

# Exercising Authority – Women and the Church

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## Part I – Exegesis, Hermeneutics, and Conclusions of the CTCR

One of the foundational documents in the LCMS today regarding the role of women in the church is "Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice" published by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations in 1985 (CTCR 1985). This document generally provides the interpretative understanding and exegesis that underlies the current official positions of the LCMS on the role of women. Therefore, a review of it first is warranted in order to gain a proper perspective of the issues involved with this topic. What follows is a presentation of some of the main points of the document that are significant in terms of revealing the hermeneutical foundation that it constructs.

CTCR 1985 begins by acknowledging that "[t]he twentieth century has witnessed a veritable revolution in the roles of women and men." It indicates that "dramatic changes in male-female roles have also produced confusion and uncertainty." It notes that the document was written in response to a request by the LCMS to study "the role of women in the church" in a climate where questions regarding whether women should hold the office of pastor, elder, or deacon, whether women should in principle be excluded from any ecclesiastical position, and similar questions were circulating (p. 2).

The first part of CTCR 1985 turns to biblical examples of women presented in the Scriptures. In reference to the Old Testament it states:

Miriam, the sister of Moses, was called a woman prophet . . . (Ex. 15:20-21). That she was one through whom God spoke is also clearly implied in Num. 12:1-2. Although there is little indication of her work beyond these passages, she is referred to as a leader on par with Moses and Aaron in Mic. 6:3-4. (p. 5)

Deborah, in Judges 4:4, is called a prophetess and also a judge in Israel. In the latter role Deborah exercised decisive leadership. When Israel was severely oppressed she called forth the will in the men of Israel to fight for freedom. The Israelite general said he would fight only if she led the way. Deborah gave the command to attack, and victory was secured (Judges 5). However unusual it may or may not have been for women to serve in major civil roles, the example of Deborah shows a woman raised up by God to govern and to deliver His people. (p. 5-6)

The third woman given the title of prophetess was Huldah (2 Kings 22:14). When the high priest at the Jerusalem temple told Josiah he had discovered the book of the law of the Lord, the king sent his

emissaries to find out what further message God had for him. They sought out Huldah who was well-known for her commitment to God and for her ability to speak for God. She told Josiah very clearly and specifically God's message. (p. 6)

[Women] were also expected to take an independent part in bringing sacrifices and gifts before God. (Lev. 12:6; 15:29) (p. 6)

Women ministered at the door to the tent of meeting (Ex. 38:8), and while it is not clear what form this service took, it did play some part in the worship. Women also participated in the great choirs and processions of the temple (Ps. 68:25; 1 Chron. 25:5-7; Neh. 7:67). Although they were not permitted to serve as priests, this is never interpreted to mean that they were less than full members of the worshipping community. (p. 6)

In sum, although the Old Testament reflects the patriarchal nature of the society in which it was written and with which it is concerned, the relationship of women to their fathers and husbands did not stand in the way of their joyful participation in the worship life of God's people. In the words of Biblical scholar Mary J. Evans, "They had a significant role to play . . . not only in their role as mothers and in the home, but also as individuals, and they were not barred from leadership when the circumstances required it." (p. 6)

In reference to the New Testament it states:

Significantly, Jesus does not say anything about women having a specific role in life. He issues no commands that apply to women only. (p. 9)

Acts 21:9 and 1 Cor. 11:5 specifically indicate that women functioned as prophets in the early church. . . . Prophecy is distinguished from preaching in Eph. 4:11. Preaching is a form of teaching, but the distinctive characteristic of prophecy is that it results from God having put His very words into the mouth of the one speaking (2 Pet. 1:21-22). In other words, the prophet depends on special inspiration to speak a message which is more than a product of human thought. While a prophetic inspiration could form the basis for an exhortation, prophecy was a message delivered as words from the Lord. It is evident that there were women in the apostolic church who were moved by the Spirit to prophesy. Certain women exercised a particular verbal gift. (p. 10)

Priscilla is a woman who receives particular mention. . . . In Acts she is engaged with her husband, Aquila, in teaching the great orator Apollos. Priscilla must have been, therefore, well-educated in the teachings of the Christian faith and a most capable instructor. (p. 11-12)

After Priscilla and Aquila, Paul greets still other women: Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis, all of whom "worked hard" in the Lord ([Rom. 16:]12). Here Paul uses a term that commonly refers to the toil of proclaiming the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 4:12; 15:10; Gal. 4:11; Phil. 2:26; Col. 1:29; 1 Tim. 4:10). In Rom. 16:13, 15 he greets the mother of Rufus and the sister of Nereus. In Phil. 4:2-3 he mentions two other women—Euodia and Syntyche—who have labored beside him in the gospel. Although it is impossible to determine from Paul's words what specific missionary tasks these

women assumed, there is no doubt but that he often benefited from the cooperation of women in his apostolic labors and that women were no less fervent than men in spreading the gospel message. (p. 12)

[Women] . . . played a significant role in the life of the community, teaching men and women and caring for those in need. (p. 12)

The second part of CTCR 1985 discusses the scriptural basis of its position. In reference to the Genesis account it states:

It is also clear from Genesis 1 that male and female are *equally* distinct from all other creatures made by God. God gave to both the command to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion” over the earth (Gen. 1:28). Male and female are given the same dominion. Both the blessing and commission of verse 28 assume that the man and the woman are equal before God in their relationship to the rest of creation. (p. 20)

*Genesis 2* . . . The “helper” is the woman God creates. She is suitable for him as a “helper.” She is not under his domination, but she stands alongside him in exercising that dominion which God has given to both. She is in every way his equal before the Creator. (p. 20)<sup>1</sup>

In the discussion related to the idea of subordination, it states:

Nowhere in Scripture is it ever said that power or authority (*exousia*) or rule (*arche*) is given to the man over the woman. All of the passages which speak of the subordination of the woman to the man, or of wives to their husbands, are addressed to the woman. The verbs enjoining subordination in these texts are in the middle voice in the Greek (reflexive). The woman is reminded, always in the context of an appeal to the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ, that she has been subordinated to the man by the Creator and that it is for this reason that she should willingly accept this divine arrangement. The Scriptures never tell the man that he is to “keep his wife in subjection” (unlike the exhortation concerning children in 1 Tim. 3:4) by the issuance of commands. (p. 31)

Regarding 1 Cor. 14:33b-35 it states:

1 Corinthians 14:34. Paul cites the Law (very likely Genesis 2 in this particular context)<sup>2</sup> as the basis for the subordination of woman. (p. 22)

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<sup>1</sup> What appears to be some kind of exegetical schizophrenia is observed in foot note 29 on page 23 of the document, which states, “But *ezer* must be seen in context. The phrase says that God created woman to be a help for man; that is to say, the purpose of her creation was to be a help to the man. There is apparently some kind of subordination indicated by the phrase.”

<sup>2</sup> The verses are not given. The wording may suggest that it is referring to 1 Corinthians 11:7-9, which is mentioned just before this, where “The apostle argues for male “headship” on the basis of Gen. 2:18-25, which teaches that the man did not come from the woman but the woman from the man and that the woman was created for the sake of the man,” p. 22.

At first glance the apostle's presumption that women will pray and prophesy (1 Cor. 11:5) appears to be in contradiction to his command for silence in 1 Corinthians 14. . . . Full clarity perhaps is not possible. However, the following conclusions seem warranted.

First, that Paul is not commanding *absolute*,<sup>[47]</sup> unqualified silence is evident from the fact that he permits praying and prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11. The silence mandated for women in 1 Corinthians 14 does not preclude their praying and prophesying.<sup>[48]</sup> Accordingly, the apostle is not intimating that women may not participate in the public singing of the congregation or in the spoken prayers. It should be noted in this connection that Paul uses the Greek word *laleo* for "speak" in 1 Cor. 14:34, which frequently means "to preach" in the New Testament (See Mark 2:2; Luke 9:11; Acts 4:1; 8:25; 1 Cor. 2:7; 2 Cor 12:19; Phil. 1:4; *et al.*), and not *lego*, which is the more general term. (The claim that Paul has a different meaning is extremely improbable.) When *laleo* has a meaning other than religious speech and preaching in the New Testament, this is usually made clear by an object or an adverb (e.g., to speak like a child, 1 Cor. 13:11; to speak like a fool, 2 Cor. 11:23). Secondly, it must be understood that Paul's prohibition that women remain silent and not speak is uttered with reference to the worship service of the congregation (1 Cor. 14:26-33). Any other interpretation is artificial and improbable. Thus, Paul is not here demanding that women should be silent at all times or that they cannot express their sentiments and opinions at church assemblies. The command that women keep silent is a command that they not take charge of the public worship service, specifically the teaching-learning aspects of the service. (p. 32-33)

Regarding the passage from 1 Timothy chapter 2, we read:

1 Timothy 2:13-14. Paul appeals to the temporal priority of Adam's creation ("Adam was formed first"; cf. Gen. 2:20-22), as well as to Eve's having been deceived in the fall (Gen. 3:6), to show that women should not teach or exercise authority over men in the church.<sup>[25]</sup>

His instructions are directed to the worship/church setting. No doubt the public prayer which is regulated in verse 8 would occur during a liturgical service. The expression "likewise" in verse 9 indicates that the women's activity occurs in the same domain. In 1 Tim. 3:14-15 the apostle explains the purpose of his letter to Timothy: "I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God. . . ." The context of this passage is that of worship/church. (p. 34)

The teaching that Paul forbids women to perform is . . . that of the formal, public proclamation of the Christian faith. The word for teach (*didaskhein*) is used uniformly in this way throughout 1 Timothy. This term is used in this epistle to refer to "false teachers" (1:3, 7); "overseers" (i.e., pastors) who are "able to teach" (3:2); the pastor Timothy, who is to "teach" (4:11), to "attend to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching" (4:13), to "take heed . . . to your teaching" (4:16), and to "teach and exhort these things" (5:17); and especially the apostle Paul himself, who is a "teacher of the Gentiles." (2:7)

Therefore, Paul is not contending that Christian women are to avoid teaching under any circumstances. Elsewhere the New Testament indicates that women did teach in a context other than the community worship service (e.g., Priscilla, Acts 18:26). The apostolic restriction in 1 Timothy 2 pertains to that teaching of God's Word which involves an essential function of the pastoral office.

The word *didaskein* is inappropriately applied to the Sunday school teacher, the Christian day school teacher, the home Bible study teacher. As Bishop Bo Giertz of Sweden suggests, “When in 1 Tim. 2:12 the word *didaskein* is used, it is a rather pregnant expression (the word means: to be a teacher in the church and to be charged by God with the proclamation of His Word).” Teaching which does not “coincide with that commission to which the New Testament refers when using the words *didaskalos* or *didaskein*” is not in view here.<sup>[49]</sup> (p. 34-35)

The question now arises, what is the relationship between teaching, learning, and exercising “authority over man”? . . .

In point of fact, however, a careful review of this passage indicates that the terms “teach” and “exercise authority” parallel each other. They are intentionally linked. The kind of teaching referred to in the passage is tied to exercising authority. The authority forbidden to women here is that of the pastoral office, that is, one “who labors in preaching and teaching.” (1 Tim. 5:17; cf. 1 Thess. 5:12).

A proper understanding of Paul here is of enormous significance for the discussion of the service of women in the church. One cannot divorce the phrase “nor have authority over man” from the pastoral office and then apply it in rather arbitrary ways. . . .

The theological matrix for the apostle’s inspired teaching on the silence of women in the church and the exercise of authority is, again, the order of creation. In 1 Tim. 2:13 Paul points to the order of creation as the basis for the instructions given in verses 11 and 12. God made Adam before Eve; that is, He created man and woman in a definite order. Turning from creation to the fall, Paul adds that Adam was not deceived but that the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.<sup>[51]</sup> The conclusion drawn is that the leadership of the official, public teaching office belongs to men. Assumption of that office by a woman is out of place because it is a woman who assumes it, not because women do it in the wrong way or have inferior gifts and abilities. (p.35-36)

The nomenclature used in the New Testament to refer to this office varies (“bishops,” 1 Tim. 3:1; “elder,” 1 Tim. 5:17; “leaders,” Heb. 13:17), but that the holders of this office are to be engaged specifically in preaching and teaching is consistently enunciated. The oversight and supervision exercised in the office of the public ministry is that of teaching the Word and administering the sacraments.<sup>[52]</sup> Paul’s directive relating to women in the church in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 provide instructions concerning this position of leadership.<sup>[53]</sup> (p. 36-37)

*The creational pattern of male headship requires that women not hold the formal position of the authoritative public teaching office in the church, that is, in the office of the pastor. (p. 37)*

1 Cor. 14:33b-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-15 speak of women’s roles in the public worship service. The main application of these passages in the contemporary church is that women are not to exercise those functions in the local congregations which would involve them in the exercise of authority inherent in the authoritative public teaching office (i.e., the office of pastor). (p. 38)

The third part of CTCR 1985 pertains to guidelines for practice:

These suggested guidelines are by no means exhaustive, but they do provide a helpful frame of reference for approaching the pertinent issues.

1. In response to questions regarding the service of women in the church, we must first ask whether God’s Word expressly permits it or whether it expressly prohibits the activity. In the foregoing study of the Pauline passages it is clear that some activities are permitted while others carry restrictions.

2. We must also ask whether an activity is consonant with the purpose of Scripture but prevented by a technicality of human definition. To what extent have cultural definitions—of “authority” or “subjection,” for instance—influenced our understanding of the Biblical passages? Or conversely, does an activity which is permitted on the basis of a technicality of definition effectively undermine, nevertheless, a Biblical norm?

3. The third guideline has to do with perceptions and the taking of offense (cf. 1 Corinthians 8; Romans; FC SD X). Is an action likely to be misunderstood or perceived in a way that it becomes a stumbling block for others? And, a perennial question in Lutheran theology at least, is this a situation in which an indifferent matter ceases to be a matter of indifference?

Some practical questions about the service of women in the church may be resolved on the basis of a clear mandate of Scripture. Other questions cannot be given a specific answer but will need to be considered according to individual circumstances from the perspective of definitions and/or perceptions. Frequently, all three guidelines will be employed in seeking to determine which ecclesiastical functions are appropriate for women to perform. (p. 40)

The remaining sections of the document apply these guidelines to a few areas of practice. The first area is the woman and the pastoral office. Regarding this issue, it states:

The ordination of women to the divinely instituted ministry of Word and sacraments is a question that can be addressed on the basis of the first guideline alone. (p. 40)

[T]he fundamental Scriptural principles (and corresponding theses) examined in this study demonstrate not only that the service of women in the pastoral office lacks Biblical foundation but, in point of fact, is expressly prohibited by the Scriptures.

First, the occupation of the pastoral office by women violates the headship structure rooted in God’s order of creation. . . . Second, women are not to be pastors nor perform the essential and unique functions of the pastoral office, since the pastoral office has oversight from God over the congregation, “the household of God” (1 Tim. 3:15). (p. 41)

In its 1981 report on “The Ministry” the Commission acknowledges that no specific “checklist” of functions of the office of the public ministry is provided in the Scriptures.<sup>[57]</sup> At the same time, it was pointed out that the functions of the pastoral office involve public supervision of the flock. The pastor exercises this supervision through public proclamation of the Word and the administration of the sacraments.<sup>[58]</sup> This, in turn, suggests that there are certain specific functions which should not be carried out by the laity (who may hold auxiliary offices) but which are to be exercised by the pastor.<sup>[59]</sup> Among them are the following:

- 1) preaching in the services of the congregation
- 2) leading the formal public services of worship
- 3) the public administration of the sacraments

4) the public administration of the office of the keys (p. 41-42)

Since a “headship” over the congregation is exercised through these functions unique to the office of the public ministry, the functioning of women in this specific office is precluded. Just as the wife should not be the “head” of the house, so a woman should not be the “head” over the “household of God” (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:12). Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession states: “It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call” (*nisi rite vocatus*). Such a call is denied to women by a “command of the Lord.” (p. 41-42)

The next area of practice addressed by CTCR 1985 is woman suffrage. It argues as follows:

Woman suffrage is an issue that must be decided largely on the basis of the second of the three guidelines noted above. One reason for this is that the matter of franchise is not discussed in the Scripture. A word which can be translated as “voting” (*cheirotoneo*—raising the hand) occurs in Acts 14:23 and 2 Cor. 8:19. However, when in the Corinthian passage the churches are described as choosing a representative to accompany Paul to Jerusalem, nothing is said about the method actually employed. In the Acts verse, the word appears to mean “appoint.” No kind of franchise seems to be involved.<sup>[61]</sup>

In summary, the Scriptural passages employed for guidance on this question have been those verses of 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Corinthians 14, and 1 Timothy 2 which deal with woman’s subordination, woman’s silence in the church, and woman’s exercise of authority. As has been noted, Paul is not addressing himself here to anything like a contemporary “voters’ assembly.” He is giving instruction to Christians regarding the arrangement of and order in public worship.<sup>[62]</sup>

Further, it has been shown that the prohibition in 1 Tim. 2:11-12 of woman’s exercising authority is not a concept independent of “to teach.” According to this text, the woman is prohibited from the teaching in the public worship assembly. To define “authority” simply as the power to make decisions is alien to the exegesis of the passage. There is no express Biblical ground for denying women the vote on issues which facilitate the work of the priesthood of all believers in the congregation.

The definition of “suffrage” is also significant. A “democratic” society of men and women is ruled by a majority vote. However, it is not an exercise of the authority prohibited to women in the Scriptures. In fact, according to this understanding of the matter, it is actually the assembly that exercises authority as a result of suffrage, not the individual voter: Furthermore, in the church, which is ruled by love, the casting of a ballot should also have the added dimension of being an act of service.

The Commission presented a study to the Denver Convention (1969) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on the issue of woman suffrage. It states by way of conclusion: “We find nothing in Scripture which prohibits women from exercising the franchise in voter’s assemblies. Those statements which direct women to keep silent in the church, and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men we understand to mean that women ought not to hold the pastoral office.”<sup>[63]</sup> Subsequent study of the matter has provided no basis for altering these conclusions. The Commission reaffirms them.<sup>[64]</sup> (p. 43-44)

The final section of CTCR 1985 deals with what it calls additional practical applications. As this section shows how the CTCR carries out its application of its exegetical conclusions, the section is presented in its entirety:

In applying the principles delineated above to concrete situations one must bear in mind that the New Testament presents no ceremonial law regulating the details of public worship. Also, in applying these principles, it is necessary to distinguish the one divinely instituted office of the public ministry of the Word and sacraments from all other offices which the church establishes in Christian freedom in response to various needs (Acts 6). Holy Scripture clearly excludes women from the office of the public ministry of Word and sacraments. For other offices we have no express “thus saith the Lord,” and everything depends on the functions assigned to these offices. Differences in judgment can be expected here in decisions regarding the specific application of general principles. What follows, therefore, is to be understood not as “canon law” but as pastoral and collegial advice to be judged by the church in terms of its faithfulness to such clear Scripture as is relevant.

1. Should a woman participate in public worship in the capacity of reading the Scriptures for the day or in assisting with the formal liturgical services?

All Christians have access to the Scriptures. They do not require the church as an institution or another person to read and interpret them on their behalf. The reading of the Scriptures belongs to the priesthood of all believers, men and women.

Moreover, there is no ceremonial law in the New Testament regarding the reading of Scripture in the context of public worship. Nor is there explicit apostolic prohibition of such reading by women. Nevertheless, it is the opinion of the CTCR that the reading of the Scriptures is most properly the function of the pastoral office and should therefore not ordinarily be delegated to a lay person, woman or man. Pastors and congregations should therefore exercise great care in making decisions permitting the lay reading of the Scriptures or any other activity in the formal liturgical services which might be perceived as an assumption of the pastoral role or a disregard for the Scriptural principles concerning the service of women in the church (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:3-16; 14:33b-35). The third guideline listed above concerning the perceptions which certain actions may convey is also relevant and should be taken into account in answering this question. (p. 45)

2. May a woman address a congregation on a particular subject in which she possesses an expertise (lectures or presentations on social and ethical issues, etc.) and therefore “teach” in the church?

The answer to this question depends, in the first place, on the interpretation of Paul’s statement in 1 Tim. 2:12 that woman may not teach. The passage does not expressly prohibit the instance envisioned in the above question. The sharing and teaching this question entails does not place the woman in the office of the pastor. She is not seeking to enforce her teaching with discipline and is not usurping the authority of any man. Paul did not forbid *all* teaching by women. In terms of perceptions or the giving of offense, such a presentation by a guest speaker on any topic should be arranged in such a way that the impression is not given that it replaces the sermon. There are women in the church who, through their education and experience, have much to contribute on a wide range of significant concerns. They should be encouraged to serve in such capacities as gifts of God to His church.



3. Does the above response also apply to the regular adult Bible class of a congregation which includes men?

Certainly there is a legitimate distinction between a special presentation to the congregation and the continued instruction offered by the adult Bible class instructor. However, there is also a distinction between “overseeing” the instruction carried on in an adult Bible class and the actual physical teaching of the class (just as there is a more general distinction between “office” and “function”). It is the responsibility of the called pastor to “oversee” the adult Bible class (as well as all of the formal educational programs of the congregation). He may, from time to time, have members of the church teach the class and such teachers could indeed be women with the gifts for such a service. Their participation would be within the bounds of the priesthood of all believers. At the same time, teaching an adult class may involve possible, but very real, confusion regarding the office of pastor for some in a congregation. No doubt the pastor would seek to allay any such misunderstanding by appropriate preparation of the class for the service of laypeople in this capacity.

4. May women hold office in a congregation, serve on committees of the congregation, chair committees of the congregation?

Women may hold any office and serve on any committee of the congregation which enhances the work of the priesthood of all believers. Women also have the privilege to chair congregational committees, since a “chair” does not “have authority over men” any more than the committee *per se* would have such authority in the New Testament sense. The only stricture would have to do with anyone whose official functions would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office (e.g., elders, and possibly the chairman of the congregation). The tasks of the elders in a congregation are often directly associated with the pastoral office and the public administration of the office of the keys. As stated in the introductory paragraph to this section, everything depends on the nature of functions assigned to various offices established by the church.

The same general position outlined above applies to various district or synodical committees and commissions. Affairs of the church have never been assigned only to those holding the office of the public ministry. Women offer valuable contributions to the work of such committees, boards, and commissions.

5. What about the service of women in other worship contexts such as devotions conducted in the chapels of synodical colleges and other institutions.

Here, especially in the tradition of the The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, much has to do with definition and perception. While it is clear from the Scriptures that women should not preach or lead the formal public worship services of the church, many of the church’s educational institutions conduct what has been referred to as extended “family devotions” and have asked women to serve in worship leadership capacities. These “devotions” should be differentiated from the formal (and to a great extent, public) worship services. Institutions that hold public worship services under the responsibility of one who is called to be chaplain, campus pastor, dean of the chapel, etc., would seem to be out of the realm of “family devotions” in any acceptable meaning of the phrase. In such contexts, women should not preach or lead the services of worship. In those other worship opportunities which may be appropriately understood as “devotions,” the chaplain or other “spiritual head” of the community should make responsible decisions regarding the service of women, keeping in mind all of the guidelines

presented in this report. It is impossible to anticipate all of the exigencies of such situations in a general study such as that offered in this document.

6. May women serve as assistants in the distribution of the Lord's Supper?

While some might argue that assisting the presiding minister in the distribution of the elements is not necessarily a distinctive function of the pastoral office, the commission strongly recommends that, to avoid confusion regarding the office of the public ministry and to avoid giving offense to the church, such assistance be limited to men.<sup>[65]</sup>

7. May young women serve in such capacities as acolytes or ushers in public worship services?

Since such service does not involve the exercise of distinctive functions of the pastoral office, there should be no objection to young women serving in such capacities. Pastoral wisdom requires that those who make decisions in this area be sensitive to such considerations as the effects of change in congregational worship practices, the need for appropriate instruction regarding the principles of Christian worship, and the importance of respectful and modest behavior and attire for those young men and women who perform such acts of service. (p. 44-47)

In 1994 the CTCR put forth the document entitled "The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices" (CTCR 1994). This document recognizes its dependence on CTCR 1985 for its statements and conclusions (p. 4, 14).<sup>3</sup> Accordingly it states:

In keeping with what the Scriptures teach about the service of women with respect to the pastoral office, women may not assume responsibility for or carry out in behalf of the congregation (that is "*publicly*"), and in the stead of Christ, those functions in the local congregation that would involve

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<sup>3</sup> It also speaks of offices in the church that are by divine right (*iure divino*) and those that are by human right (*iure humano*). It indicates that the former category applies to the office of the pastor and the latter applies to the other offices established by the church. It states:

Throughout its history the church in Christian freedom has established other offices distinct from the one divinely instituted office of pastor in order to meet various needs in different times and places. Since the church is under no divine command to create such offices, they and their functions exist only "by human right" (*iure humano*). Already in apostolic times, and under apostolic direction, the church selected individuals to assist the apostles in carrying out their work (cf. Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). Similarly, the contemporary church has continued to establish offices which have their origin not in a divine command but in the decision of the Christian congregation and groups of congregations (e.g., Synod) to facilitate the mission given to them by God. (p. 5)

When a congregation or group of congregations (the Synod) assigns "official functions" to a particular office established by the congregation or the Synod, this too, is done not by divine mandate (*iure divino*), but by human arrangement. That is to say, the assignment of duties to all offices in the church belongs in the sphere of Christian freedom exercised in love. Congregations are free to assign functions to various offices in their midst as they deem appropriate and necessary, for the edification of the church and in keeping with the principles of good order (1 Cor. 14:40). This principle also holds true for all synodical and district offices. (p. 5)

them in the exercise of the authority inherent in this authoritative public teaching office in the church. This remains the only stricture.<sup>4</sup> (p. 6)

After referring to the passage of Resolution 2-17 at the 1969 LCMS convention that decided “to grant women suffrage and board membership,” the appendix of the CTCR 1994 says:

Following this action by the Synod in 1969, the President of the Synod and a number of congregations asked that guidance be given by the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) to congregations desiring to incorporate into their constitutions and bylaws the provisions adopted in Resolution 2-17. In 1970 the CCM issued “Suggestions for Congregational Constitutions or Bylaws Regarding the Privileges of Women (Voting and Holding Office).”<sup>[13]</sup> Restricting itself to the position taken by the Synod (“*de iure humano* rather than *de iure divino*, by human right rather than divine right”), and assuming that the Synod “may further define its position in the future, thereby making it necessary perhaps to refine the suggestions being offered herewith,” the CCM offered a sample constitutional paragraph under the title “Privileges of Women.” This paragraph allows, in addition to the franchise, that women may “serve as officers and as members of boards and committees as long as these positions are not directly involved in the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching, the public administration of the sacraments, church discipline) and as long as this service does not violate the order of creation (usurping authority over men).” The paragraph then concludes (footnotes bracketed): “Accordingly, they shall not serve as pastor, as a member of [Here shall be listed the board of elders or corresponding board directly involved in the functions of the pastoral office], as chairman or vice-chairman of the congregation, or as chairman of [Here the congregation may list at its discretion those major policy and decision-making boards or standing committees, if any, whose chairmanship the congregation may wish to restrict to men].” The Synod affirmed this position as stated in the CCM opinion in 1981<sup>[14]</sup> and again in 1986.<sup>[15]</sup> (p. 12-13)

In response to CTCR 1994, “Dissenting opinion on women in congregational offices” was issued, signed by 5 professors who were members of the CTCR, Robert A. Daragatz, Cameron A. MacKenzie, Norman Nagel, James Voelz, and William C. Weinrich (DO 1994). After discussing some procedural concerns, the document provides historical and theological concerns with CTCR 1994. Regarding historical concerns it states:

The Appendix says, “Regarding offices and board membership the Synod [said in 1969 Res. 2-17] . . . that women are prohibited from holding any other kind of office or membership on boards or committees in the institutional structures of a congregation, only if such a way of proceeding involves women in violation of **this principle**” (emphasis added). “This principle,” in the context of the Appendix, is that women ought not be pastors or carry out distinctive functions of the pastoral office. But that is not what the Synod’s resolution actually said. . . . [W]hat the 1969 Resolution

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<sup>4</sup> Congruent with CTCR 1985, the document applies this principle to the office of elder, the office of chairman and vice chairman, and membership on a synodical dispute resolution panel, indicating that if the office involves the assumption of the distinctive use of the functions of the pastoral office (usually the case for the office of elder in current practice, usually not the case for office of chairman and vice chairman, and not the case for members of a synodical dispute resolution panel) then women may not serve in the office. (p. 6-9)

actually said was that congregations could make changes “provided the polity developed conforms to the general Scriptural principles that women neither hold the pastor office **nor exercise authority over men**” (emphasis added).

Again, in 1969 Res. 2-17 the Synod acknowledged (as it always had) a principle of the order of creation which defines the relations between men and women in the church, as well as specific application of this principle in allowing only men to serve in the pastoral office. That this is the correct reading of Res. 2-17 is clear from the 1970 ruling of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) to which the Appendix refers.<sup>[4]</sup> In its sample constitutional paragraph, the CCM allows the service of women as officers and members of board and committees “as long as these positions are not directly involved in the specific functions of the pastoral office . . . **and as long as this service does not violate the order of creation (usurping authority over men)**” (emphasis added). This position of Synod was (as the Appendix notes) subsequently reaffirmed by Synod in convention in 1981 and in 1986.<sup>[5]</sup> What is not clearly admitted in the Appendix is that the present Report challenges the repeated and historic position of the Synod regarding the service of women in congregational offices such as chairman, vice-chairman and committee chairs. In the Appendix and in open discussion, the members of the majority and the staff made much of the CCM statement that “the Synod may further define its position in the future.” But has the groundwork been laid to sustain such a change? (p. 2)

Moving to theological concerns, DO 1994 states:

The final concern which is, of course, the most important but which is impossible to argue in detail in this place and at this short notice, is doctrinal and Scriptural. Several items may, however, be brought forth: first the treatment of terms such as “teaching,” “exercising authority,” etc., and second, the understanding of the doctrine of the order of creation. To take 1 Tim. 2:8-15 as the focus of our comments in this short Minority Report, the following issues/questions can be raised:

1. Regarding the teaching (*didaskain*) mentioned in Verse 12: Is it simply coterminous with the activities of the entire pastoral office? Paul certainly does not use the word that way. In describing his own ministry, Paul says that he was called to be a teacher (*didaskalous*) (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). But he never describes himself as a pastor/overseer (*poimeen/episkopos*). Indeed, he specifically denies descriptions of his ministry in terms which fit the specific sacramental functions of the pastor of a local congregation (1 Cor. 1:17).<sup>5</sup> In addition, he ascribes teaching to others besides

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<sup>5</sup> The footnote to this states, “‘For Christ did not send me with a commission to engage in baptizing but to do preaching of the Gospel.’ It is true, of course, that in Eph. 4:11 the words ‘pastors’ (*poimenas*) and ‘teachers’ (*didaskalous*) are preceded by one article (*tous*) and linked by the word ‘and (*kai*;)’ but these terms conclude a listing of gifts/offices in the church and this may well be an example of a common stylistic feature of Paul used to conclude a recitation of individual items in a list. See, e.g., the conclusion of the list in Gal. 3:28 (*kai thelu*). At any rate, this point must be argued.”

pastors (Col. 3:16),<sup>6</sup> including, it must be noted, women (Titus 2:3).<sup>7</sup> Clearly, more work needs to be done here.

Simple equation of teaching with the pastoral office seems too facile for this text.

2. Regarding the exercising of authority (*authentein*) also mentioned in verse 12: What is the actual meaning of this word? Is it “to exercise authority?” (cf. Report), “to usurp authority” (cf. 1970 CCM ruling)?, or something else? Furthermore, with respect to what is the exercising/usurping done? With respect to spiritual matters? to matters of physical wellbeing in the congregation?<sup>8</sup> More importantly, what is the relationship between exercising/usurping authority and teaching? Is the one equivalent to the other? If not, does one still somehow modify the other? Or, are these two completely different things? On this latter point, we can say that the grammatical construction of the verse<sup>9</sup> and the argument in the context from the order of creation (see next point) seem to suggest that teaching is one thing and with the mention of authority Paul moves on to a new topic.

The issues surrounding the verb *authentoo* (“to exercise/usurp authority”) are very difficult and simply must be handled, as the Report does not.<sup>10</sup>

3. Regarding the order of creation discussed in Verses 13-14: Can the argument in these verses concerning this truth of Scripture and of creation really be limited in this passage to the pastoral office? Several points strongly suggest that it cannot. On the one hand, Paul’s treatment of the order of creation elsewhere does not suggest such a limitation (Eph. 5:25-33 deals with the relationship between husband and wife, and 1 Cor. 11:2-16 concerns evidence expressing the relationship between husband and wife and/or men and women). On the other hand, the context of the entire passage in 1 Tim. 2:8-15 may not be limited to a worship setting at all, as is often assumed. What Paul says concerning women’s dress and deportment in Verses 9-10 may well not concern worship practices only, especially when one compares these verses to the highly similar wording in 1 Pet. 3:3-5. This may well indicate that more general (even familial) relationship considerations are in view.

Indeed, the matter of the order of creation raises questions concerning the very nature of manhood and womanhood, as well as the relationship between creation and the new creation of the Age to Come.<sup>11</sup> These questions are worthy of fundamental (re)consideration.

Reacting to DO 1994, the CTCR issued “Response to the Dissenting Opinion on *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*” (R 1994). Regarding the historical concerns expressed by DO 1994, it states:

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<sup>6</sup> The footnote to this states, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching (*didaskontes*) and admonishing yourselves with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs....” Related is the question what the teaching mentioned in this verse concerns. Does it concern all sorts of topics? religious matters only? Answers to such questions help to determine if the pastoral office is in view at all.”

<sup>7</sup> The footnote to this states, “Older women, similarly, ought to be properly reverent in behavior, not devils, not enslaved to much wine, noble teachers (*kalodidaskalous*).”

<sup>8</sup> The footnote to this states, “Later, in 1 Tim. 5:9,16 [cf. Acts 6:1], Paul deals with very earthly matters of care of widows in the congregation.”

<sup>9</sup> The footnote to this states, “*ouden* / ‘and not’ joins the two words. The use of *de* (‘and’), as well as its compounds *ouden/meeden* (‘and not’), in 1 Timothy always strongly suggests a move to a different topic or to quite a different aspect of a topic. See, e.g., 2:15 and 1:4.”

<sup>10</sup> The footnotes to this states, “The 1985 ‘Women in the Church’ document’s treatment of this issue is very brief, encompassing only several sentences.”

<sup>11</sup> The footnotes to this states, “The latter question is explored in some detail in the 1985 document only.”

The first “declaration” of 1969 Res. 2-17 states that “those statements of Scripture which direct women to keep silent in the church and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men, we understand to mean that women ought not to hold the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office.” In response to what is said about this statement in the minority report, it is by no means self-evident that references to “the order of creation” and to the phrase “exercise authority over men” later in this resolution are to be read as “additional principles” rather than being read in the light of the initial “declaration” quoted above. It is precisely because of questions such as this that were left unanswered by Res. 2-17 that the Synod in subsequent years has repeatedly asked the CTCR to study and clarify further what the Scriptures teach regarding the role of women in the church (1977 Res. 3-06; 1981 Res. 3-11; 1983 Res. 3-10; 1989 Res. 3-13A; 1992 Res. 3-05). (p. 3)

[T]he Synod’s official position . . . is that expressed in the 1970 CCM opinion. The Synod itself, by adopting and repeatedly reaffirming this opinion, recognized that this *de jure humano* position may be “further define[d]” and “refine[d]” in the future on the basis of further study of the Scriptures. (p. 4)

What the CTCR says in this report has as its theological basis the Commission’s 1985 report *Women in the Church*. (p. 4)

[T]he minority report raises what appears to be the fundamental question at issue in this section by asking whether “the groundwork has been laid to sustain” the conclusions offered in the CTCR’s report. The Commission believes that the theological groundwork [has] been laid in its 1985 report, which has been repeatedly commended by the Synod for study and guidance (1986 Res. 3-09; 1989 Res. 3-14; 1992 Res. 3-04). It would appear, therefore, that the fundamental concerns of the signers of the minority report are not with this report of the CTCR but rather with the CTCR’s 1985 report on which it is based, as well as with the resolutions of the Synod commending this report. (p. 4)

Moving to the theological concerns addressed by DO 1994, it says:

1. Paul’s use of the term *didaskein* in 1 Tim. 2:12 is carefully discussed in the CTCR’s 1985 report (pp. 34-35), with the conclusion that “the apostolic restriction in 1 Timothy 2 pertains to that teaching of God’s Word which involves an essential function of the pastoral office.” The minority report says that this interpretation “seems too facile for this text,” but no alternative interpretation of the text is offered. Several questions need to be asked, such as these: Do those dissenting to the Commission’s report believe that Scripture prohibits women from *every* form of teaching or public address? If not, what specific kinds of teaching—beyond the teaching which is an essential function of the pastoral office—are clearly prohibited by this passage?

2. The CTCR’s 1985 report also discusses the term *authenthein* and its context in 1 Timothy 2, concluding that “the authority forbidden to women here is that of the pastoral office” (p. 35). Do the signers of the minority report believe that this passage prohibits women from exercising *any and all* authority over men? If so, what implications does this have, e.g., for questions such as woman suffrage (not only in the church, but also in society)? The questions raised in this section of the

minority report have profound implications for the position on the role of women in the church which the Synod has taken since 1969.

3. What is said above also applies to questions raised in the minority report regarding “the order of creation.” First, it should be stated clearly that neither the Commission’s 1985 nor 1994 report limit the application of the order of creation “to the pastoral office.” (Scripture’s application of the order of creation to the relationship between husbands and wives is discussed repeatedly in previous reports of the Commission, such as its 1985 report *Women in the Church*, its 1981 report *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective*, and its 1987 report *Divorce and Remarriage: An Exegetical Study*.) What the Commission does say is that in applying the order of creation to worship/church contexts, 1 Cor. 14:33b-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-15 teach that “women are not to exercise those functions in the local congregation which would involve them in the exercise of authority inherent in the authoritative public teaching office (i.e., the office of pastor)” (*Women in the Church*, p. 38). If those dissenting believe that “more general” applications of the order of creation are mandated by the Scriptures with respect to the service of women in offices brought into being by the church, what are these specific applications and what is their Scriptural foundation? (p. 5)

Among its concluding statements, R 1994 gives the following:

The Commission is aware of . . . exegetical problems (such as the possible meanings and usages of the term *authentēin*, which occurs in Scripture only in 1 Tim. 2:12), and it will undoubtedly continue to study and discuss them. It also believes, however, that despite any number of exegetical questions and ambiguities (some of which may never be resolved on this side of heaven), we do have a clear word from God in 1 Tim. 2:12. That clear word is that “women are not to exercise those functions in the local congregation which would involve them in the exercise of authority inherent in the authoritative public teaching office (i.e., the office of pastor)” (*Women in the Church*, p. 38). During the years of study and discussion within the Commission on its most recent report, no Scriptural evidence was presented which persuaded the majority of the members of the Commission of the need to redo, revise, or reject the exegesis underlying this and other theological conclusions of its previous reports. Nor does the minority report itself provide evidence from Scripture that demonstrates that the conclusions of these reports are in error. At the same time, the executive committee recognizes that the critical examination of previous conclusions of CTCR reports regarding what the Scriptures teach is necessarily an ongoing task. When the Commission becomes convinced through its study of Scripture and the Confessions that “new” or revised positions on certain issues are necessary, then it must proceed in the confidence that such corrections or revisions are gifts from the Holy Spirit and should be brought to the attention of the Synod.

One final point needs to be underscored. In order to remain faithful to the Reformation principle *sola Scriptura*, the church must constantly and meticulously guard against a twofold danger—the danger of teaching as God’s truth either less or more than God’s Word actually teaches on any given issue. Where God’s Word speaks—and speaks clearly—the church must do the same. The Commission in adopting its 1994 report indicates that it continues to believe that it was faithful to this principle in its 1985 report, the conclusions of which form the basis for *The Service of Women*. However—as the *Brief Statement* says so well—“those questions in the domain of Christian doctrine may be termed open questions which Scripture answers either not at all or *not clearly*. Since neither an individual nor the church as a whole is permitted to develop or augment the Christian doctrine,

but are rather ordered and commanded by God to continue in the doctrine of the apostles, 2 Thess. 2:15; Acts 2:42, *open questions must remain open questions*” (p. 21; emphasis added). The study of God’s Word must continue, and where God’s Word speaks clearly, the church must clearly speak. But just as importantly, where God’s Word does not speak clearly the church has a divine mandate to *refrain* from saying “thus says the Lord.” (p. 6-7)

The CTCR issued an opinion in 2004 related to the service of women in the church. “The Service of Women in Congregational Offices of Executive Director/President or Assistant Director/Vice President” (CTCR 2004) makes some of the following points:

Congregational polity is an *adiaphoron*, neither commanded nor forbidden in Holy Scripture. . . .

But to say that polity is an *adiaphoron* is only the beginning of the discussion. For then the church has the difficult task of determining what would be wise and edifying for the church. In matters of *adiaphora*—things neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture—the church’s arrangements should support and reinforce the scriptural teaching. Even regarding matters of polity, which are *adiaphora*, there should be a concern to support and reinforce the church’s God-given doctrine and practice. (p. 28)

The congregation’s polity should uphold the God-given family structure. It should not in effect subvert it, whether intentionally or unintentionally, by setting up a completely egalitarian arrangement that makes no distinction between husbands and wives. Instead it should reflect and reinforce the family structure. (p. 29)

There is no “Thus saith the Lord” regarding positions such as executive director/president and assistant director/vice president. These are offices established by the church in Christian freedom. Scripture does not prohibit women who possess the requisite gifts from holding these humanly-established offices, assuming that the occupants of these offices do not “perform those functions that are distinctive to the public exercise of the ministry of Word and sacrament,” or carry out “official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office.” In filling these offices the congregation should take into account, among other things, the aforementioned family structure. Further, the Commission encourages men not to neglect their leadership responsibilities in their congregations. Since the church encourages husbands to exercise their God-given headship in a God-pleasing way at home, the church should correspondingly encourage men to exercise leadership in their congregation. Congregations are encouraged to organize themselves in ways that complement and reinforce the family, for the church is “the household of God” (1 Tim. 3:15). (p. 30)

In 2005 the CTCR provided an opinion on the meaning of the word *Authentein* (“Authority”), entitled “*Authentein: Atlantic District Request*” (CTCR 2005). Based on recent research at the time into the use of the word outside of the New Testament, where it only occurs in 1 Timothy 2:12, the CTCR states,



The research of those who have examined in detail all the evidence now available to us shows that the predominant meaning of *authenthein* in the Greek-speaking world during the time of Jesus and Paul was the non-pejorative or positive meaning “to exercise authority over.” (p. 1)

The Commission has limited itself to the more narrow task of describing the lexical aspects (relating to word meaning and vocabulary) of the research, rather than to an exegetical analysis of 1 Timothy 2:12 itself” (p. 1).

Nor is it the Commission’s purpose here to draw conclusions regarding the application of this verse in the contemporary church. For a discussion of what the New Testament says in general about the service of women in the church the Commission recommends the continued study of its 1985 report *The Service of Women: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice*. (p. 12)

Paul F. Nus responded to CTCR 2005 with “A Minority Opinion on *Authentein*: Response to a Request from the Atlantic District” (MO 2005). Nus faults CTCR 2005 with not providing practical applications and implications based on the findings of the word study and maintains that the conclusions of such study “contradict and undercut crucial aspects of” CTCR 1985 (p. 2). In particular he asserts that CTCR 1985 blends *authenthein* with and subordinates it to *didaskhein* in its evaluation of 1 Timothy 2:12, where a wrong understanding of the use of *oude* in this verse is also assumed (p. 3-4).

In 2006, the CTCR issued “CTCR Response to Expressions of Dissent (2004-2006)” (R 2004-2006). This document includes a response to those who dissent from Resolution 3-08A “To Affirm the Conclusions of the 1994 CTCR Report: *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices*,” adopted at the 2004 LCMS convention. After noting some arguments of the dissenters, which are essentially the same as expressed in DO 1994, this document includes the following points:

Scripture itself clearly identifies the existence of an order or structure of creation that reflects God’s good and gracious will for His creatures and belongs “to the very structure of created existence”<sup>[6]</sup> (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 11:7–9; 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:13–14). . . . We are therefore bound by Scripture to affirm this order of creation. As those who believe, teach, and confess that the Bible is “the *only* rule and norm for faith and practice,” however, we are also bound by what *Scripture alone* teaches about the doctrinal *implications and applications* of the order of creation for the service of women in the church. We are not free to take the scriptural principle of the order of creation and apply it however we think it can or should be applied, thereby claiming scriptural authority for our personal or ecclesial applications. While affirming the order of creation, we must also ask: What does *Scripture alone* teach about the doctrinal implications and applications of the order of creation for the service of women in the church?

The LCMS holds that women may not serve as pastors or carry out the distinctive functions of the pastoral office because Scripture itself applies the order of creation to the question of service in the pastoral office. When the Bible says that women, because of the creational order, are not to “teach,” “speak,” or “exercise authority over men” (see 1 Cor. 14:33b–35 and 1 Tim. 2:11–15), this

does not mean that women are bound by the very structure of God’s creation to refrain from *any and every* kind of teaching, speaking, or exercising authority over men—in society or in the church. However, these passages do require women to refrain from the teaching, speaking, and exercising of authority that have been entrusted by God specifically to one who holds the pastoral office—an office which God has made it clear should be held only by qualified men. It is Scripture alone that tells us that “the creational pattern of male headship requires that women not hold the formal position of the authoritative public teaching office in the church, that is, the office of pastor.”<sup>[7]</sup>

At the same time, the Synod has concluded in 2004 Res. 3-08A that women may hold all humanly instituted offices in the church because we have no express “thus says the Lord” about the implications of the order of creation for service in these offices. If the position descriptions for these offices call upon women to carry out distinctive pastoral functions, then (says Res. 3-08A) women may not serve in such offices—because this is what Scripture clearly teaches about the implications of the order of creation for such service. Underlying the Synod’s position is not only an affirmation of the order of creation, but a deliberate effort to say no more and no less than what Scripture alone says regarding the implications of the order of creation for the service of women in the church.

“The order of creation” and “what the Bible says,” therefore, are not two different (even “complementary”) norms or standards of authority for determining the church’s doctrinal stance regarding the service of women in the church. There is only one “rule and norm” for the doctrinal position of the Synod on this (and every other issue): Scripture alone. If the dissenters believe that *Scripture* clearly and definitively teaches that, due to the order of creation, women are forbidden to serve in certain humanly instituted offices in the church (even when these offices do not require them to carry out the distinctive functions of the pastoral office), then it is incumbent upon those dissenting to demonstrate where and how Scripture makes this clear. This, in the CTCR’s judgment, the dissenters have not done. (p. 24-26)

Questions of polity, such as whether a woman may serve as chairperson of a given committee (or whether a congregation should even have that committee) are strictly speaking *adiaphora*—matters that are explicitly neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture. The Scriptures expect Christians to make use of their “sanctified common sense” in applying Scriptural teaching to their different contexts in matters of *adiaphora*. Such application needs to happen, and in fact does happen, in countless ways as individual Christians and congregations seek to make godly decisions about their daily lives. But there is an important distinction between applications explicitly made by Scripture and applications that are left to our own ministerial use of reason. (p. 26)

To summarize: The CTCR agrees with the dissenters that the order of creation is clearly taught in Scripture and has important implications for the service of women in the church—specifically with reference to the pastoral office and its distinctive functions. . . . The CTCR also believes, however, that we are bound to *Scripture alone* as the norm when it comes to making *doctrinal* judgments about the specific implications and applications of the order of creation for the service of women in the church. It believes that the dissenters have failed to provide scriptural evidence to show that, in the words of one dissenter, “a woman is violating the order of creation by serving in certain capacities where she does not carry out functions of the pastoral office.” (p. 28)

“The Creator’s Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church” was put out by the CTCR in 2009. This document affirms the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 provided in CTCR 1985 (p. 34-37). Regarding the service of women it states:

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

Such leadership of women is not inconsistent with Scriptural teaching. On the contrary, it exists in the very context of our church’s life and teaching which upholds and promulgates the divinely ordered responsibility of pastors and husbands. When women serve in this way they are enhancing the work of the priesthood of all believers, serving as members of the body of Christ, and not usurping pastoral authority or violating the “order of creation.” Scripture provides numerous examples of such service, for instance Priscilla’s instruction of Apollos (Acts 18:26) or the teaching Timothy received from his mother and grandmother (2 Tim 1:5). (p. 45)

The CTCR produced the “CTCR Review of 2005 Task Force Guidelines for the Service of Women in Congregational Offices” in 2014 (CTCR 2014). Some points of note made in this document are as follows:

This section helps to clarify what the Synod did—and did not do—in adopting Res. 3-08A at the 2004 convention. The Synod did not adopt, approve, or affirm the CTCR’s 1994 report *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* as such or in its entirety. Rather, it affirmed two specific conclusions “based on” this report which are summarized as follows in the second “Resolved” of Res. 3-08A: 1) “that women may not serve in the office of pastor nor exercise any of its distinctive functions,” and 2) “that women may serve in humanly established offices in the church as long as the functions of these offices do not make them eligible to carry out “official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office.”” (p. 4)

The CTCR . . . is aware that some members of the Synod continue to have questions and concerns about whether 2004 Res. 3-08A and the conclusions of the CTCR’s report on *The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices* are consistent with the Scriptural and Confessional principles set forth in this section. It is also aware that some members of the Synod may not agree fully with some of the previously adopted resolutions of the Synod summarized in these principles—e.g., resolutions that “permit women to vote in congregational assemblies (without any limitations on

matters on which they may vote)” and/or resolutions that permit women “to read the Scriptures in public worship services” (cf. 1969 Res. 2-17 and 1989 Res. 3-14). (p. 5)

[I]t should be noted that while the Commission affirms that “the order of creation is clearly taught in Scripture,” and while it acknowledges that questions about the understanding and implications of this issue have not been sufficiently addressed and articulated, it also recognizes that questions about exactly “how to apply” the order of creation to specific questions of practice and polity (beyond its application to the pastoral office and its distinctive functions) are very difficult to address with complete certainty, clarity, and consensus on the basis of Scripture alone. In other words, the Bible does not spell out explicitly “where to draw the line(s)” when it comes to exactly how the Biblical principle of the order of creation applies to all matters of congregational polity and practice. Hence the need for continued careful study and discussion of this matter (and patience, charity, and restraint where there is disagreement about these very difficult questions of application), to which the Commission itself is strongly committed as is indicated above. (p. 6)

In addressing “Concerns Regarding Woman Suffrage” in 1995 Res. 3-05 (see attached, Appendix D), the Synod officially declared “that honest Christian conscience can and does exist on both sides of this issue, but such difference of opinion is not divisive of Christian fellowship.” The same is true, the CTCR believes, with regard to 2004 Res. 3-08A and the matter of women serving in humanly-established congregational offices “that are not directly involved in carrying out the specific functions of the pastoral office or in public accountability for the functioning of this office.” Therefore, the CTCR also affirms in this context the Synod’s appeal in 1995 Res. 3-05 “that the members of the Synod, with due sensitivity to those for whom change in this area is a matter of conscience, continue to exercise Christian love and patience in all discussion and deliberations on this subject.” (p. 7)

The CTCR produced the document “Women and Military Service: A Lutheran Perspective” in 2017 (CTCR 2017). While not pertaining to the service of women in the church, the document states hermeneutical principles consistent those used for the service of women in the church:

God’s Word does not make explicit every implication or application of the order of creation for life in the civil estate. However, essential realities woven by God into the very order or structure of His creation (such as the distinction between male and female) remain and must not be ignored or denied. As God’s creatures specially designed in accordance with His will, men are to embrace their masculinity<sup>[24]</sup> and women are to embrace their femininity<sup>[25]</sup> together with all this implies, not only within the realms of the family and the church, but also in other vocations and areas of society. (p. 7-8)

As noted above, Paul’s primary concern in these passages [including 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2] is to show how the order of creation, rooted in the reality of God’s creative work and will, applies to the relationship between husband and wife in marriage and to the question of order in the church, especially with reference to the pastoral office. With regard to the latter, the LCMS has consistently held that “those statements of Scripture which direct women to keep silence in the church and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men [1 Cor. 11 and 14; 1 Tim. 2:11–15], we

understand to mean that women ought not to hold the pastoral office or serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office” (1969 Res. 2-17).

Less clear is how Scripture’s teaching about the order of creation may be relevant or properly applied to various questions in the left-hand kingdom, since (as noted earlier) Scripture does not make explicit every implication or application of the order of creation for life in the civil estate. Here we must be cautious to say neither more nor less than Scripture itself says, nor expect or insist that Christians equally committed to the authority of Scripture will reach exactly the same conclusions about how the order of creation may or may not apply to such questions. (p. 11)

Finally, we come to “The Order of Creation: Theology, History, Definition,” which was published by the CTCR in 2022 (CTCR 2022). This document recounts the conclusions of CTCR 1985 (p. 4, 12-13). Also, in reference to CTCR 2017 it states:

The report does affirm the relevance of the order of creation for civil matters yet exercises a degree of restraint by not urging a theological inference (as opposed to a clear statement of Scripture) upon the consciences of the faithful in a way that may be unnecessarily divisive of fellowship. (p. 14)

Note, however, the following statements that it makes about the concept of “order of creation”:

The term “order of creation” is not found in Scripture. This does not mean it is unbiblical. (p. 1)

While the term “order of creation” is not found in Scripture, it is nonetheless a biblical concept. (p. 2)

The order of creation as a theological theme is derived from numerous New Testament passages. (p. 2)

[T]he term “order of creation” is not explicitly found in Scripture, but is a concept used to make sense of biblical passages that appeal to the narrative of creation and fall as precedent for conduct in the church and home. (p. 5)

The concept order of creation, though not found by name in Scripture, has in the Lutheran tradition been used as a way of referencing or summarizing Scripture’s own rationale for assigning specific roles of authority to men in the church and in the Christian home. (p 10)

The concept of the order of creation is indeed found in the Scriptures. (p. 15)