

The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture

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Theses

- A. Holy Scripture sets forth a role of complete equality for man and woman in their relation to God and in the enjoyment of His saving grace in Christ Jesus.
- B. Holy Scripture assigns distinctive roles to man and woman in their relation to each other for this life.
 1. These distinctive roles for man and woman in their relation to each other for this life were ordained by God at creation. The *order of creation* with respect to these distinctive roles belongs to the immutable holy will of God for this earthly life. This moral law is briefly comprehended in love.
 2. Christians, according to the new man, will find no fault with this order of creation.
 3. The order of creation in which distinctive roles are assigned to man and woman was established by God in the interest of the institution of marriage and the family, upon which human society in this earthly life is basically structured.
 4. The Lord wants His order of creation with respect to the distinctive roles of man and woman to be clearly reflected in the worship life of the church.
 5. To understand the apostolic directions properly given in Holy Writ to uphold the order of creation in the work and worship life of the church, we need to remember that, unlike God's Old Testament people, the New Testament church has no binding legal regulations and prescriptions from God beyond that which is imbedded in the moral law, God's immutable holy will for this earthly life.

Exposition of the Theses

The women's liberation movement is engaged in a relentless drive to place women on an equal plane with men before the law and to eliminate as much as possible all distinctions between the sexes. This has had far-reaching effects upon the social, political, and economic life of our nation. The impact has been particularly strong also on marriage and the family, the basic structures of human society. Here many other current trends and influences have been especially strong contributory factors. Evolutionary thinking, which has pervaded public education for many decades, is recently revealing its inherent atheism and undermining the natural knowledge of God and of the inscribed law of God. Thereby it has promoted situational ethics in which autonomous man is accorded the right to set all the standards of his conduct himself and is made wholly responsible for his destiny. Widespread permissiveness in premarital and extramarital relationships on the part of men and women has been the result. This has been abetted by the ease with which modern science has made effective contraceptives available. On the other hand, propaganda concerning the danger of over-population has discouraged the propagation and rearing of children in marriage and has even raised the question whether this should be considered a basic purpose of marriage in our present world. Abortion has been legalized and this has led to the annual murder of a million unborn infants in our nation. In such an atmosphere homosexuality dares to make a public claim for acceptance as an alternate lifestyle.

All these things are prone to influence also the thinking of Christians. To a measure, they are always children of their time, affected by the thought patterns of the world in which they live. We who look to

Scripture as the inspired and inerrant Word of God have much reason, therefore, to study carefully the role of man and woman in marriage and apart from marriage as it is set forth in Holy Scripture.

A. Holy Scripture sets forth a role of complete equality for man and woman in their relation to God and in the enjoyment of His saving grace in Christ Jesus.

In the creation account, Genesis 1:27-28, we read: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." From this we see that both man and woman were created in the image of God. The thoughts of both upon their creation were in perfect harmony with God's thoughts; the feelings of both alike shared God's evaluation of all things; the will of both were in perfect accord with God's will. The secret of their sinless state was a bond of perfect trust toward their creator in which both man and woman enjoyed blessed fellowship with their God; they experienced the rest of perfect joy and bliss in Him and in all of His works. This blessed rest of fellowship with God, both man and woman lost as they fell into sin. According to Scripture, it is offered in equal measure to man and woman alike in the Gospel of Christ's finished redemption which had been promised already in Paradise.

As the Gospel awakens faith in the heart of a sinner – whether a man or a woman – both enjoy forgiveness of sins and with it life and salvation. Through their God-given faith the image of God is restored in both man and woman according to their new nature, and both await a complete restoration of that image in heaven.

St. Paul clearly sets forth this complete equality for man and woman in their enjoyment of God's saving grace in Christ Jesus when he states: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28-29).

The Apostle Peter asserts this same equality of man and woman in their relation to God when he reminds Christian husbands that their wives are "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Pet. 3:7).

B. Holy Scripture assigns distinctive roles to man and woman in their relation to each other for this earthly life.

1. These distinctive roles for man and woman in their relation to each other for this life were ordained by God at creation.

We are apprized of the distinctive roles through the additional details with which we are supplied in Genesis 2:18-25 concerning God's creative procedure in making the woman. Here we need to distinguish between the creation of woman and both the institution of marriage and the establishment of the first marriage of Adam and Eve. The marriage of Adam and Eve took place when God brought Eve to Adam to be his wife, and Adam received her as his wife, and she was willing to be given to Adam as his wife. That with this procedure God was at the same time establishing marriage as a basic institution for this earthly life of the whole human race becomes evident by God's own statement, made through Moses, verse 24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

The marriage bond is established before God when a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife. Thereby he breaks off a close family bond, one that is likewise established by God, but dissoluble; and he binds himself with an unconditional commitment (evident in his leaving of father and mother) to the woman involved. The man is spoken of as taking the initiative in this, (Gen. 2-24), although the corresponding unconditional commitment of the woman is definitely implied and assumed. How would man otherwise know that she was his wife to cling to? Of those thus joined together in marriage, God says: "And they shall be one flesh." Sanctified in the marriage bond by the will and command of God, husband and wife through carnal intercourse legitimately enjoy a union uniquely intimate.

The creation of Eve, on the other hand, is preparatory to her bond of marriage with Adam. It pertained to the special manner in which she was created and to what she was like by this act of creation. Thereby her marriage to Adam was not yet effected.

This becomes all the more evident when we consider that according to Scripture the creation of Eve is to be understood as being at the same time the creation of womanhood, of the whole human female sex. What was determined for all womankind through the act of creation is what they were made to be like to fit them for marriage but does not yet place them into the marriage bond. That in the creation of Eve we are dealing with God's creation of woman as a separate sex, whether they would actually enter marriage or not, is also brought out in verse 23, when we hear the man saying: "This one shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." Why? Was it because she was to be joined to him in marriage? No, but because in her creation "this one" was taken from man.

Concerning the creation of woman, note that according to verse 18 God says: "It is not good for man ($\alpha\delta\alpha\mu$) to be alone." God is speaking of man as the male generically, not merely of Adam as the first individual. Note furthermore that God does not say: "I will *give* him a helper corresponding to him." He says: "I will *make* a helper for him that is corresponding to him." Thus Eve is a helper already by virtue of her creation, even before she became the wife of Adam. She is a helper by the manner in which she was made and by virtue of what she was like through God's creative action. What was true of her is then true of all womankind inasmuch as they, too, are what they were made to be through Eve's creation. Woman was made for a subordinate position, for the position of a helper in relation to man. Though we will return to this thought later, we want to state even here that "subordinate" must not and should not be equated with being of lesser quality, value or importance. It has to do with God's order; which is something quite different.

The argument is frequently advanced that being a helper does not in itself imply a subordinate position. This is quite correct, for in Holy Scripture God Himself bids us to look to Him above all as our helper. In a similar sense, man is to help his wife in self-sacrificing love as he exercises his headship over her. It is quite a different matter when we are told that God specifically made woman to be a helper to man. Being *made* as a helper for someone can only be understood as being made for a subordinate station.

That womankind was made for a subordinate position to man, to whom the leadership role is assigned by God's creation, is clearly confirmed by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11. In setting forth the relation of woman to man, the apostle here stresses that she was made for man and out of man. Paul says, 1 Corinthians 11:8-9: "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man." Here the apostle is definitely setting forth the distinctive roles assigned to man and woman at creation. This becomes all the more evident when we note that in verses following (verses 11 and 12) Paul in another respect is ready to recognize a certain interdependence of man and woman, saying: "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman." Thereby Paul emphasizes that the subordinate position of woman, established at creation, remains in effect in spite of any interdependence of man and woman that can be recognized in other respects.

In 1 Timothy 2:12-15, St. Paul touches upon the very heart and essence of woman's subordinate role, namely, upon this that the woman is not "to exercise authority over man" ($\alpha\upsilon\gamma\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \alpha\upsilon\delta\alpha\mu\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$). This is the more exact translation. In substance, however, the King James Version, "usurp authority" is not incorrect. What the apostle forbids is an exercise of authority over man by a woman. Yet if the woman purposely falls out of her assigned role as she exercises authority over man, she is usurping an authority which the Lord has not assigned to her. The terms "woman" and "man" are general, generic. The burden of proof would rest upon anyone who contends that "man and woman" here mean "husband and wife." Since this proof cannot be produced, the contention must fall and the terms "woman" and "man" must be taken to be general and generic. This is confirmed by what St. Paul adduces as the basis of the order of creation.

Now what basis does St. Paul adduce for saying that a woman is not to exercise authority over a man? Does Paul point to the marriage bond in which a woman finds herself? Does Paul point to the relation in which she stands over against the man in the bond of marriage? No, he leads this – that she is not to exercise authority

over man – back to something that was bound up with her creation, namely, to the fact that Adam was first formed, then Eve. No reference whatsoever is made to the marriage relation of Adam and Eve in this argument. As a second basis, Paul adduces the fact of the fall: "And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner." In this argument, too, Adam and Eve come into consideration simply as the individuals that they were by the aforementioned creation. The facts set forth concerning them in this argument are again not brought into relation to their status in marriage, to their relation to each other as husband and wife. It is impossible, therefore, to hold that what St. Paul asserts on the basis of these two arguments, namely, that the woman is not to exercise authority over man, is restricted only to a wife in her relation to her husband.

Some have thought of Paul's second argument on the basis of the fall in this sense that it is a punishment for her transgression that woman is not to exercise authority over man. Yet there is nothing in Paul's statement to support this understanding. In the context, Paul's argument must rather be understood to be this: having set forth the woman's subordinate position assigned to her in creation, he now points to the sad consequences that ensued when woman assumed the initiative, took on the leadership role for which she was not made. The force of the argument does not depend on this that we are able to carry out in specific detail what it is in her creation for a helper role that caused her to be deceived while Adam was not deceived.

In 1 Corinthians 14:33b-34, St. Paul says: "As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in *submission* as the law says." The words "be in submission" indicate the real import of the admonition. We will have more to say on this point later. Paul emphasizes that the law, God's Word, says that the woman is to be in submission. It is not merely Paul's judgment for a specific situation. There is general agreement that the word of God which he especially has in mind is the account of the creation of woman in Genesis 2, setting forth God's will concerning woman's role. Also here it is arbitrary to restrict the term "woman" to mean "wife." Those who contend for restricting the apostolic demand for submission to women in marriage, to wives in their relation to their own husbands, will point to what Paul says in the next verse (verse 35): "If they want to inquire something, they should ask their own husbands at home." Hence, they say, Paul must be speaking of wives. This does not follow. In the first place, "their own husbands" in verse 35 could be translated "their own men," and include fathers, adult brothers, and so forth. But even if we do translate "their own husbands" Paul can still be giving his advice *a potiori*, i.e., in a way which covers the majority of cases. Advice is often given in this way. The context indicates that Paul is dealing with a public worship situation. Here, first of all, the women would not all be married women. Moreover, the married women, as they presume to exercise authority over men by their public teaching in such a worship service, would not only be violating their relation to their own husbands, but also to all the other men present – single men as well as husbands of the other women.

Those who restrict Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 2:11 that a woman is not to exercise authority over a man to her relation in marriage seek support in verse 15. There the apostle exhorts women to lead their lives in faith, love, and holiness amidst childbearing, i.e., the tasks and pursuits of motherhood. In this they see evidence that Paul is speaking throughout about married women. The remarks of the previous paragraph apply here also and invalidate such an argument.

We will have to say that the distinctive roles of man and woman in their relation to each other for this earthly life were ordained by God at creation. This is clearly established by a careful study of Holy Scripture, especially of Genesis 2:18-24; 1 Corinthians 11:1-9; 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35; 1 Timothy 2: 11-15. Man was created first for leadership. The woman was created to be a helper and hence she is not to subvert this role by presuming to exercise authority over man.

We properly speak of this divine arrangement, even as we do of the relationship between parents and children and of the relationship of the Creator Himself to His creatures, all relationships established by God at creation, as a part of the *order of creation*. All these aspects of the order of creation belong to the immutable holy will of God for this earthly life (the moral law). They apply to all people and to all times as long as this earthly life of grace continues. These aspects of the order of creation are the structure in which the moral law, the immutable holy will of God, is to be fulfilled during this earthly life. According to Romans 13:8-10, the

moral law, God's immutable holy will, is comprehended in love: "...He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law... If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself... Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." This is also brought out in the Savior's summary of the law in Matthew 22: 37-40, in which he quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

2. Christians, according to the new man, will find no fault with this order of creation.

In the joyful confidence of faith the Christian will accept it as altogether good and salutary. With such confidence the Christian accepts every aspect of God's immutable holy will. In their faith, Christians say with the Apostle Paul, Romans 7:22: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Since the order of creation belongs to the moral law, the immutable holy will of God, Christians apply also to it the apostle's inspired judgment, Romans 7:12: "So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good." Because with His gospel of forgiveness and eternal life God has filled their hearts with peace, comfort, joy hope, and hence with thankful love, they will say also with reference to the distinctive roles which God has assigned to man and woman, Psalm 119:32: "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

Of course, the Old Adam of the Christian, too, has little understanding and appreciation for any kind of subordination. Ever since the entrance of sin into the world, man wants to be autonomous, he himself wants to be God. That is also the thinking of the Christian's Old Adam.

Yet, the Apostle Paul himself reminds us that being subordinated to a head in itself does not imply anything degrading, nor does it debase the one who is subordinated. Notice how in 1 Corinthians 11 the apostle introduces the discussion on the headship of man and of woman's subordination to him. He states: "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." He places man's headship over the woman between two other headships, Christ's headship over man and God's headship over Christ according to His human nature. With the assumption that the Christian whom he is addressing, also the Christian women, would find nothing debasing in the first and the last mentioned instances of subordination, they would from the start dismiss the very thought that there is something debasing in God's creation order by which the woman is subordinated to man.

Headship and subordination to a head are a matter of wholesome order which deals with the assignment of different realms of responsibility. This is something that we continually experience in various relationships of human society around and about us. For order's sake, every business endeavor, every educational institution, every governmental unit has to have a head if it is to function in a salutary way and serve the purpose for which the organization has been set up.

A manufacturing concern, for example, must have an administrative head if the enterprise is to function efficiently as a unit. Yet the dedicated and able department heads, the research advisers, the financial counselors, will be as important and indispensable for the successful functioning of the endeavor as the executive who has been designated as the head. If the subordinates should refuse to devote all their abilities, understanding, and skill with true dedication, because they feel that a stigma rests on their subordinate status, the manufacturing concern would hardly prosper.

Let us remember that in the creation account, in which we are told how God established His order for the basic unit of human society, He clearly states: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." In other words, the reason that God made a helper for man was this that it was something good, salutary, needful. Another leader to share his headship would not have served God's purpose for the welfare of human society. It would not have filled the need. That is also abundantly verified by human history. Behind great men in government, in the church, and in the business world, there have generally been able, understanding, and dedicated helpmates, who share credit for their accomplishments. That is God's blessed order of creation.

3. The order of creation which assigned distinctive roles to man and woman was established by God in the interest of the institution of marriage and the family, upon which human society in this earthly life is basically structured.

This accounts for the fact that the distinctive order assigned to men and women by God's order of creation is defined most explicitly with reference to the marriage bond.

We have rather explicit definitions of the respective roles in marriage in Ephesians 5:22-25. There wives are bidden to submit themselves unto their own husbands as unto the Lord. There it is clearly stated that "the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church." There it is explicitly set forth that as the church is subject unto Christ the wives are to be subject to their own husbands in everything. On the other hand, it is also brought out how the husband is to exercise his headship, not as a prerogative which he can turn to his own selfish interests, nor in a domineering spirit, but as a responsibility which he will carry out in a self-sacrificing spirit even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, and still functions as our Head in perfect love. In exercising the responsibility of his headship he is to show loving concern for his wife. Referring to Christ's self-sacrificing love toward the church, Paul states: "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies."

We find the same explicit determination of the creative order within marriage set forth by the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 3:5-7) where wives are bidden to be "in subjection unto their own husbands even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" and where husbands are bidden: "Be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life." Notice how in one brief admonitory sentence both the full equality of the woman with her husband in her relation to God and her subordination to her husband as the weaker partner are expressed.

That the order of creation with respect to the distinctive role of man and woman was established in the interest of the basic institutions of marriage and the family is also the reason why the application of this creation order to the marriage bond is always in the foreground when the distinctive roles of man and woman are under discussion in Holy Scripture. As we have already seen in discussing some of these Scripture sections, the applications to the marriage bond do not support the contention that the creation order is restricted to the marriage bond.

Rather, it is in the very interest of maintaining the basic institutions of marriage and the family for this earthly life that the order of creation obtains also apart from the marriage bond, and apart from the family. The basic structure of the home and the relationships that are to obtain there will never be maintained for any length of time if the order of creation is not somehow reflected outside of marriage in the relationship of women over against men and of children over against their elders. Yet God made woman what she is that it would be natural for her to serve in the role that He has ordained for her.

What the order of creation requires of the single woman in every instance and of the married woman over against other men besides her own husband is not defined as fully and precisely in Holy Scripture as it is with the relation in the marriage bond. Hence, it cannot be delineated as fully by us. It is expressed in the broad statement that the woman is not to exercise authority over the man, and that she is to be in submission as the law says.

It is certainly not true that every man is every woman's head as the husband is the head of his own wife. Yet the Christian woman will always keep the ideal of the home before her mind and also in relation to other men will conduct herself in the spirit underlying the order of creation. She will not seek to dominate men with her will and delight in exercising authority over them. When circumstances place her in a leadership position, she will carry it out in a spirit of service.

There will be such situations in public life. We shall content ourselves with expressing this concretely by several examples. Public life is under the jurisdiction and regulations of human government which is also an institution of God. Yet it is an institution which according to Scripture is to carry out its function in the light of human reason. As a result the regulations of human government will not fully reflect God's moral law and His

order of creation which is a part of it. We owe obedience to these regulations, however, as long as they do not involve us in clear disobedience to God's Word.

According to the laws of our country, women are accorded the right to possess property and earthly possessions of every kind. As a corollary, women are then held responsible for their property. The fourth and the seventh commandment are also a part of the immutable holy will of God. Thus a Christian woman will want to be a faithful steward over the possessions that the Lord has given to her and will feel responsible to administer them according to the laws of the land. If considerable wealth is involved, this may place her into situations in which she must carry out a leadership role which may involve other men. Yet she will endeavor to do it in a spirit that does not violate God's order of creation.

Under the laws of our land, women have been accorded equality in holding jobs and in earning a living. Under this economic system the adult single woman is expected to provide for her own living. She will be expected to seek the employment that is available to her and for which she has skill, knowledge, and aptitude. To the extent that this may make men subordinate to her in her position of employment, the Christian woman will seek to conduct herself in a way that it remains evident that she is not contesting God's order of creation. Christian love would restrain us from raising charges unless the contrary could be very clearly established. Actually, it is not a new problem. Also in the social and economic circumstances of the past, many a Christian lady running a large household had a considerable number of male servants and workmen serving under her. We need only to think of Luther's wife, Katharina. Yet she was not thought to have stepped out of her role in God's order of creation.

In applying the broad moral principles that woman is not to exercise authority over men to her activities in public life outside the home, Scripture leaves a great deal to our conscientious Christian judgment. It may be helpful to think of a parallel in another aspect of God's order of creation for this earthly life, the God-ordained relation between parents and children. For minor children who stand in that relation, God's will is very explicit. Children are to honor their parents and obey them unless it involves clear disobedience toward God. The subordinate relationship which Scripture assigns to children with reference to their elders outside of the home is less explicit. It does demand respect, deference, a willingness to serve, but not the all-inclusive obedience that the children are to accord to their own parents.

4. The Lord wants His order of creation with respect to the distinctive roles of man and woman to be clearly reflected in the work and worship life of His church.

We have already noted that also human government is God's institution. God has not, however, entrusted His written Word to human government. He has left government to carry out its assigned function in the light of human reason. This includes the natural knowledge of God and the inscribed law; but neither are perfect in sinful man. Hence the precepts and regulations of human government will never conform fully with God's immutable holy will. They may also not fully reflect His order of creation. Yet the means that God has given to human government suffice for its function of maintaining a measure of outward decency and order. If these means no longer prove effective in doing that, God intervenes directly with His judgments.

It is different with His church of believers. To them, and to them alone, God has entrusted His revealed Word, the Holy Scriptures. It sets forth His immutable holy will in full clarity. In the work and worship life of the church God therefore wants this immutable holy will, including also His order of creation as it pertains to the distinctive roles of men and women, to be reflected. Through His precious Gospel of salvation He has supplied His church with the motivation to feel constrained in thankful love to live by His will in all things.

5. To understand the apostolic directions properly given in Holy Writ to uphold the order of creation in the work and worship life of the church we need to remember that, unlike God's Old Testament people, the New Testament church has no binding legal regulations and prescriptions from God beyond that which is imbedded in the moral law, God's immutable holy will for this earthly life.

If we take any of St. Paul's injunctions which he voices in stressing the order of creation as special precepts for the New Testament church, as regulations that hold good only in the church and in its worship life and have no application to anyone outside of the church or to any other setting, then we are misunderstanding them.

There were such additional binding, divine precepts and regulations for God's Old Testament people, the Sinaitic Law Code. It contained many precepts and regulations that were binding only to God's chosen people from Sinai until Calvary. The tithes and the Sabbath rest were two such regulations. These precepts and many others like them, which were not a part of the immutable holy will of God for this life, did not apply to people outside the covenant nation, even if they were brought to faith in the true God of Israel and trusted in His saving promises. But the Sinaitic Law Code was abrogated with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the completion of His work of redemption. Paul clearly states (Ephesians 2:14): "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two (Jews and Gentiles) one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations." The same truth is clearly set forth in Galatians 4:1-7. God's New Testament children are no longer minors, whose life must be guided and controlled and kept in bounds by a discipline of outward regulations. They are adult children who live in the full light of Christ's finished redemption. That full light revealed in Christ Jesus suffices to constrain them to live according to the immutable holy will of God.

Every injunction of St. Paul that he voices in reference to the order of creation must also be led back to the moral law and be understood as in some way expressing a demand that is imbedded in the moral law. Whatever is bidden or forbidden must be something that under the obtaining circumstances is required if justice is to be done to a part of God's will so that it is fulfilled and not violated.

Take 1 Timothy 2:12: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." We have already stated that the heart and essence of this apostolic statement is this that the woman is not to exercise authority over the man. That is the moral principle involved. The additional statement "I suffer not a woman to teach" and the demand that the woman is to be in silence were binding only because in the situation to which Paul was speaking the acts ruled out by Paul would have been contrary to God's order of creation.

The apostle's demand of silence in the church on the part of women was just a negative way of ruling out such teaching as would have constituted an exercise of authority over men. The apostle's demand for silence on the part of women would, of course, be totally misapplied if, for example, we were to use it to prohibit women from joining in congregational singing, or in the public confession of the Creed or in the recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

That Paul is to be understood in this way is substantiated by 1 Corinthians 11:3, where the apostle says: "And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head." Here the apostle does not demand silence or forbid either praying or prophesying, the presentation of a special revelation that God might be pleased to give through a woman. Yet Paul demanded that the women pray and prophesy with their head covered so that it would be clear to all that with their praying and prophesying the women were still upholding God's order of creation and not exercising authority over men.

The apostle is not instituting a ceremonial law beyond and in addition to the moral law. A woman's long hair and a head covering do not in their very essence express proper womanly submission and chastity. Yet, according to Greek custom, familiar to all in Corinth, the customs under discussion stood for these things and expressed them. That is why the apostle spoke for continued observance of these customs. By cutting their hair and dispensing with a head covering they would have given the impression that they were setting God's order of creation aside. Notice what St. Paul adduces in support of this counsel. He does not say as in Corinthians 14, "as also says the law." Instead, he says, 1 Corinthians 11:16: "If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have

no other practice, nor do the churches of God." Thereby he himself shows that he is seeking to uphold the order of creation in terms of the customs of the day that would reflect that order. Where such customs are not known and, if practiced, would carry no specific message, the apostle's word in behalf of such customs would not be relevant. The New Testament church has no binding legal precepts beyond the moral law, the immutable holy will of God for all men. Anything bidden in an absolute way for us in the New Testament is demanded in an absolute way by love, in which the moral law is briefly comprehended. Anything absolutely forbidden in the New Testament is absolutely forbidden by love.

Yet, someone may ask: What about the New Testament injunction to preach the Gospel, to baptize, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, to believe and repent? Are they not distinctive imperatives for the New Testament church? Yes, indeed, but the imperatives of the New Testament in which God expresses His will are of a double kind. The legal imperatives which express His immutable holy will are all included in the moral law. These imperatives, e.g., love your enemies, steal not, do not covet, do not convey any power to us to fulfill them. Of themselves, when sinful man hears them, they awaken a knowledge of sin, resentment, or outward compliance out of fear.

Yet there are other imperatives in the New Testament that express God's saving will, e.g., the imperative to repent, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. These imperatives are a most forceful divine invitation to salvation. They reveal God's saving will in Christ Jesus and are full of creative power to effect the repentance and faith by which the sinner enjoys salvation.

Gospel imperatives, revealing God's saving will in Christ Jesus, are also the imperatives: preach the Gospel to all creatures; make disciples of all nations by baptizing; do this in remembrance of me, with reference to the Lord's Supper. They are God's means of grace to us and others. In these three imperatives addressed to believers, to Christians, to the church, everything is embraced that belongs to the special Gospel mission entrusted to His believers. They, too, are filled with the creative power to effect what the imperatives state.

When God says to us: "Preach the gospel to all creatures," He is revealing His saving will. He is saying to us: I want the good news of the blood-bought forgiveness of my Son, which has brought you peace, life, and salvation, brought to all other sinners. As we hear this reminder of God's saving will in Christ, our faith and our thankful love are renewed to give us strength and willingness to preach the Gospel to all creatures.

It is the same with the imperative "Make disciples of all nations by baptizing." We are reminded how through baptism we became dear children of God, were washed clean of our sins, and became heirs of eternal life, and thereby gained strength and willingness to share these blessings with others. When the Savior with reference to Holy Communion says: "This do in remembrance of me," He is saying: As I give you my body and blood under the bread and wine, remember how I gave my body unto death and shed my blood for the remission of your sins. This gives us joy and desire to celebrate His holy supper and with it also zeal to proclaim Christ's death for the salvation of sinners before others.

The Gospel imperatives connected with the means of grace are neither New Testament ceremonial laws nor precepts of the moral law, demanding something of us. This is true even though we fulfill the law of love when we preach the Gospel, when we baptize others in the name of the triune God, and celebrate the Lord's Supper. This is the most glorious fulfillment of the second commandment to glorify God's name. Yet that is also true when we through the power of the Gospel believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such faith is a fulfillment of the trust which the first commandment demands. Yet it is a fulfillment that we do not effect of ourselves, but God brings it about with His Gospel imperative: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved."

The biblical injunctions, however, which uphold the order of creation with reference to the distinctive roles of man and woman are neither Gospel imperatives nor are they special legal precepts for the New Testament church. They belong to the immutable holy will of God for this earthly life.

This statement was adopted by the Commission on Higher Education in April 1978. With the approval of the Conference of Presidents it was submitted to the Synod convention, August 1-8, 1979. The Synod adopted the following resolution:

WHEREAS 1) the theses listed in *The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture* address a subject of great concern in our times; and

WHEREAS 2) the subject matter of the theses is too weighty to be studied in depth by this convention; therefore, be it

Resolved a) That the theses be thoroughly studied by congregations and conferences of our districts as opportunities present themselves; and be it further

Resolved b) That the 1980 district conventions officially study the theses and submit summary reports to the Commission on Higher Education; and be it finally

Resolved c) That the CHE report the results of the districts' studies to the 1981 convention of the Synod.