm>.

⁶⁸ See Popenoe.

Secondly, sexual relationships outside the bond of marriage and cohabitation without marriage also involve a decided refusal to make the generously self-giving commitments to another that marriage requires. Because of overriding individual fears, desires, or priorities, another individual is treated only as a potential or occasional partner, and not as the one to whom a life-long commitment has been made and kept. If and when pregnancy occurs, abortion is far more prevalent among unmarried than married women. When a woman gives birth to a child outside marriage, the child from the single-parent household suffers under the parents' failure to make or keep a commitment to one another. This child is burdened with uncertainty about at least one parent's presence and commitment to him or her, learning implicitly that the parent's individual desires are more important than the security and well-being of the family, a problem also occurring all too often in cases of divorce. Moreover, the "single-parent household" will, on average, experience significantly greater economic distress than a married household.

Finally, homosexual relationships, regardless of how they are labeled or the level of commitment existing between partners, are also examples of individualism over community.⁶⁹ Central to the moral inappropriateness of homosexual behavior is that it ignores the created purposes and functions of our bodies. Homosexual activity is not a joining of different persons, but of *like* persons; it involves the *same* sex, not the God-given *opposite* sex. In their sameness, homosexual partners, whether two males or two females, deny the gift of their creation as male or female.

Homosexual relationships are therefore by definition non-procreative. Man and woman rightly enter marriage not only to be in community with one another, but also, depending upon the will of God, to be partners in the procreation of a family. Children are a natural extension of the marital community and they become part of a wider community. While not every marriage will bear children, only the marriage of a man and a woman can affirm the procreative purpose for marriage (Gen 1:28). Rejection of the procreation and nurture of children as a purpose and intention of marriage is an example of individualism at the expense of community.⁷⁰ It ignores or denies the role of marriage within the wider community of humanity.

In light of these remarks, it is important to note that while homosexual behavior is identified by Scripture as sin (Rom 1:21-27), it is one sin among many,⁷¹ and just as the Gospel frees every other kind of "immoral" person

⁶⁹ By "homosexual relationship" we are referring to individuals of the same sex who engage in sexual activity together.

⁷⁰ There is more to consider concerning a Christian view of homosexual behavior and "marriage." For example, see *Human Sexuality*, 32-36.

⁷¹ Although, in Rom 1:24, Paul notes that homosexual conduct has a certain unique seriousness in its "dishonoring" of the body God has created.

(see 1 Cor 6:9-11) for new life in the community of the church, it does the same for the homosexual. God's desire for the homosexual is the same as it is for the heterosexual: repentance of *all* sins, new birth in Christ Jesus, and full incorporation into the body of Christ.

The unmarried person with sexual desires who nonetheless restrains those desires exercises an exemplary sacrificial love. The challenge of celibate chastity confronts every unmarried person, homosexual or heterosexual.⁷² This is God's command for all people in order to preserve marriage and for the well-being of society. A comment on the witness to Christ and to the beauty of the Creator's design which brought a homosexual woman to faith and to chastity is a salutary reminder also to everyone as we seek to share God's truth about life as male and female:

They knew I was gay, and that I was pretty vocal about it. They tried, when I asked, to explain church teaching on homosexuality, but did it very poorly. I'm glad that they instead wanted to talk with me about the Crucifixion as the reconciliation of justice and mercy, or Creation as an explanation of the goodness and intrinsic, poetic meaning of the physical world.⁷³

Christians, whose bodies are claimed in Baptism as temples of the Holy Spirit by which God is glorified (1 Cor 6:19) should be especially aware that they have a unique opportunity in today's society to give a much-needed witness to the world. Chaste singleness testifies that our individual personhood does not find its completion in the pursuit of individual self-fulfillment and personal desires. Its witness has both an eternal and a practical element. The enduring element of celibate chastity is its testimony to the Word of Christ that marriage does not continue in eternity so that marriage is not placed on par with our relationship to God.⁷⁴ The practical witness consists in the ability of the Christian single person to devote undivided attention to God and His church.⁷⁵

Failure to address the inherent gifts and weaknesses of man and woman

Man and woman are uniquely created. Their individuality is in some measure an aspect of their sexual nature. It is true that each is made in the

⁷² This same challenge exists for a married person whose spouse is unable to engage in sexual relations.

⁷³ Eve Tushnet, "Experience and Tradition," *Commonweal* June 15, 2007, 21.

⁷⁴ In Luke 20:34-36 (also Matt 22:23-33, Mark 12:18-27), Jesus teaches that marriage and the natural family are only for this present age. His followers now belong to two families, natural families and the family of God. In the ages to come that begin with the bodily resurrection there is only the family of God.

⁷⁵ As Paul emphasizes in 1 Cor 7:35.

image of God and so shares a likeness to Him that is more similar than dissimilar to one another. Yet each also has within his or her created nature particular avenues for the destructive power of sin to show itself. It is the nature of temptation to be individualized. The physically strong and powerful person will know an individualized temptation to assert that physical strength in selfish ways that violate God's will and the communities He seeks to create. The individual who is intellectually gifted or particularly articulate will be tempted to assert these gifts to humiliate, confuse, or cheat those who are less gifted.

It is the same with our sexual embodiment. Men, typically stronger than women physically, too often misuse their strength in violence toward women. According to the Center for Disease Control, women are twice as likely as men to be the victims of all forms of abuse, and three times more likely than men to die from domestic violence.⁷⁶ Women are designed by their Creator to carry, give birth, and provide the earliest nurture to a child. This means a woman may be tempted to abort an inconvenient child or to believe that she is the only parent a child needs.

These are two examples of how sexual embodiment becomes a vehicle for sin's power. The social sciences and popular books, even in an environment of sexual politics, have made plain many of the disparate ways men and women act and think, because of their gender.⁷⁷ Such sexual differences are, in virtually every case, both great gifts from God and also areas where men and women must recognize their vulnerability as sinners.

Simple observations may be pertinent here with respect to Christian life in the home and the church. To some degree such observations are stereotypical and—certainly—have countless exceptions in the relationships of Christian men and women. Nonetheless, there may be some value in the following considerations.

Men have frequently used women sexually and exploitatively, for example, in pornography, prostitution, and other anonymous sexual relationships, as well as in more long-term relationships and even within marriage. Men have abandoned their children without support or involvement more frequently than women. Men tend to be less inclined than their wives to attend church or Bible study or to provide spiritual direction and nurture for children. While churches have focused appropriate attention on the role of women in home, church, and society, we should not ignore the significant problem of declining responsibility by men in each of these

⁷⁶ "Understanding Intimate Partner Violence Fact Sheet," 2006 <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/IPV-FactSheet.pdf>.

⁷⁷ E.g., the popular work by John Gray, *Men are from Mars; Women Are from Venus* (New York: Harper, 1993).

spheres of human life. Male abdication of responsibility in home, church, and society is at crisis levels.⁷⁸

Women may also have some troubling tendencies more frequently than men. Recent studies indicate that women initiate divorce more often than men. Women seem more likely to reject any need for men than men are to reject any need for women. Increasing numbers of women intentionally choose to have and raise children without a husband.⁷⁹

Such observations may help us to understand better certain portions of Scripture. Some passages are viewed as offensive because they are not egalitarian between the sexes. Men are told to honor women as the weaker sex and to love women sacrificially. Husbands are commanded to care for their wives' material needs and told that they are to raise their children with gentleness. Such commands are fitting in light of a male potential for abuse, neglect of children, and abdication of responsibility toward women and children.

Wives are cautioned not to take over the spiritual authority and responsibility of their husbands. Instead they are to support and encourage their husband's Christ-centered leadership. Given the increasing tendency by men to avoid such responsibility, this, too, seems particularly relevant.

In these ways, men, often disinclined toward matters of the home and of spiritual things, are compelled to take responsibility for these very things as husbands and fathers. Women are reminded not to neglect what only they can do and be as wives and mothers. However, where men are absent or persistently abdicate spiritual responsibility, women then must accept the full responsibility of spiritual leadership in the home. Moreover, male abdication of responsibility should not be used as an argument against women's responsible leadership in home and church.

⁷⁸ David Blankenhorn, whose research supports the assertions of this entire paragraph, calls the declining numbers of men who raise the children they beget "our most urgent social problem," *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). One may also consult The National Marriage Project website at www.marriage.rutgers.edu regarding the problem of fatherlessness in America. On the problem of comparatively less male than female commitment to Christianity, see also David Murrow, *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005).

⁷⁹ See Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *The Divorce Culture* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, Inc., 1996), 50-64 on changing female attitudes regarding divorce. David Popenoe and the Rutgers University National Marriage Project studies state that roughly two-thirds of divorces are initiated by women (see "The Top Ten Myths of Divorce," <http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/pubtoptenmyths.htm>). More men than women are using internet services to seek a spouse. See graphs attached to Carl Bialik, "Marriage-Maker Claims Are Tied in Knots," *Wall Street Journal* (July 29, 2009): A11. On growing numbers of intentional single motherhood, see Emily Yoffe, "And Baby Makes Two," *Slate* (March 20, 2008), online edition at www.slate.com/id/2185944/pagenum/all/.

Submission to Christ

A Christian husband and father is called to submit to Christ, not only as any Christian would be called, but also because he is responsible for setting a pattern of submission in his household (1 Cor 11:3). In faithful, submissive love for Christ and according to His own example, the husband loves his wife as Christ loves His bride, the church (Eph 5:25). He provides a leadership of love, establishing a caring, safe environment for his wife and children. A Christian woman's willingness to honor and recognize her husband's leadership occurs with the recognition that her submission is following the pattern of the submission of her husband to Christ (1 Cor 11:3). In her respect for her husband's sacrificial leadership, she exhibits the perfect submission of the Bride of Christ to Christ's own loving sacrifice (Eph 5:22-24). As warp and weft threads in a tapestry of divine love, both husband and wife are therefore submitting to Christ and making a home for their children in which Christ and His loving self-sacrifice are at the center. Both are living in submission, which is but another description of a life that does "nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider[s] others better than yourselves" (Phil 2:3)—which is to say: both are living in the way of Christ Jesus.⁸⁰

Clarifications

The foregoing study and practical implications affirm the ongoing validity of several theological emphases, including the priesthood of all believers, the order of creation, the meaning of vocation, and the third use of the Law. Each of these teachings deserves a brief explanation.

Priesthood of all believers

"Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests..." says Martin Luther, reminding us of the biblical teaching we call by such names as "the priesthood of all believers" the "spiritual priesthood," or "the universal priesthood" (see 1 Pet 2:5, 1 Pet 2:9. Rev 1:5-6).⁸¹ This teaching is anchored in the truth that there is but one true and perfect priest, the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. By His atoning work, we are baptized into the holy priesthood to pray for, teach, and forgive one another in our daily lives.⁸² Above all, this priesthood is a matter of sacrificing ourselves—the whole of our lives—to God, which is a calling not only for those ordained to the pastoral ministry, but to all

⁸⁰ See Phil 2:5-11. Note the connection between Christian submission and humility. *TDNT*, Vol. 8: 45.

⁸¹ AE 36:116.

⁸² "To this congregation and to every member of it belong the keys, the power to forgive sins, and to proclaim the gospel—privately, and publicly if one is required to do so by others having equal authority." AE 36:298.

believers.⁸³ To be a priest of God is to have all the rights and responsibilities of priests—and this is true of all the baptized, male or female.⁸⁴ Every woman as well as every man has this calling equally, for all are baptized into Christ. This shows itself in the common life of the church, particularly in prayer and praise: “Let the Word of Christ dwell in [all of!] you richly, as you teach and admonish one another and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts toward God” (Col 3:16).

*Order of creation*⁸⁵

The “order of creation,” as we have presented it here, is the basic and important truth that what God has done in the creation of the world continues to be relevant and paradigmatic for today—and until the end of time. The order of creation may be compared and contrasted with the “order of redemption” or the Biblical idea of a “new creation.”⁸⁶ Through our redemption in Christ Jesus, we are a new creation and “the old is gone” (2 Cor 5:17). This reminds us that none of our human differences—race, age, intellect, sex, and so forth—are relevant to our baptismal regeneration, our redemption in Christ, our membership in the Body of Christ, or our responsibility to serve Christ and one another.

We are aware that the idea “order of creation” is not an expression used in the Bible and that it may be used in various ways, some of which are objectionable from and even contrary to a Lutheran theological perspective. Future study of this terminology, its history, its potential for misunderstanding, and its value as a means of communicating biblical truth effectively may be of benefit. What is emphasized here, however, is that redemption does not diminish the importance of God’s work of creation. His created design has continuing significance in the lives of men and women today.⁸⁷ Different

⁸³ AE 36:138-139, 145.

⁸⁴ See *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*, 1. The priesthood also requires that all Christians, male and female, are to judge the doctrine of their pastors. C. F. W. Walther, “The Sheep Judge Their Shepherds” at www.reclaimingwalther.org/articles/sheep.htm.

⁸⁵ *Women in the Church* provides a brief background to the concept on p. 9. The term is sometimes used in the plural, “orders of creation,” with reference to the fact that creation includes the establishment of such various orders as marriage and economic vocation. Either in the singular or the plural, “The point of this doctrine is to affirm that Christians like all other human beings exist in a framework of universal structures that are there prior to and apart from the fact that Christians believe in Christ and belong to his Church.” Carl Braaten, *No Other Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 120.

⁸⁶ The “order of redemption,” reminds us that in Christ, by faith, we are all “one in Christ”—not Jew, Greek, male, female, etc. (Gal 3:28). See *Women in the Church*, 22-27, which concludes its comparison of the orders: “The individual characteristics of believers are not abolished by the order of redemption,” 27.

⁸⁷ Mickey L. Mattox in “Luther on Eve, Women, and the Church” notes that the reformer develops his understanding of women primarily from the Old Testament, not the New Testament, and, specifically, from Eve. *The Pastoral Luther: Essays on Martin Luther’s Practical Theology*, Timothy J. Wengert, ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 255.

created traits enable God's redeemed humanity to live rightly within the order of creation.

As noted above, God's creation as "male and female" informs our identity as God's redeemed children. Our inherent identity includes our sexuality, for we are embodied creatures. God's creation of marriage, beginning with our first parents, provides a pattern (paradigm) for what marriage will always be. The responsibilities God gives to us as humanity in community and in our personal individuality continue to reflect the pattern begun with creation: we are to be fruitful and to exercise responsible stewardship of the world God has made. The husband should recognize his very body/flesh in his wife and so care for her sacrificially, respecting her as a fellow heir to the kingdom and supporting her use of the spiritual gifts and responsibilities God has given her. A wife is to respect, support, and help her husband, willingly acknowledging his spiritual gifts and responsibilities in marriage and home. Such spiritual leadership would be undermined if the church did not also reflect it. The New Testament pattern for church leadership complements the Biblical requirement for leadership in the home, by ordaining qualified men to pastoral ministry.

Vocation

This study affirms Luther's emphasis on vocation, which is connected with the previous two teachings. All believers are equally God's priests. Our priestly service, however, is unique to our own individuality and circumstances—our created identity and our individual callings—so that the Christian life is not one of self-serving chaos. One of the Reformation's great "rediscoveries" was this truth: that every Christian—ordained or lay person—is intended to serve God in his or her individual circumstances, not only in the church, but also at home, at work, and in society. I don't serve God as a priest "in general," but in the *specifics* of my own life and circumstance, serving the specific people that I encounter. So the Augsburg Confession declares specific ways of serving God here and now: "for example, that the father of a family works to support his wife and children and raises them in the fear of God; that the mother of a family bears children and looks after them..." (AC XXVI 10). Gustav Wingren explains: "Vocation means that those who are closest at hand, family and fellow-workers, are given by God: it is one's neighbor whom one is to love. Therein vocation points toward a world which is not the same for all people."⁸⁸ This important insight is perhaps best known from the biblical Table of Duties which concludes Luther's *Small Catechism*. It also shows itself in the variety of vocations in ministry established by churches through the ages, most of which were and are open to both men and women. In a similar fashion, this

⁸⁸ Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957, reprint CPH, Concordia Heritage Series, n.d.), 172.

study reaffirms the continuing importance of our individual calling as man and woman today.

Third use of the law

The fourth teaching underlying this study is the use of the law as a guide. Recent years have seen a growing number of Christians reject this teaching, often called “the third use of the law.”⁸⁹ The idea is basic: although we are redeemed in Christ, by grace, through faith, apart from the law, and the law has no more condemning power over us, believers continue to obey God’s commands and guidance.⁹⁰ Therefore we have sought to reaffirm and apply what the Bible teaches us about man and woman, including its specific directions for how we are to relate as male and female.

Avoiding misunderstanding

The preceding emphases help to correct misunderstandings or abuses of biblical teaching in our daily lives. The biblical teachings of male headship and ordination are fraught with potential for abuse. Therefore it must be clearly stated that any understanding of male leadership in the home or the church as a personal privilege or claim to power is a contradiction of Christ. Any emphasis upon female submission that ignores the command to *all Christians* to do nothing “out of selfish ambition or vain conceit” (Phil 2:3) inevitably misinterprets leadership as privilege or power instead of the service Jesus teaches (Lk 22:26-27).

For a man to abuse his leadership is an affront to Christ and the Word of God. Martin Luther recognized that marriage dare not ground itself in selfishness, but only in sacrifice and gentle love. He scolded men for seeing headship as the equivalent of a worldly office of command and power and privilege.⁹¹ When men are authoritarian and selfish, women may find

⁸⁹ Lutherans have referred to three “uses” of the Law of God. The first is the Law’s use as a curb or check against human sinfulness as it condemns sin and threatens punishment. The Law’s ability to show us our sin and bring us to repentance is its second use. The third use is the guidance it offers for Christian living that pleases God. *Formula of Concord*, Ep and SD, Article VI.

⁹⁰ A helpful survey of this topic in recent LCMS history is found in Scott Murray, *Law, Life, and the Living God: The Third Use of the Law in Modern American Lutheranism* (St. Louis: CPH, 2002).

⁹¹ “Here one should also note that Abraham says that he spoke most respectfully to his wife. He did not give an order and did not say: ‘You must obey me; I compel you; I demand from you.’ No, he said: ‘I beg you,’ and he does not consider her action obedience; he considers it a favor, as though by a superior person, in accordance with Peter’s precept (1 Peter 3:7): ‘Bestow honor on the female sex.’ But why did Moses record this? Doubtless in order to present an example of a very fine marriage, something which is indeed a rarity on earth but is most pleasing both to God and to men.

“Therefore by means of this very example Peter exhorts spouses to learn to love each other and to treat each other with respect and not as people are now in the habit of doing. Husbands generally are lions in their homes and are harsh toward wives and domestics. Similarly, the wives generally domineer everywhere and regard their husbands as servants. But it is foolish for a husband to want to display his manly courage and heroic valor by

it impossible to respect their husbands and, perhaps, morally necessary to reject his sinfully enacted “authority.” Similarly, where Christian women, out of pride or other sinful emotions, reject the Word’s command to submission “as to the Lord,” the Church’s witness to Christ suffers.

Additionally, the foregoing understanding should not be misconstrued as implying male superiority or female incompetence in any way. Some of the earliest teachers of the Bible cautioned against such misunderstanding—cautions just as necessary in our day. We should not fail to see the responsibility of both men and women to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29) and to witness to the Christian faith. We should not allow male incompetence or falsehood to stand unchallenged in the name of submission.⁹² A husband should listen to his wife with the recognition that her wisdom, insight, understanding, and piety as a human person, holy priest, and sister in Christ will complement his own.

Due to the rapidly changing environment of the contemporary world, the discussion of male-female relationships must continue also in the church. It is important that it genuinely be a *discussion*, and that women be afforded full opportunity to take part. For this reason, as indicated in the preface, the CTCR intends to continue the process begun by this document, in whatever formats seem most effective, to address both the questions and concerns of Christian men and women regarding their relationship with Christ and one another. Women as well as men should be asked to provide insights, concerns, and questions in the ongoing discussion. Our goal is that questions—some old and others new—will be patiently and effectively considered, and that young men and women in particular will be offered timely, constructive, and helpful guidance according to the Word of God.

ruling his wife. On the other hand, it is also unbearable if wives want to dominate. Such marriages—where both are capricious—are common, as the proverb has it: ‘Three things are rare, but they are pleasing to God: harmony among brothers, love among neighbors, and accord between spouses.’ The reason is that people generally enter into this kind of life without prayer and, like swine, regard only what is carnal. Therefore the wife does not see what is truly good in her husband. On the other hand, the husband sees in his wife only what displeases him. Since there is no mutual tolerance between them, quarrels and countless outbursts of anger arise.” AE 3:353-54.

⁹² For example, Jerome questions false views of submission: “[F]requently wives are found to be much superior to husbands at ordering and running the house, and educating the children, and maintaining family discipline, while the husbands live in luxury and pursue mistress after mistress. Whether wives of such caliber should rule, or fear, their husbands, I leave to the reader’s judgment.” Quoted by J.C. Cavadini, “The Sacramentality of Marriage in the Fathers” *Pro Ecclesia* 17:4 (Fall 2008): 445.

Conclusion: Centrality of the Gospel

In the end, our discussions and affirmations regarding our creation as male and female and our church's public teaching and practice must find their place within the life of faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the greatest challenge for us is to speak about these matters from the standpoint of the Cross. We dare not forget that the heart of the Christian message is not guidance for marriage or sexuality or any other current issue, but the truth of an irreparably broken world that finds forgiveness, hope, and salvation only in Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection.

Whatever we say about sexuality, it must not overshadow the Gospel of Christ and His Cross. After all, the culmination of any true appreciation of our creation as male and female goes beyond the blessings that come of our sexual embodiment for this life, as much as we rejoice in the gifts of marriage, disciplined sexuality, and sanctified masculinity and femininity.

All these are good things—good gifts of God to be honored. Yet, there is no higher honor given to humanity as male and female—no greater good—than that which was identified at least as early as St. Augustine (354–430 AD). Augustine's insight was that in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, God honors and blesses His work of making man, male and female. By the means of Mary's embodiment as a woman, and our Lord Jesus' embodiment as a man, the whole of humanity, both male and female, plays a role in nothing less than the salvation of the world.⁹³ If God Himself gives such dignity to man and woman, then each of us, whether male or female, is also called to live within his or her individual, sexual personhood, uniquely, yet toward God's own eternal purposes within the tapestry He has woven.



⁹³ See Augustine's *Eighty-three Different Questions* in *Fathers of the Church*, vol. 70, 42 and also his *The Christian Combat*, in *Fathers of the Church*, vol. 21, 338-39, as referenced and quoted in Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 8.

APPENDIX: 1995 Resolution 3-10

To Prepare a Comprehensive Study of the Scriptural Relationship of Man and Woman

Overtures 3-70-71 (*CW*, p. 174)

WHEREAS, It is apparent that confusion exists in the Synod, as well as in our culture regarding the relationship of male and female. This is evident from the overtures received by the convention. These overtures deal with a diversity of subjects: ordination of women, woman suffrage in our congregations, use of female assistants in the public worship. Additional overtures ask for a definition of the orders of creation as they relate to the priesthood of believers in the service of women in the church.

The committee therefore recommends a comprehensive study and offers the following resolution. Among the questions which might be included in such a study are:

1. Creation, Gen. 1:26-30: Does the image of God here apply to each individual person, or to the race? Are male and female together in their relationship to each other the image of God?
2. Is subordination inherent in the very nature of a creation done by the Triune God, or is subordination a consequence of sin?
3. Is the dominion given in Gen. 1:26, 29 given to both male and female, and what is the significance of this for their relationship to each other?
4. Does Gen. 3:16 imply that the male is to have dominion over the female in the race?
5. Does the subordination of the Son to the Father (1 Cor. 15:27-28) speak of some sort of subordination in the Trinity and what are the implications of this for the unity of the Trinity? What implications does this have for the distinction of persons within the Trinity?
6. Does the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 29) in some way reflect the unity of the Trinity and the distinction of persons within the Trinity, and what implications does this have for the relationship of male and female?
7. In the light of the above, must a distinction be made between the way in which the Adamic cultures understand the relationship of male and female, and the way in which the distinction between male and female is to be understood and expressed within the chosen race (1 Peter 2:9)?
8. What is the meaning and implication of "head" in Eph. 5:20-33, and in what way is this

illuminated by Eph. 1:22 and Eph. 5:20?

9. May the words *submit* or *subordinate* in Eph. 5:21-22 be interpreted as meaning obedience as this word is understood by the Adamic cultures?
10. In what way are the findings of this study to be applied to the church, as she orders her life and worship?
11. In what way are the findings of this study to be applied to marriage and the life of the family?

Resolved, That the CTCR coordinate a comprehensive study of the scriptural relationship of man and woman, together with the faculties of both seminaries, making use of other persons who are competent in the area of theology, including women.

Action: Adopted (10).

(During discussion an amendment, *Resolved*, That this issue be commended to the next convention of the Synod with the recommendation that an early session be scheduled for that purpose and that an entire session be set aside for the debate, was declined. This occurred after the delegates agreed to cease debate on the amendment but not on the main motion. A further amendment calling for deletion of the entire paragraph containing a list of possible questions for consideration was declined. A number of delegates asked that their negative votes be recorded. These are attached to the official copy of the minutes.)





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