

Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations

Ordination of Women to the
Office of Ministry of Word and Sacrament
– Scriptural and Confessional Authority

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The Purpose of this Paper

The congregations of the Canadian Association Lutheran Congregations (CALC) voted to permit the call and ordination of women to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament at its 2007 annual General Convention. The purpose of this paper is to present scriptural and confessional support for our belief that God calls women to the office the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. To this end, this paper will: (a) state CALC's original policy on the Ordination and Ministry of Women together with the impetus for the change of our policy and, (b) lay out scriptural and confessional support for the ordination of women.

1. CALC's Original Position on Ordination and Ministry of Women

The original position taken by CALC on the ordination and Ministry of women is found in CALC's "Doctrines and Policies - Declarations Concerning Matters of Life and Practice" Statement 2.5 – Ordination and Ministry of Women:

"The Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations (CALC) submits to Scriptures as the only infallible authority on all matters of faith and life. Both those who favour and those who oppose the ordination of women base their positions on interpretation of Scripture. Nevertheless, the position of those who oppose the ordination of women also find secondary support for their interpretation throughout church history, as well as church tradition, and by the majority of opinion in the body of Christ around the world for centuries.

Scripture indicates that God calls and uses both men and women in different areas of the ministry; therefore, CALC shall ordain only men in the Ministry of Word and Sacrament and encourage women to seek and consider God's call into other areas of ministry. (1 Timothy 2:8-15; 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 14:33-36 and Ephesians 5:21-33). CALC shall continue to study the role of men and women in the Church, in light of the Scriptures and with the enlightening of the Holy Spirit."

The case against the ordination of women to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament is based primarily upon the Apostle Paul's injunctions as set forth in 1 Corinthians 14:33-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14.

1 Corinthians 14:33-38: ³³For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, ³⁴women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. ³⁵If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. ³⁶Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? ³⁷If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. ³⁸If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored." (1 Corinthians 14:33-38).

The Torah does not contain a law or commandment which requires women to be silent in the assembly of God's covenant people. Paul's appeal for women to be silent must then be based on the Torah's account of the creation of mankind. His argument for the silence of female voices is related to the subordinate status of women in the account of creation of Adam and Eve and may be described as follows: The account of the creation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:4b-26) testifies God made man, or Adam first. God spoke to Adam first. God gave Adam the first law by which he was to live and the consequences for breaking the law: he must not eat the forbidden fruit and would die if he did. God created Eve from Adam's rib for Adam's benefit. Genesis 2:19 testifies that Adam named all the animals God created for him. The act of naming testified to Adam's dominion or superiority over the animals. In Genesis 2:27, Adam gave Eve her name without her advice and consent, thereby testifying to his superiority (the one who names (i.e., a parent) is superior to the one named (i.e., a child)). Adam spoke to Eve and explained God's commandments with respect to the forbidden fruit. All of this evidence speaks to the subordination of Eve to Adam.

A minority of exegetes or interpreters have interpreted these verses to prohibit women from speaking in any way, shape or form in worship. However, the majority of scholars interpret 1 Corinthians 14:34 in light of 1 Corinthians 11:5 which would permit women to pray and prophesy in the assembly of believers. In common church life, prophecy was recognized to be a spirit-prompted utterance though with no guarantee of divine authority in every detail and therefore, was not only in need of evaluation (1 Corinthians 14:29),¹ but

¹ 1 Corinthians 14:29: "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said."

necessarily inferior in authority to the deposit of truth represented by the Apostle Paul. (1 Corinthians 14:37-38).² Prophecy had to be evaluated in light of the non-negotiable apostolic deposit of teaching which Paul had communicated to the Corinthian congregation and is found in his letters to the churches. If Paul's call to silence cannot prohibit women from prophesying, it must then prohibit women from participating in the weighing of prophecies; that is, participating in the discussion on what the prophecy might mean. If a wife contributed to a discussion concerning her husband's prophecy, this would be a violation of the submissive character of a wife and unacceptable in the assembly of believers for that very reason.³

1 Timothy 2:11-14: ¹¹A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

What precisely is Paul prohibiting when he prohibits women from teaching men? The Greek word for translating 'teach' and its cognate nouns 'teaching' (*didaskalia*) and 'teacher' (*didaskalos*) are typically used in the New Testament to denote the careful and scrupulous transmission of the tradition concerning Jesus Christ and the authoritative proclamation of God's will to believers in light of that tradition.

What does it mean have to authority over a man? It is defined as a governing or ruling function exercised under God by some Christians over others (1 Thessalonians 5:12 and Hebrews 13:17). This governing authority is generally given to the elders in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy 3:5; 5:17). The office of elder is always referred to in reference to a male leader.⁴ 1 Timothy 13 and 14 are intended to remind the women at Ephesus that Eve was deceived by the serpent in the Garden (Genesis 3:13) precisely in taking the initiative over the man whom God had given to be with her and to care for her. In the same way, if the women at the church at Ephesus proclaim their independence from the men of the church, refusing to learn "in quietness and full submission" (verse 11), seeking roles that have been given to men in the church (verse 12), they will make the same mistake Eve made and bring similar disaster on themselves and the church."⁵

Implications: The Ministry of Word and Sacrament requires that the pastor preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in public and in the congregation of the saints; baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; administer Holy Communion; and exercise authority over men and women in teaching and the administration of the life of a congregation of saints. 1 Corinthians 14:33-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 prohibit a woman from speaking in church and teaching and having authority over a man. It is essential for a pastor to speak and teach with authority in the church; women cannot, therefore they can't be pastors. Paul's appeal to creation in support of his injunctions against the participation of women in the assembly of the saints as pastors and teachers has been interpreted as decisive for all time and all places. Yet some Christian denominations, including Lutheran denominations, have ordained women to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

The case in support of the ordination of women asks a fundamental question: Are Paul's injunctions against the participation of women in the assembly of the saints as leaders and teachers found in 1 Corinthians 14:33-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 decisive for all time and all places or can they be seen as accommodations, necessary for a season, in order to avoid offense? The thesis of this paper is that Paul's injunctions were not meant to be permanent and that Old Testament and New Testament scriptures may be interpreted to foreshadow the call of women to ordained ministry. The thesis may be stated as follows:

² 1 Corinthians 14:37-38: If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.

³ D. A. Carson, "**SILENT IN THE CHURCHES**": ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN 1 CORINTHIANS 14:33B-36, John Piper & Wayne Grudem, Editors **RECOVERING BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD A Response to Evangelical Feminism**, (1991 CROSSWAY BOOKS, WHEATON, ILLINOIS, A DIVISION OF GOOD NEWS PUBLISHERS) page 144

⁴ Douglas Moo, "**WHAT DOES IT MEAN NOT TO TEACH OR HAVE AUTHORITY OVER MEN?**", John Piper & Wayne Grudem, Editors **RECOVERING BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD A Response to Evangelical Feminism**, (1991 CROSSWAY BOOKS, WHEATON, ILLINOIS, A DIVISION OF GOOD NEWS PUBLISHERS) page 184.

⁵ Douglas Moo, "**WHAT DOES IT MEAN NOT TO TEACH OR HAVE AUTHORITY OVER MEN?**", John Piper & Wayne Grudem, Editors **RECOVERING BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD A Response to Evangelical Feminism**, (1991 CROSSWAY BOOKS, WHEATON, ILLINOIS, A DIVISION OF GOOD NEWS PUBLISHERS) page 184

- (a) The injunctions prohibiting women from speaking in church and teaching and having authority over men as described in 1 Corinthians 14:33-36 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 may be interpreted as imposed for a season to avoid offense not unlike the prohibitions imposed by the Apostles relating to the consumption of blood and food sacrificed to idols.
- (b) Galatians 3:26-29 declares that those baptized into Christ's name put on Christ and, as a result, are all one before God; we are no longer men or women. The old orders of creation are not binding on the baptized.
- (c) While Ephesians 5:21-33 calls wives to submit to their husbands, said submission is not based on orders of creation; rather, it is based upon Christ's voluntary submission to God and to the Church. Christ is the head of His Bride, the Church.
- (d) As head of the Church, Jesus has committed to all Christians, as members of a royal priesthood: preaching, teaching, absolution, prayer, spiritual sacrifice, Baptism, the Eucharist and discernment of doctrine. Christ also appoints Pastors and teachers to equip His priests and conduct public ministry on behalf of all His priests.
- (e) Both the Old and New Testaments scriptures reveal that God and Jesus have called women of faith to take leadership positions in God's covenant community; that is, to speak, prophesy, teach, lead and provide spiritual counsel to God's people in God's name. We believe and trust that God's call and appointment of women to leadership positions in the Old and New Testaments represents an integral part of the fulfillment of God's promise to make His covenant people a royal priesthood (Exodus 19:5-6 and 1 Peter 2:4-10) and points to their eventual call to the office of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Therefore, any CALC congregation who, by the Holy Spirit's guidance, discerns that a woman is being called by God to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament within their congregation and is satisfied that said woman's character, commitment, ability and preparation permit her to serve in that office, may call that woman to that office, and in the case of a first call, ordain her.

2. The Apostolic Council (Acts 15:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14)

The Apostolic Council in Jerusalem is monumental in the history of Christ's Church. It was called to settle a dispute. Paul and Barnabas were representatives to the council from the Church in Antioch. At the time of the council, congregations were composed of Jews and Gentiles. Jewish Christians began to raise issues which threatened to break the congregations apart. The council wrestled with this question: What was absolutely necessary for salvation and thus for membership in the Christian Church?

Some Jewish Christians contended that a man could not be saved unless he was circumcised after the custom of Moses. Faith in Jesus Christ was not enough, circumcision had to be added. Consistency would have required the whole legal code to be added, including the dietary laws. Circumcision was necessary in the Old Covenant; it was part and parcel of the covenant as set forth in Genesis 17:10-11. The New Covenant however, rests wholly on Jesus' blood. Circumcision, together with the whole legal code, had come to an end. The sole function of the Old Covenant was to lead to the New Covenant. To say that circumcision is required in addition to faith in Jesus for salvation made Jesus less than our complete saviour. The council held that circumcision was not required. In addition, the Apostle James spoke up and proposed a resolution which exempted Gentile Christians from circumcision; yet maintained three prohibitions based on the Torah; namely, eating food sacrificed to idols, blood and strangled meat (Acts 15:19-20).

The Apostle James' resolution was unanimously accepted. The result was that Jew and Gentile Christian remained on the same level in every way; their living together in full unity was mediated by Christian love in the domain of liberty in the adiaphora or the non-essentials. RCH Lenski wrote: "The four points communicated by the council constitute fraternal advice to the Gentile congregations deemed necessary for them in view of their gentile origin and their position in Gentile and pagan surroundings and as being brethren of Jewish Christians in almost all cities. The idea of James is by no means that of an Apostolic decree handed

down by an apostolic authority which demands legal obedience. The Apostles are not a body which substitutes for Moses and decrees laws similar to those given to Israel at God's command."⁶

The Apostles were dealing with a real problem. Jewish and Gentile Christians were part of a community in which they were encouraged to worship and eat together. Some of the meat and other food on a table may have been sacrificed to an idol. Food sacrificed to idols is the fruit of the violation of the first commandment not to worship gods other than the Lord God. In addition, food sacrificed to idols would have been handled by Gentiles, which would automatically pollute the meat under Levitical law. Jews would have been repulsed. Meat on the table could also have come from an animal that had been snared, not butchered and bled out, thereby 'unclean' because the blood is still in it (Leviticus 17:13). The Israelite was absolutely prohibited from eating blood (Leviticus 17:14 and Deuteronomy 12:16, 23).

As we will see in Section 4 below, the Levitical prohibition of eating strangled meat and blood are done away with by the sacrificial death of Jesus. In addition, during his earthly ministry, Jesus declared that food could no longer make a person unclean. Jesus testified concerning food and the ability of food to make one unclean: "Are you so dull?", he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean." (Mark 7:17-19. See also Matthew 15:11) The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:1ff spoke of the dangers inherent in eating such foods. It was common for meat sacrificed to pagan gods and deities to be served at dinners and banquets that a Gentile convert to Christianity would still attend. Paul assured the Gentile members of the Church at Corinth that there is only one God and that the idols to which their pagan neighbours made sacrifices to were not real; therefore, the food so sacrificed was not polluted. Lenski contends that even though Jewish Christians knew that these points of the law were abrogated, they still felt horror for eating blood or any meat that has blood in it.⁷ The Apostles thus prohibited what was plainly permitted.

The Apostles prohibited what was possible for one reason alone: to permit Jews and Gentile Christians to worship and live together for a time. The prohibition eventually lapsed and fell into disuse when Jewish Christians exercised their Christian Freedom and gave up following the Torah's dietary laws and the church became an essentially Gentile church. The key reason in the removal of the dietary restrictions was the belief and trust that Jesus' sacrificial death had fulfilled the Torah's dietary requirements.

The Reformers saw the Apostolic Decree in Acts 15:19-21 as establishing and embodying a principle of interpretation of scriptural prohibitions and ecclesial or canon laws. Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession provides: "The apostles directed that one should abstain from blood and that which is strangled. Who observes this prohibition now? Those who do not observe it commit no sin, for the apostles did not want to burden consciences with such bondages but forbade such eating for a time to avoid offense. For in this decree we must perpetually consider what the aim of the Gospel is." Scriptural prohibitions and ecclesial or canon laws were to be viewed in this light; namely, whether the prohibitions and the burdens on consciences which sprang there-from, were for the promotion of good order only for a period of time, or were deemed necessary for salvation and therefore imposed for the Church age. In order for the restrictions on women imposed by 1 Corinthians 14:33-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 to be seen in the same light as food sacrificed to idols, blood and strangled meat, it must be shown that Jesus' death and resurrection redeemed men and women from the curse of the fall and that Paul's reference to the first order of creation was necessary for a time to avoid offence.

3. The Sacrificial Death of Jesus Satisfied the Parts of the Torah which Subordinated Women to Men

In his letter to the Galatian churches, the Apostle Paul declared that Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection forever changed the relationship between Christian men and women.

Galatians 3:24-29: You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

⁶ Lenski, RCH, The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, (1944, Wartburg Press, U.S.A.) Pages 613-614

⁷ Lenski, RCH, The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, (1944, Wartburg Press, U.S.A.) Page 616

Paul's declaration in Galatians 3:24-29 has many implications for believers. Lenski put it this way: "In Baptism, all Galatians are alike clothed with the garment of Christ's perfect righteousness. In God's eyes, they are all alike. During the time the Mosaic Law was in force, this law itself recognized and maintained differences. It had provisions for Jews over against the Gentiles – many of them; for free men over against slaves; for men over against women. When faith and Christ came, these distinctions were abolished."⁸

Lenski continues this line of reasoning: "The Old distinction between Jew and Gentile is placed first; it extends to the nations. Next is that between the slave and the free; we must remember that this extended through the whole Roman world at that time. These two pairs are placed chiasmatically; for Jew was greater than Pagan Greek, and free, of course, greater than slave. The last difference is a coordinate pair, two neuter terms: "no male and female," i.e. no male or female sex. Paul stops with this; any other distinction can readily be added. He says: Since you Galatians are all sons of God by faith, clothed with Christ's righteousness by baptism, all these and similar distinctions and differences are wiped out as to your spiritual standing. This does not involve a physical mutation. Christians of Jewish or Greek descent retained their descent, free men and slaves kept their social positions, men and women kept their sex. The Gospel changes nothing in the domain of this world and this natural life. In a way the Gospel effects changes also in this domain. It has driven out slavery and elevated the status of women. But Paul is here speaking of the Spiritual domain, of God's household in which all believers are equally sons of God."⁹

Lenski clearly stated that the equality declared in Galatians 3:26-29 was in the "Spiritual domain." He also declared that the Gospel affects this domain of time and space without elaborating. The Gospel and the Lutheran Confessions testify mightily of the intersection of this domain and the "Spiritual domain." Jesus declared that when two or three of His disciples gather together in His name for worship, prayer and praise, He is present among his disciples (Matthew 18:20). Martin Luther, in his explanation to the third Article to the Apostles Creed, writes that we cannot come to Jesus Christ or believe in Him without the agency of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of the Gospel. In the same way, the Holy Spirit calls, gathers and enlightens the whole Christian church.¹⁰ The Apostle Paul testified that when each of us is baptized, we are joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus. This death and resurrection occurs in the Spiritual Domain. In his explanation of the Sacrament of the Altar in his Small Catechism, Luther further declared that when we receive Holy Communion, we receive Jesus in, with and under the bread and the wine and our sins are forgiven.¹¹ Our receipt of Jesus in Holy Communion occurs in the Spiritual domain. Whenever the Gospel is preached in its purity and the Sacraments are rightly administered, the Spiritual domain and our domain intersect.

It is when we gather for worship, prayer, praise and study that we are in that Spiritual domain. In the Spiritual domain, Galatians 3:26-29 declares that, to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, there are no Jews or Greeks present, nor are there any men or women, or slaves or free people. It is precisely in this domain that we are one in Christ to God. The problem is that we can't see that. Through human eyes, we still see Jews and Greeks, men and women, slaves and free people. We have the vision problems.

It is precisely because we have eyes and yet cannot see that God has made concessions. God knew that Jewish Christians could not look at food tainted by blood or idol worship. God knew that some Gentile Christians would also not be able to stomach eating food tainted by idol worship or watch other Christians eat tainted food (See 1 Corinthians 8:1ff). God is great and God is merciful. He moved the Apostles' hearts to be merciful and encouraged all Christians, Gentile and Jew, to abstain from tainted food. God knew that Jewish Christians, who had heard the Torah for generations, believed Adam was made first, that God spoke to Adam first and permitted Adam to name Eve. In this way, God made Adam the superior of Eve. They believed that Eve was deceived by the serpent to sin against God and she caused Adam to sin. God knew that when these Jewish Christians saw a woman speak in their assembly, they would see Eve and be offended. God is great

⁸ Lenski, RCH, **The Interpretation of Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians**. (1946, Wartburg Press, U.S.A.) Page 188

⁹ RCH, **The Interpretation of Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians**. (1946, Wartburg Press, U.S.A.) Page 189.

¹⁰ Tappert, William, Editor, **The Book of Concord**. (1954, Augsburg Publishing, Minneapolis) Page 243

¹¹ Tappert, William, Editor, **The Book of Concord**. (1954, Augsburg Publishing, Minneapolis) Page

and merciful, he moved Paul to tell women not to speak in the assembly or teach or have authority over a man. The question is begged, did God intend Christians to maintain these attitudes and visual problems in perpetuity?

Paul's letter to the Galatian churches answers the foregoing question in the negative. The Apostle Paul assumed they had problems with their vision and used the letter to correct their vision. Paul declared that his letter was in response to the mayhem caused by some Jewish Christians. These Judaizers wanted the Galatians to 'see' their assembly the way God 'saw' it. They convinced the Galatians that God had inspected their assembly and He did not like what the inspection had revealed. God, they said, wanted to see some changes around the Galatian churches. God wanted to see the men circumcised, Sabbath worship practiced, men, women and children eating kosher, and all the proper festivals observed. Paul's response was that God didn't see them in this way at all. He declared that, because of their baptism in the Triune name, God did not see *them*, He only saw Christ in them. Paul argued that the whole purpose of the Gospel was to give blind people sight, so they could see Jesus clearly. He wanted them to see that they were saved by Grace through faith in Jesus, not by observance of the law. Through Paul, Jesus invited the Galatians and all other Christians to see past the man or the woman in the pew beside us, preaching to us or teaching us, and to see Him.

4. The Subordination of One Christian to Another is Voluntary, Based on Christ's Sacrifice

The New Testament scriptures testify that Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit to see submission of one Christian to another in a new and different way. Paul called wives to submit to their husbands. However, said submission of wife to husband was not based on an order of creation; rather, said submission was based upon the example of Jesus and His perfect submission to God and to the Church in His earthly ministry and Passion. This principal submission, including wife to husband, is beautifully stated by Paul in Ephesians 5:21-32:

²¹Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

In verse 21, Paul called all Christians to submit to one another regardless of age, race, ethnic status, social status or gender, not out of obedience to a law code or Torah, but out of love for and imitation of our Lord Jesus. Paul's admonition to the mutual and reciprocal submission of all Christians is echoed in Romans and Philippians and by the Apostle Peter.¹² Lenski put it this way. In the church there is: "No rivalry, no self exaltation, no divisive pride is to interfere. Rich and poor, learned and simple, high and low are to be one, and this is accomplished by "subjecting themselves to each other in Christ's fear," not in false humility in sycophancy [defined as using submission and flattery to gain an end], or the like. None is to subject another; each is to subject himself, voluntarily freely. This is to be mutual, reciprocal and all around."¹³

Paul then speaks of self-subjection within the marriage relationship of husband and wife. Wives are to submit to their husbands. What God first wrought in creation continues to please God in the redeemed relationship between a husband and a wife. However, the submission of wife to husband is not based on the old order of creation: (a) man was created first; (b) God spoke to man first and prohibited the forbidden fruit; (c) woman was made for man; (d) man communicated God's words of prohibition to woman; and, (e) woman was

¹² Roman 12:10: Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Philippians 2:3: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 1 Peter 5:5: Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

¹³ Lenski, RCH, The Interpretation of Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians. (1946, Wartburg Press, U.S.A.) Page 623-624

deceived and broke God's law and caused man and woman to fall. The marriage of a man and a woman is likened to the marriage of the Lamb (Jesus) to the Church.¹⁴

Jesus is the head of the Church because He gave His life for the Church. The Church submits to Jesus because Jesus is the head of the Church. In the same way, wives are to submit themselves to husbands. There can be but one head in a relationship. Wives are to submit to their husbands in all things. However, Lenski adds this caution: "This self-subjection is not partial but complete "in everything." Yet, in the nature of the case, the phrase is involved in the things involved in the marriage or home relation. Luther drew the scriptural line well when he called Christian Marriage *ein weltlicher Handel*. He did not mean a "worldly affair" but an affair pertaining to the natural and not the spiritual or the church life. In all religious matters the Gal. 3:28 applies: neither male or female, for you are all one man in Jesus Christ. But in all earthly matters the husband functions as the head."¹⁵ The Christian husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. Christ loved his own body, the church, so when the husband loves his wife he loves his body.

God's love for the house of Israel and Christ's love for His bride, the Church, is seen in God's establishment of His covenant community as a royal priesthood and a holy nation, the giving of the Holy Spirit to His priests so that God's will is communicated, and the appointment of leaders over the priests. God's love for the House of Israel and Christ's love for His Church is seen in their appointment of leaders, to whom God has called His priests to submit as a wife submits to her husband.

5. God Called Men and Women into a Covenant Community of Royal Priests and Prophets

God called the descendants of Abraham to be members of a royal priesthood. Following the Exodus from Egypt, God brought the people to Mt. Sinai. God was about to reveal the Law. God made this promise to Moses: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you [all the people] will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." (Exodus 19:5-6). Priests are not priests unless they offer sacrifices. The priests of the House of Israel offered sacrifices. The Law provided that the males of the Tribe of Levi were to worship God and offer animal sacrifices to God on behalf of all the priests. These animal sacrifices all pointed to Jesus. All priests of the House of Israel were to live according to the Torah; they were to love and worship God alone, to practice the Sabbath, follow the Torah's dietary requirements, attend the requisite festivals at the Tabernacle and then the Temple, and to follow the Torah's moral code, including refraining from sexual immorality as stated in Leviticus 18 and 20. Fathers were to teach children to conform their lives to the Torah. This whole law pointed to God's Holy will for mankind and the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, to free the people from their sins.

In addition to being a royal priesthood, God called His people to be prophets. Moses led the people of Israel by virtue of God's call and an anointing with the Holy Spirit. God used Moses to communicate this desire and intent as revealed in Numbers Chapter 11. This chapter discloses that the chosen people had been wandering in the desert for a period of time. Their daily diet consisted of manna. They began to complain and grumble to Moses about the manna and demanded meat. The people's rejection of the manna was seen as evil by the Lord. It showed contempt for the Lord and His providential care for them. The people's rejection of the manna was disconcerting and troubling for Moses. Moses became frustrated. Rather than turn to God and ask for guidance and understanding so that he could respond to the people, Moses turned to the Lord with a lament. He asked God why He had vexed him with this calamity. He argued that he would rather die than deal with this obdurate people. The Lord's response to Moses' lament was twofold. It was loving and gracious toward Moses and represented a judgement on the people. The Lord judged and cursed their desire for meat. Not only would He give them meat, but would give them so much that they would get sick of it. He had mercy on Moses. God permitted Moses' workload to be shared. God placed some of the same Spirit that was on Moses on seventy designated elders.

¹⁴ Revelation 19:7; 21:9; and 22:17: ⁷Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. ⁹One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." ¹⁷The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

¹⁵ Lenski, RCH, [The Interpretation of Galatians, Ephesians and Philippians](#). (1946, Wartburg Press, U.S.A.) Page 628

So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the Tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again. (Numbers 11:24-25)

When the Spirit came upon them, they went throughout the camp and prophesied; that is, spoke to the people in God's name and revealed God's will to them. The prophetic role of these elders was temporary and their prophesying ceased in short order. Their principal task was to help in the administration of the people, especially in light of their impiety. The Lord had summoned the elders to the Tent of the Meeting; however, two of them remained in the camp. The Spirit came upon them and they prophesied. A young man, most probably Joshua, the son Nun, objected to their prophesying. He informed Moses and asked Moses to silence these men. The young man feared the implication of these two prophesying after the other elders had prophesied. These men could be seen as challenging Moses' leadership. "But Moses replied,

"Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp." (Numbers 11:28-29).

Moses desired that all of God's people would receive God's Spirit and the gifts the Spirit gives, including leadership, proclamation, teaching, administration and understanding God's will. Moses' wish as articulated in Numbers 11:28-29 became God's promise spoken through the Prophet Joel.

"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." (Joel 2:28-29)

God permitted Joel to see into the distant future; specifically, to a time that God would pour out His Holy Spirit on people in abundance and with power. God's covenant people are the intended recipients; yet the circle is drawn wider, on all people of the earth, regardless of their age, status and/or sex. It would be a time of renewed spiritual activity. People touched by the Spirit would dream dreams, convey God's will in prophetic speech and see visions. The Book of Joel points to a future where a redeemed and refined covenant people, men and women, eagerly do God's will, which is to carry His message to generations standing under God's final judgment.

The Apostle Peter heralded the beginning of a new era in Acts Chapter 2:14-18. It was fifty days after the Resurrection, on the Jewish Pentecost, that God first acted to fulfill the promise made through the prophet Joel in Joel 2:28-29. The Apostle Peter also pronounced a blessing on those whom the Holy Spirit would fall. Speaking for the Lord, Peter pronounced this blessing on the Church:

"As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus ChristBut you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9)

Peter declared that God's promise to make His chosen people a royal priesthood and Holy nation in Exodus was renewed in the covenant community which arose after Pentecost: the Church. Peter's words created the expectation that, as the Church grew, both men and women would receive the Holy Spirit and would prophecy, see visions, dream dreams and serve God through spiritual sacrifices offered in the community of priests.

Luther declared and proclaimed that every Christian was a member of the royal priesthood that the Apostle Peter announced, together with all the rights and duties appertaining thereto. Luther made this bold declaration in a letter written by him in 1523, which has been titled, "**Concerning the Ministry.**" The letter was to the Bohemian church and the Senate of Prague. It was sent in response to their dilemma. The pope had persistently refused to appoint an archbishop for Bohemia. The lack of an archbishop prohibited the Bohemians from ordaining priests for their churches. Only priests trained and ordained in Rome could serve in the Bohemian churches. The Bohemian churches were most displeased with the priests they received from the pope. They appealed to Luther for advice. Luther asserted that, by reason of Rome's unconscionable behaviour in refusing to appoint a Bohemian archbishop, and the questionable training and morals of the

priests that were actually sent by Rome, the Bohemian churches had the right to engage in acts of ecclesial disobedience, and ordain their own priests.

Luther's advice was rooted in his understanding of the difference between a priest and a pastor or minister. He wrote: "For a priest, especially in the New Testament, was not made but born. He was created, not ordained. He was born not indeed of flesh, but through a birth of the Spirit, by water and the Spirit in the washing of the regeneration. (John 3:6f; Titus 3:5f). Indeed all Christians are priests and all priests are Christians."¹⁶ Luther quotes 1 Peter 2:9 and Revelation 5:10¹⁷ as evidence of Christ's appointment of all Christians as priests of equal degree. He noted that the function of the priest include:

1. To teach, preach and proclaim the Word of God;
2. To baptize;
3. To consecrate or administer the Eucharist;
4. To bind and lose sins;
5. To pray for others;
6. To sacrifice (Romans 12:1f prayer and praise);
7. To judge all doctrine and spirit.

Luther reminds us that all of these duties require the teaching of the Word of God. We teach with the Word, consecrate with the Word, we bind and absolve sins with the Word, we baptize with the Word, we sacrifice with the Word, we judge all things with the Word. This Word is given to all Christians; therefore, no one can deny anything to Christians who have received the Word with respect to the exercise of his/her priesthood. Luther declared that preaching, teaching and proclamation; baptism; the Eucharist, the office of the keys; prayer; sacrifice and discernment belong to all Christians.

Luther declared that every Christian has the right to perform each and every function of a priest; however, while everyone may have a right to do something, it certainly is not wise for everyone to perform every function. Further, Luther affirmed no one person can rise up and take or usurp the right to exercise the priestly duties when it belongs to all. The community must arise and must choose from among its number, one or more, who will exercise the priestly duties publically. Others in the community would be permitted to perform the priestly acts in a time of emergency; however, regularly, the ones appointed would perform the priestly duties. So the church makes the minister out of one of the priests. Luther is clear: the appointment of the minister is for the sake of the good order of the church. He argued that, if one is chosen and acts, there is order, "Otherwise, there might be shameful confusion among the people of God, and a kind of Babylon in the church, where everything should be done in order, as the Apostle teaches (1 Corinthians 14:40). For it is one thing to exercise a right publically; another to use it in time of emergency. Publically one may not exercise a right without consent of the whole body or of the church. In time of emergency each may use it as he deems best."¹⁸

Scriptures testify that the members of this royal priesthood are called by God; that is, they do not serve by their own volition or by their own reason and strength. This principle is most especially articulated in God's call of leaders of His covenant community. Scripture declares that God does not call the qualified; rather, He qualifies the ones He calls. George F. Wollenberg articulated this concept as follows: "God does not accept volunteers. All the prophets of the Old Testament are reluctant conscripts, drafted against their will into the service of God as His spokesmen. It is God who calls. Moses meets God in the desert when he examines a bush which is burning and is not consumed (Ex 3:1ff). The Lord speaks to Moses, "I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring the children of Israel out of Egypt." Moses objects, "First the people will want to know Your name or they will not listen. What is they say, "How will we know the Lord sent you?" Then the final objection: "I've been out here so long with the sheep that I am no longer capable of speaking well in the court of the king of Egypt." God gave Moses no choice. "Aaron will be your mouth and you shall be to him as God" (Ex. 4:16). Moses agrees because the Lord has become angry with him (Ex. 4:14). He is the reluctant

¹⁶ C. Bergendoff, H.T. Lehman, Editors, **Luther's Works, Volume 40, Church and Ministry II**, (1958 Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia). Page 19.

¹⁷ **1 Peter 2:9**: But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." **Revelation 5:10**: You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

¹⁸ C. Bergendoff, H.T. Lehman, Editors, **Luther's Works, Volume 40, Church and Ministry II**, (1958 Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia). Page 34.

prophet.” Wollenberg adds Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Jonah to the list of reluctant prophets. Each one protested his lack of qualification for the task. The Lord overcame each objection. The Lord then guided each leader and prophet in the Old Testament.

God, through Jesus, called and qualified many leaders in the New Testament:

“It was he [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The church came into being through the teaching and preaching of the Apostles. We believe, teach and confess that the pastoral ministry, or office of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, is a divinely instituted office established by God to serve His priests. It was given as a gift from God for the building up and edification of the church. We believe, teach and confess that we cannot obtain the forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works or satisfactions. Our sins are forgiven and we are made righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, when we believe that Jesus suffered for us and for His sake our sins are forgiven and we are made righteous before God. In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel.¹⁹ It is through the office of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament that the Priesthood of All Believers comes into being.

Luther declared that congregations, in obedience to the will of God, have the command from God to call pastors. Pastors cannot be volunteers; each must experience a call from God to the ministry. It is in the pastoral candidate's dialogue with the congregation that God works and moves a congregation to issue a call. When the congregation issues a call, it is a call from God. Luther urged the Bohemian congregations to pray earnestly to God. First, they were to repent and admit that their sins put them in the predicament they found themselves in. Second, they were to pray to God for the wisdom and grace necessary to call the right pastor. Third, they were to assemble, appoint candidates and have the assembly elect their pastors. Leaders in the congregation are to lay hands on the candidates and make them bishops, ministers or pastors. Luther warned the Bohemian churches not to fall into the error that equated pastoral ministry with an estate, an order, an authority or dignity that stands on its own. What makes pastoral ministry is the office and the function (vocation). The authority and dignity of pastoral ministry resides in the community of the believers.²⁰ The congregation has the right to call a pastor in accordance with its own will. The church was to appoint and call faithful men in accordance with Paul's instruction in 1 Timothy and Titus on the definition of Elder and Deacon. In so doing, Luther capitulated to Paul's stance that women are not qualified to be pastors. There is no question that in the history of Israel and the fledgling Church, God has spoken to, through and led His people predominantly through men. However, those same scriptures testify that God called women of faith to take leadership positions in Israel; that is, to speak, prophesy, teach, lead and provide spiritual counsel to God's people in God's name. The call of women to leadership is echoed in the New Testament. Paul's declaration that among the baptized there are no men or women but a unity in Christ, was embodied by Jesus in His own treatment of women and in the partnership between men and women that arose after Pentecost. All of this scriptural evidence points to the possibility of God's call of women to leadership positions in the church, including the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

6. God Called Women of Faith to Leadership Roles in the Old Testament

The Old Testament Scriptures testify that God spoke to and through women. These women taught, judged and prophesied, and in so doing, exercised authority over men and women. They led during the time that wives (women) were subordinate to husbands (men) by the Law, namely, the orders of creation and the fall.

¹⁹ Tappert, Theodore G., The Book of Concord, The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (1959 Fortress Press, Philadelphia) Pages 30-31.

²⁰ Ibid. Page 35.

Miriam: The Old Testament scriptures attest to Miriam's status as a prophetess and leader. "I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam." (Micah 6:4). Following the destruction of the Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea, Moses was moved by the Holy Spirit to worship God before the people of Israel. Moses, once again moved by the Holy Spirit, broke forth in a psalm praising God for this great victory (Exodus 15:1-18) in front of the whole assembly. The text continues with a Holy Spirit inspired, albeit abbreviated, psalm sung by Miriam in the same assembly: "Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea." (Exodus 15:21) Miriam described herself as a vessel through whom God spoke. Referring to Aaron and herself, she declared: "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this." God was not pleased with her outburst and the presumption she had displayed. She presumed to be on par with Moses. God punished Miriam and Aaron for their haughtiness. However, Miriam's haughtiness did not vitiate her leadership in Israel's life or her prophetic ministry.

Deborah: The Book of Judges speaks of the rule of a female judge named Deborah. The scriptures describe Deborah as follows: "Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided." (Judges 4:4-5). In these short and pithy sentences she is described as a leader of the people. The words point to Moses and his appointed male subordinates who sat as judges over the people as described in Exodus 18. When asked by his father-in law Jethro to describe his role as judge, Moses responded: "...the people come to me to seek God's will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws." (Exodus 18:15b-16). God's people saw Deborah as one to whom to go to seek God's will and have their disputes judged. The palm tree is used in scripture to allude to the grace and stateliness of women (See Song of Songs 7:7-8). The allusion to the palm tree in the description of Deborah's judgeship, may speak to her grace and stateliness as she judged between and among the Israelites.

Around the time of Deborah's judgeship, a coalition of Canaanite forces led by King Jabin and his fierce general Sissera, oppressed Israel mercilessly for some twenty years. Sissera commanded 900 chariots and was considered invincible as a result. The Israelites cried out to God for help. God gave Deborah a vision in response to their prayers. God directed Deborah to challenge Barak to gather troops and to move them to a site near the Kishon River. This would be a challenge to Sissera and would cause him to deploy his chariots and troops in response. Deborah delivered God's message to Barak. His response was not one of complete faith and trust. He declared he would go only if Deborah accompanied him. In Barak's mind, Deborah's presence on the battlefield would assure tangible contact with God and success in battle, the same way that the presence of Moses and the Ark of the Covenant had assured Israel's success in battle in the past (Numbers 10:35). When Moses and the Ark were not with Israel as they met an enemy, Israel lost the battle (Numbers 14:44). Deborah acquiesced to Barak's request, but at the same time chastised him for his lack of faith. She further prophesied the honour of taking Sissera's life would be taken from him and given to a woman. She accompanied Barak as he raised troops and assembled them as God directed. Sissera advanced just as predicted. Barak attacked after Deborah's assurance to him that the Lord would go ahead of the Israelite army. God indeed intervened and the Canaanites were routed and defeated and Sissera was killed by a Kenite woman. In response to the victory God had given them, Barak and Deborah sang the hymn of praise and victory recorded in Judges 5. The hymn is ascribed to Deborah.

Huldah: The account of the prophetess Huldah is found in 2 Kings 22: 11-20. Her ministrations occurred during the reign of the King Josiah in Judah. The Book of the Law was found in the Jerusalem Temple. As a consequence of this discovery, the King heard the words of the law code for the first time. The King became instantly aware of two things. First, the people had completely neglected the covenant with God and had not worshiped Him or kept the appointed feasts. The people had grievously broken their covenant with God. Secondly, the law code provided for the punishment of their transgressions; specifically, the destruction of the nation. The king Josiah was mortified. He confessed his sin and the sin of the people and expressed his contrition by tearing his robes. He gave orders to his secretary, high priest and attendant to inquire of God on his behalf. Josiah's representatives went to the prophetess Huldah who lived in Jerusalem. Huldah announced God's wrath and judgment on Jerusalem. However, she also announced God was moved by Josiah's

confession and contrition and that, as a result, God promised to withhold destruction until the end of Josiah's life. Josiah would die at peace with God before the terrible judgment would come on Jerusalem and Judah. Huldah's words came to pass. In response to Huldah's words, Josiah renewed the covenant with the Lord, as did the people. He instituted a purge: the Temple, Jerusalem and the surrounding lands were cleansed of all pagan worship practices and sites of worship. He rid the land of Pagan priests, male shrine prostitutes and mediums.

God promised to make the Children of Israel a royal priesthood and prophets. Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Moses and Joel were men and women upon whom the Holy Spirit had fallen and their ministry among God's people were concrete examples of royal priesthood and prophetic office in action. They demonstrated what the Holy Spirit's presence wrought in the lives of these great men and women. The Holy Spirit permitted Miriam and Deborah to lead the people. Deborah fed God's people with teaching and adjudication. God used her to strengthen Barak's weak faith. She taught the people about worship to sing praises to God in response to His providential protection. Miriam led with Moses and taught the women to sing songs of victory. God used Huldah to communicate God's forgiveness to a King chastened by God's word and thereby gave Josiah, his counsellors and the nation of Judah the strength and courage to renew their covenant with God and resume the proper worship of God. To use the language of Numbers 11, some of the Spirit which God had placed on Moses was placed by the same God on Miriam, Deborah and Huldah and they led despite their gender and the status their gender occupied at the time of their ministrations. What was the purpose of the ministrations of Miriam, Deborah and Huldah? Was the ministry they provided to Israel a mere anomaly or were their ministrations concrete evidence that the priestly and prophetic office fell on both men and women and that both sexes had authority to lead in these areas (albeit women leaders were in the minority)? God continued to put some of the same Spirit He put on Moses, on women in the New Testament. The ministrations of women continued in the New Testament times.

7. In the New Testament God Spoke to and Through Women Prophetically in the Manner of Huldah

The Lord God spoke to the Virgin Mary through the angel Gabriel and revealed His plan to bring the Messiah to earth through her. Mary consented and Messiah was conceived in her by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary's cousin Elizabeth when she came into the Virgin Mary's presence. Luke records that Elizabeth was able to discern the presence of Jesus in Mary's womb and bless Mary and the infant Jesus in a loud voice. (Luke 1:39:45). Elizabeth's prophetic utterance was echoed by Mary's Holy Spirit inspired hymn of victory and praise we call the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple for His dedication, the Prophetess Anna "gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38).

In response to Jesus' assertion that He was the resurrection and the life, Martha replied, "Yes, Lord". She told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." (John 11:27) Martha's confession echoes Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 12:16). Jesus declared that Peter's confession could not be attributed to his own reason, strength and ability; rather it was based on the power of God. "Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." (Matthew 12:17) Peter and Martha spoke and confessed in the power of the Holy Spirit. Martha made this proclamation in front of an audience at Jesus' direction.

The Gospel of Luke records this account of the healing of a woman on a Sabbath in a synagogue during the time Jesus was teaching. (Luke 13:10-13). These verses confirm the presence of women in a synagogue on a Sabbath during a time of worship and a time preaching and teaching. Her response to healing was to praise God in that assembly in response to a miraculous healing wrought by the very Son of God.

On the day of resurrection, the synoptic Gospels attest that it was the women who went to Jesus' tomb first. They were the first to see the empty tomb; they were the first to be told by the angel at the tomb that Jesus was not in the tomb; that He had risen from the dead. (Mark 16:1-8, Matthew 28:1-10; Luke 24:1-11). St. John's Gospel attests that Mary Magdalene was the first person to arrive at Jesus' empty tomb and also the first person to see the risen Lord (John 20:1, 11-18). The Gospels record that the resurrection was first revealed to

the named women and that Mary Magdalene was the first witness to the risen Christ and she went to tell Peter the good news.

The Apostle Paul himself records that women prophesied during the New Testament times. “And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved.” (1 Corinthians 11:5) The Book of Acts records that when Paul and his missionary companions traveled to Caesarea, they met the four daughters of Phillip who were said to have prophesied (Acts 21:9).

8. Jesus’ Nativity and Mission Heralded a Change in God’s Treatment of Women

The Gospel according to Luke records these words from the lips of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35). Theologian Walter Freitag characterizes this text as follows: “Luke very delicately suggests that Mary’s function in bearing the Son of God is of the same magnitude as the original creation. This text is the basis for the view which arose in the church, namely, that Mary is the opposite figure and type of Eve. That is, if Eve is to be held responsible for the fall of man into sin, Mary has the honor of bearing the savior who made it possible for mankind to be restored to the original paradisiacal condition on the Garden of Eden.”²¹

In baptism, God treated men and women as equals. The baptism Jesus sanctified with His death on the cross and resurrection to new life heralded another change in the way that God treated women. In the Old Testament, only males bore the marks of the first covenant: circumcision. Baptism with water in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is necessary for salvation because Christ commanded it so and the grace of God is offered through it (Matthew 28:29; John 3:5; Ephesians 5:26; 1 Peter 3:21). Scriptures testify that women were baptized along with the men and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:5, 12).

9. Jesus’ Disciples Included Women and He Treated Them with the Same Dignity as He Treated Men

The Gospel of Luke records Jesus’ visit to a home occupied by two sisters Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to what He said. These words describe a pupil sitting at the feet of a teacher. According to Lenski, Mary’s posture and active listening made Jesus’ seat a pulpit, her place at His feet a pew and the sanctuary in which the mercy of God was preached, where God drew near the sinful heart with grace. Martha is busy with the preparations that a woman would naturally be engaged in when a guest came to the home. Martha believed that Mary’s rightful place was with her in serving Jesus. Martha took for granted that Jesus believed as she did and really deprecated Mary’s indifference to her sister’s efforts. Martha misunderstood Jesus. He had come to serve and not be served. Jesus wanted Mary and Martha at His feet. He wanted to feed them with heavenly food before they ate earthly food together. Like the Samaritan woman, Jesus wanted Mary and Martha to feel that they, as women, were of great importance to Him and He wanted them at His feet on the same basis as the male disciples who He drew to Himself.²²

Luke’s Gospel records another instance of the presence of women with the other disciples as they travelled from town to town with Jesus. The women even helped finance Jesus’ ministry. “After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.” (Luke 8:1-3) Luke declares that the women who had followed Jesus through Galilee were present when He was crucified. “But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.” (Luke 23:49).

The Gospel according to St. Mark testifies to the presence of women with Jesus as He journeyed through Galilee and up to Jerusalem, and were witnesses to His passion. “Some women were watching from a

²¹ Freitag, Walter Opcite. Page 51.

²² Lenski, RCH, The Interpretation of St. Mark’s and St. Luke’s Gospel, (1942, Lutheran Book Concern, Columbus Ohio) Pages 862-863.

distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.” (Mark 15: 40-41) Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joseph, were also witnesses of Jesus’ burial in the tomb.

Paul’s declaration that among the baptized there are no men or women, but all one in Christ, was embodied in his own treatment of women. Acts 16:13-15 describes the conversion of Lydia. The Lord permitted the apostle Paul, to see past the Rabbinic prohibition which prevented him from speaking in public to a woman who was not his relative, most especially about matters of faith (see paragraph 10 below). Following her baptism, Lydia called Paul to see her not as a single woman, but as a member of the body of Christ, and to come stay in her home. In defiance of all traditions, Paul and his companions stayed with her. For Paul and his companions, Lydia was no longer a woman, but a believer, clothed with Christ.

10. Jesus Spoke to and through Women During His Earthly Ministry and After His Resurrection

The Gospel according to St. John records a conversation between Jesus and a Samaritan woman at the well in the city of the Sychar, in the region of Samaria. Jesus was alone with this woman because His disciples had gone into town to buy food. Upon their return with the food, the disciples found Jesus deep in discussion with the woman. The Gospel records their surprise and wonder at His speaking with this woman (John 4:27). They were surprised for two reasons. First, a great deal of enmity existed between Jews and Samaritans. Samaritans presumed to have a connection with the Patriarch Jacob and the coming of God’s salvation. The Jews refused help from the Samaritans in the rebuilding of the Temple following their return from exile in Babylon. They believed the Samaritans were a mixture of former Israelites and Gentiles who had practiced a mixed religion (2 Kings 17:24-41). They were ritually impure and thus not able to build the Temple, as they would defile it. This rejection strained the relations between Jews and Samaritans right up to the time of Jesus. Secondly, Jewish tradition and customs forbade a Rabbi to speak in public with a woman, most especially about the law.²³ Jesus treated this foreign woman in the same way that He would have treated one of His male disciples. Jesus spoke to this woman across national and cultural boundaries. During that conversation, Jesus established His omniscience by and through His revelations concerning her chequered past and sinful present. In an act of grace and mercy, Jesus revealed His identity as the Christ she had been waiting for. In response to these revelations, this woman rushed into her village and proclaimed Jesus to her neighbours (John 4:7-29). The same text records that many believed in Jesus based on this woman’s words alone (John 4:39-42).

11. Women Shared in the Ministry and Leadership Roles in the Church in the Manner of Miriam

Women were present with and prayed with the Apostles before Matthias was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot. The Apostles all joined together constantly in prayer, “along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers” (Acts 1:12-14).

Scriptures testify that the Christian fellowship which arose following the first Christian Pentecost festival included women. “The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number” (Acts 15:12-14).

Scriptures testify that both women and men suffered for their beliefs. Before becoming an Apostle of Christ’s Church, Saul of Tarsus persecuted both the men and the women which had become a member of the body of Christ through Baptism (Acts 8:2-3 and Acts 9:1-2).

Paul made reference to another woman whom he describes as a labourer with him in Christ. "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well" (Romans 16:1-2 RSV). The terms *Deacon* (masculine) and *Deaconess* (feminine) were derived from the Greek word *diaconos*, meaning a *servant*. The term *diaconos* was a general term for all servants. It had absolutely no religious connotation; however, the apostles adopted the term for individuals

²³ Lenski, RCH, [The Interpretation of John’s Gospel](#). (1942, Lutheran Book Concern, Columbus Ohio) Pages 302-303, 329.

who were given the responsibility of taking care of practical matters within the church. The term was first used with "The Seven" (Acts 6:1-6, 21:8). They saw to the physical needs of people so that the Apostles could concentrate on *ministering (diakonia)* the Word of God. Deacons were not, however, limited to service; some of the deacons were also teachers and evangelists. Stephen is regarded as the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:1-60). Prior to his death, he publically proclaimed the Gospel. The deacon Philip successfully preached in Samaria (Acts 8:5-13) and baptized one of the first converts from Africa, the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-38). Phoebe certainly helped Paul in the ministration of the Gospel. While Paul does not delineate Phoebe's specific duties, like Phillip and Stephen, she could very well have seen to the physical and spiritual needs of Christians and evangelized the un-churched. Further, these verses call the church at Rome to see past her gender and see her as Paul's friend and fellow servant of Christ. He calls them to take her in and treat her the way the members of the church should treat the most trusted saint!

Paul wrote in his concluding remarks to the church at Philippi: "Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. And I ask you also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life." (Philippians 4:1-3 RSV). In Euodia and Syntyche, we have two women who labored with Paul and others in the Gospel. Like Paul and Barnabas, they had come into a serious dispute. The existence of this dispute has come to Paul's attention. He regards their dispute as serious enough to mention in his letter. These women must have occupied a status within the Church at Philippi that their dispute could well divide this congregation.

The Apostle Paul permitted older women to teach younger women. "Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children" (Titus 2:3-4).

12. The Leadership of Priscilla – Preaching and Teaching

The Book of Acts records an instance where a woman named Priscilla, and her husband Aquila, taught an adult male Christian concerning matters of the faith. The scriptures testify that Priscilla and Aquila were friends of and co-workers of the Apostle Paul. Paul first met Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth. They were Jews who had been driven from Rome by persecutions under the Roman Emperor Claudius and, like Paul, were tentmakers. (Acts 18:1-5) They are described by Paul as fellow workers in Christ (Romans 16:3). Paul declared that a church met in their home. (1 Corinthians 16:19). Acts 18:24-26 records their instruction of Apollos as follows:

²³"Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁴He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁵He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:24-26).

The Holy Spirit worked mightily in the lives of Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos. Apollos was a valuable man of God. He was a learned man. His hometown Alexandria was internationally known as a center of learning, education and culture. Many universities and libraries flourished in Alexandria. It was also a center for Judaism and Jewish education in particular. He knew the Old Testament scriptures very well. He had also received instruction concerning the *way* of Lord Jesus from some disciples of John the Baptist. The term "*way*" meant doctrine, faith, confession and life all in one word.²⁴ Apollos was a gifted teacher and evangelist; however, the Holy Spirit brought Apollos to Ephesus because his education was not complete; he needed additional teaching. The Holy Spirit brought Priscilla and Aquila to Ephesus at the same time to be Apollos' teachers.

Aquila and Priscilla heard Apollos speak. They were impressed with what he said; yet, at one and the same time, immediately saw his limitations. They took to him and immediately asked him to their home for a meal with the ulterior motive of teaching him the Gospel of Jesus Christ as they had heard it from the Apostle Paul.

²⁴ Lenski, RCH, The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, (1944, Wartburg Press, U.S.A.) Pages 771

The question was whether Apollos, a learned man, would condescend and submit to the teaching of a humble tentmaker and his bride. Apollos capitulated and submitted to these two teachers.

Exegetes have noted that Luke placed Priscilla's name before Aquila's in Acts 18:25b. The placement of the wife's name before her husband's is preserved in other references to the couple. Priscilla's name precedes Aquila's in Acts 18:18, Romans 16:3 and 2 Timothy 4:19. The placement of Priscilla's name first is said by some to have deep meaning. Lenski noted: "We conclude that Priscilla was the moving spirit, that she was by nature more gifted and able than her husband, also spiritually fully developed due to her having Paul in her home for eighteen months while residing in Corinth....Luke surely wants his reader to understand that Priscilla was the main teacher. ... Her great treasure was the gospel, and her ability was that she could impart it with all lucidity and force. She helped to teach Apollos in all propriety."²⁵ Moreover, Lenski noted that Priscilla acted completely within her sphere as a woman. She never thrust herself forward, never asserted herself or made her superiority felt. She was loyally true to Paul's teaching that the husband is the head of the household. He also noted that since it was a private teaching, it in no way conflicted with the apostolic principle that women are to remain silent in church. While Lenski's assessment as to the propriety of Priscilla's teaching is accurate on the surface, the scene of the two men and a woman sitting in the Ephesian home conveys much in addition to what the esteemed exegete brought out.

Lenski failed to address the subject teaching session in light of 1 Timothy 2:11-14, in which verses the Apostle Paul declared that women are not permitted to have authority over or teach a man. The term "teaching" as used in the New Testament, denotes the careful and scrupulous transmission of the tradition concerning Jesus Christ and the authoritative proclamation of God's will to believers in light of that tradition. The text clearly states that the husband and wife team conveyed the "way" of Jesus Christ more adequately to Apollos. Priscilla, an acquaintance and disciple of Paul, engaged in teaching and having authority over a man in her instruction of Apollos. She also exerted authority over her husband in taking the teaching role on and not capitulating and deferring to her husband as teacher.

Lenski concluded that the teachers and their student were involved in a private session, therefore the Apostle Paul's injunction against women speaking in church as set forth in 1 Corinthians 14:34 did not apply. Paul forbid women from speaking in church, as their speaking in an assembly of Christians was a violation of the submissive character of a wife and unacceptable in the assembly of believers for that very reason. In light of the foregoing, an important question must be asked: how many Christians must gather together in order for that assembly to be the "church" so that the injunctions of 1 Corinthians 14:34 apply? Paul does not give a number. Jesus says where two or three are together He is present. However, Paul does say that it is perfectly acceptable for a husband and wife to speak about all matters of faith in the privacy of their home in an intimate conversation between the two (1 Corinthians 14:35). Therefore, it is the addition of another adult male believer to the assembly that makes the wife's speech insubordinate and offensive and thus enjoins a wife from speaking. It could forcefully be argued that Apollos' presence alone triggered the injunctions of 1 Corinthians 14:34 to apply. His mere presence would have caused Priscilla to have to defer all questions of faith and instruction to her husband. Yet, this did not happen: Priscilla spoke and taught.

The Holy Spirit guided Luke to include the account of Priscilla and Aquila teaching Apollos in the Acts of the Apostles despite the encounter's possible conflict with 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14. A forceful argument could be made that the inclusion of this account is further evidence that Paul's injunctions found in 1 Corinthians 14:31 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 were imposed in order to avoid offense to Jewish Christians and potential Jewish converts for a season. The verses of Acts 18 testify that Jews who had converted to Christianity continued to worship and witness in Jewish synagogues as long as they were allowed. Priscilla and Aquila, Jews by birth, worshipped at the synagogue in Ephesus that Apollos came to. Apollos was permitted to witness to his faith in Jesus at that same synagogue. Paul had witnessed to the Christian faith at the same synagogue before Apollos came. Priscilla, by reason of her sex, could worship at the synagogue but could not speak in the assembly, as women could not speak in the synagogue according to Jewish tradition. However, when their faith in Christ was revealed to Apollos, a bond of trust was established between them

²⁵ Ibid. Page 744

and Apollos accepted their hospitality. When the three met together away from the strictures of the synagogue, they felt free to express their Christian liberty. Their baptism had made them one in Christ. On matters of faith, they could speak to one another in Christian love.

The instruction of Apollos conveyed most beautifully the Christian submission described in Ephesians 5:21 in action. In this verse, the Apostle Paul asked all Christians to submit to one another. Apollos, an intellectual superior, expositor of the scriptures, and a teacher, capitulated to and subordinated himself to a woman and her husband who were not his peers, and received instruction from them. Aquila capitulated and subordinated himself to his wife Priscilla and permitted her to teach another man while in his presence. Priscilla submitted to the request of husband and pupil to teach, even though she was to submit to her husband in front of another adult male. All this subordination found its source in Christ Jesus and His headship of the Church. As members of the royal priesthood established by Christ, they were free to worship together. Jesus had endowed both Priscilla and Aquila with the spiritual gifts of preaching and teaching. Their gifts were nurtured and brought to fruition through their submission to the preaching, teaching and ministrations of the Apostle Paul. Jesus had given the gifts of preaching, teaching and evangelism to Apollos. Jesus called Priscilla and Aquila to preach to and teach Apollos so that his spiritual gifts could mature and be brought to their full fruition. In the instruction of Apollos, it could be argued that Priscilla, like Deborah, was called by God to sit as a stately Palm tree, instructing a man of God brought before her. By her teaching, Priscilla added, albeit in a small way, to the fulfillment of God's promise to make the Church a royal priesthood.

As Lutherans, we believe, teach and confess that the office of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament is a gift from God. The very essence of this office is the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments publically, in the assembly, for the purpose of nurturing faith through the agency of the Holy Spirit. It requires a call from God to the preacher; this call is affirmed by an assembly of believers. In the case of Apollos' instruction by Priscilla and Aquila, Jesus had called this couple to preach and teach Apollos. Apollos affirmed their call from Jesus and accepted their instruction. The sage instruction of this godly couple empowered Apollos to go in peace and serve the Lord more fully. We at CALC believe that the account of the teaching of Apollos, by a couple set apart by the Lord, was not an isolated incident or an anomaly; rather, we believe it pointed to the future. It pointed to the time when the Church separated itself from the synagogue and its strictures, and permitted Christians in worship and study to see one another not as men or women; rather, as one in Christ. It points to a time when God's call of a woman to leadership, even in preaching and teaching, is embraced by the Church and lived out. We believe this account calls the Church and its female members in particular, to be open to the discernment of God's call to the office of preaching and teaching in Church.

Conclusion

Based upon the foregoing, we at CALC believe and trust that: (a) As head of the Church, Jesus continues to endow women, like Priscilla, with the gifts of preaching, teaching, administration and all other gifts necessary for the office of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament; (b) Jesus continues to direct women, like Priscilla, to members of His flock, who show great potential but need additional instruction in the "way" of Jesus; (c) Jesus continues to permit His flock to recognize the gifts of preaching, teaching and administration in the women He has endowed with said spiritual gifts; (d) Jesus continues to permit women, like Priscilla, to experience a call to feed and nurture the flock Jesus has shown her; and (e) Jesus continues to permit the flock to affirm Jesus' call to that woman.