

# THE GOD-GIVEN ROLES OF MAN AND WOMAN APPLIED AT MLC

*By David Kuske*

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## INTRODUCTION

The issue of having women teachers at our college in New Ulm is one that has come full circle. In the late 1970's it was this very question that initiated a rather thorough-going discussion in our church body of the God-given roles for man and woman. In 1991 and 1993 our synod adopted a statement of theses and antitheses setting forth what Scripture teaches on this subject. Now this matter has come back once again to New Ulm for application at this school. This subject of the role and function of men and women instructors in our worker training schools probably has more urgency than ever now that our two colleges have been amalgamated on this campus.

Prior to the time when the CHE presented a statement to synod on the scriptural principles regarding the role of man and woman (1979), the CHE had also drawn up some guidelines in regard to having women serve as teachers at synodical schools. The presidents of the synodical schools at that time who also served on the CHE were: M. Toepel, O. Siegler, C. Frey, C. Toppe, and C. Lawrenz. It might be helpful to go back and look at some excerpts from the 1973 document containing those guidelines. It is interesting to note that the questions asked and the guidelines proposed then are not all that much different from those at the present time. The words underlined are emphasis added by this writer .

... In this connection (i.e. the use of women instructors), however, certain questions have arisen which, in turn, have led to the request that the Objectives-Policies Committee formulate certain guidelines on the subject under discussion. Some of the questions which have been raised are as follows: With respect to the use of women instructors in a classroom, what bearing does the Scriptural injunction of 1 Tim. 2:11-12 have on the matter ("Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.")? When does a "boy become a "man," as the term "man" is used in 1 Tim. 2:12? May a woman instructor be called by the Church to teach young men on the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level? on the college level? Is there an essential difference between a classroom-teaching situation and a one-to-one teaching relationship (e.g. piano instruction)? Does all "teaching" necessarily also involve the exercise of authority over the person receiving instruction? ...Does full faculty status on the part of a woman instructor necessarily involve the exercise of authority over fellow faculty members or students of such a school?

...We do not believe it is possible to give simple or categorical answers in each case to the question: Is the woman instructor hereby "usurping authority" over the man? The answer to such a question may often depend on how a Christian instructor conducts herself under the circumstances. Nevertheless, the following guidelines are offered in the hope that they will serve to clarify certain basic principles related to the general subject matter.

1. In any consideration of the subject in question, one basic principle remains constant: our Lord does not want a woman to usurp authority over the man.

2. Under normal circumstances our Synod should avoid placing or calling a woman into a position of teaching men. Although teaching need not necessarily involve the usurping of authority, such a teacher-student relationship can expose a woman instructor to the temptation of violating God's order of creation and of usurping authority contrary to God's will.
3. Unusual circumstances may dictate a need for using women in a teaching capacity with respect to men, but careful attention will then be required in such cases that the God-pleasing relationship between men and women be maintained.
4. We understand the expression "usurping authority" (Greek - authentein) to mean the imposing of one's own will or judgment upon someone else's will or judgment.
5. With respect to the term "man" as used in the pertinent passage of 1 Tim. 2:12, the Scriptures do not precisely define when a "boy" becomes a 'man.' Generally speaking, we... recognize manhood where the state so recognizes it, e.g., in a legal sense. Dependence or independence of a son with reference to his parents is also a factor which warrants consideration.
6. As to any distinction between a classroom situation and the one-to-one teacher-student relationship, we find no essential difference in the two situations - with respect to the question at hand. At the same time, the classroom situation would appear to offer more likelihood or occasion for the usurping of authority than one would expect in the one-to-one relationship.
7. With respect to the question of faculty status for a woman instructor (although the functions of the woman instructor, even on the college level could otherwise be beyond question, e.g. teaching of women students), faculty status could result in a situation where a woman would be usurping authority over the man. Much would depend, however, on a particular woman instructor's conduct and actions - that she make her contributions to faculty deliberations in a willing and humble spirit of service rather than in the desire to exercise authority. In order that these considerations may be kept in mind, it would seem to be a matter of wisdom to accord women instructors an advisory faculty status. (CHE minutes, emphasis ours)

The questions asked both then and now are these: When does a "boy become a man? Does all "teaching" necessarily also involve the exercise of authority? Does faculty status on the part of a woman instructor necessarily involve the exercise of authority? The basic answer given to all these questions was, "We do not believe it is possible to give simple or categorical answers in each case . . ." Later in this paper it will be shown that we still need to answer in essentially the same way. Each of these questions, plus a couple more, and how we answer each, will be dealt with at length in the last part of the paper. Before that is done, however, it is important to review a number of truths that are basic to formulating answers to these questions.

### **THREE ESSENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

1. The role of man and woman isn't a peripheral matter, as some would argue, just because it doesn't deal directly with the doctrines that teach us the way of salvation. The matter of roles is something that God addresses in his word, and that makes it important. A Christian takes everything God says in his word seriously whether it deals directly with the way of salvation or not. The matter of roles is also an important matter because it tells us what pleases God. In thankful response to God's saving love, we want to do only that which pleases him. In Ephesians 5:8,10 Paul urges us, "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light . . . and find out what pleases the Lord."

Words from an article written by Wayne Grudem (Trinity Journal, Fall, 1982, page 232) put this first consideration into proper perspective:

This relationship, appropriately understood and carried out in accordance with the biblical pattern, answers the deep longings for men to be men and to act like men, and for women to be women and to act like women, equal in value and importance as persons, equal in dignity before God and equally created in God's image, and yet distinct and different in the roles God has assigned to us: not better or worse, not superior or inferior, simply different in roles. For us to be truly obedient to God and truly fulfilled as his people, these role distinctions must never be obliterated or forgotten. We must recognize that to distort or deny these relations will bring not only disobedience to God's pattern but also immeasurable harm to the church, to the family, and to society.... It is a relationship of great beauty which truly adorns the doctrine which we profess. As such it has always been, and, God willing, will continue to be, a cause for great thanksgiving and praise to God.

2. Since we want to be guided by God's word in this matter it is essential that we use proper hermeneutics. History and culture do play a part in biblical interpretation, but they must always be used properly otherwise what is taught can become what man imagines rather than what God actually teaches.

We determine the meaning of sentences and paragraphs in all literature (including Scripture) by the context. We establish the shading of meaning for individual words by their use in the immediate context, not by using whatever shading of meaning seems to make sense to us or suits our fancy (e.g. the meaning of *ἀνὴρ* and *γυνή* in 1 Co 11:1-16). We establish the meaning of sentences and paragraphs by their interrelationship with one another in the context in which they are placed. This interrelationship is not determined by what makes sense to us or by what suits our fancy. It is determined by the conjunctions the writer used to indicate how he wanted the reader to relate one thought to another (e.g. the conjunctions used throughout 1 Co 11:1-16).

The historical and cultural setting given us by scripture itself is the only setting that is authoritative. This setting is basic to interpretation and dare not be ignored since it is part of the inspired text. Non-biblical sources about the historical and cultural setting can add to our understanding of a given passage because this information may give us a possible background in which the words were spoken or written. However, this non-biblical information can never be used to alter or change the simple, plain meaning of the biblical words.

Often in the discussion of the passages involving the role of man and woman, people have ignored what the inspired writers make clear in the context is the basis for what they say about these roles. People have also added what they imagine the historical or cultural setting might have been to suggest a different basis for what is said about these roles (particularly the role of the woman). They then proceed to do one of two things:

1. They say that we can't be sure that the simple, plain meaning of the words is what God is saying because there might be another interpretation. Therefore, they argue, we can't use these passages to establish doctrine.
2. They alter or change the simple, plain meaning of the words in context.

This is not proper hermeneutics because it uses a subjective approach to cast doubt on what God says about this matter or substitutes man's word for God's word. In his Bible study on the role of man and woman (Leader's Manual, page 10), Dr. Brug expresses it this way: "It is an invalid method of interpretation to make the understanding of a biblical text dependent on facts absent from the text, which must be supplied by the imagination of the interpreter or from other sources."

3. Once we have determined what God's will is, this matter requires careful consideration as we move to application in various aspects of our lives. In the New Testament God expresses his will for our lives in universal principles without giving us any hard and fast rules for application. Scripture does make a few applications that give us some guidance. But these applications don't give us quick, easy answers for

contemporary situations. Usually the latter may parallel the biblical situations in some ways but are quite different in other ways.

Some situations in our day are open and shut cases where we will all agree that a particular principle applies or doesn't apply. Many other situations are borderline cases where, for the sake of good order, we may adopt some general guidelines for application that help establish uniformity of practice in our church body. Still other situations are unique enough that each needs to be considered in the light of its particular setting.

Into which of these categories does the question of women teachers at MLC fall? For the most part it fits into the second category, that is, it's a borderline case where, for the sake of order, MLC adopts some general guidelines that establish a general application at this school. Placing the role of man and woman into this second category should not be seen as something unique. The application of many of God's commandments fall into this category in a large school setting such as this, and examples are not hard to find.

The fifth commandment forbids us to cause anger in another person. Should we then abolish college freshman initiation rites that make one freshman or another angry at times? Let's say that the college board would, upon recommendation by the faculty and administration, abolish freshman initiation rites. There would surely be sincere people (students, lay people, pastors) questioning why the board is restricting the Christian freedom of students in this way. If the board permits initiation rites, it is sure to have sincere Christians questioning why it allows such an "unchristian" thing to take place.

The sixth commandment urges us to keep our minds and hearts pure in sexual matters. Should we then forbid college students to go to R-rated movies or to rent such movies and play them on their VCR's in the dormitory? Which R-rated movies would we put on the blacklist, only some or all of them? If only some, what criteria would be used to establish those that are not proper? What about programs on the regular TV channels or on cable? What about rap music? What about the literature we read in the college English classes, or in Latin or Greek literature for that matter?

The seventh commandment tells us not to take our neighbor's money. Should we then forbid students to play cards for small change? The eighth commandment tells us that God wants us to speak well of one another and take the words and actions of others in the kindest possible way. Should we then forbid students from spreading the constant scuttlebutt that makes the rounds fairly often during a year on a college campus such as this?

My point in mentioning these things is to put the matter of women college teachers into proper focus. All of the general principles set down in Scripture and all of our summaries of what Scripture says in regard to these principles (e.g. Luther's explanation of the commandments) do not provide easy, ready-made applications for the many specific situations that must be dealt with on a college campus. There are many situations that are borderline cases. Our application of scriptural principles in such situations requires that we make the best sanctified judgment we can in each instance. Everyone in synod will not necessarily agree with every judgment that is made (recall the matter of freshman initiation rites as an example). When people for whatever reason call our application of a biblical principle "unchristian," we should be ready to show them that the judgment we made was one that was carefully chosen to avoid giving people a license to sin while at the same time not unduly restricting Christian freedom.

Drawing up guidelines in any borderline case, therefore, requires great care on our part in several ways: 1) We would be drawing some rather narrow lines in making a judgment, and we would want to be sure that the lines we have drawn would be clear to everyone rather than confusing the matter even more; 2) We would want to be sure that the underlying principle was understood by everyone involved so that guidelines that are established would lead to actions that flow from a heart responding to God's will in faith-born love rather than mere grudging, outward obedience - the kind of obedience that stinks in God's sight; and 3) We would want to be sure to express the readiness to change these guidelines if the situation were to change in a way that would invalidate one or more of the reasons for any of the guidelines. Since these three things should be true of guidelines for application involving any other biblical principles that express God's will, they should also be true of the guidelines for the application of God's role for man and woman here at MLC.

With these three essential considerations in mind (i.e. this is not a peripheral matter, the need to use proper hermeneutics, and the need for carefully crafted guidelines in making an application of a general principle) let's move on to the specific principle that is the center of our attention.

## WHAT EXACTLY IS THE PRINCIPLE?

It might seem that after fifteen years of discussion, the principle would be clear to everyone. But recent discussions of this matter in various parts of our synod indicate that it is still a matter that people are seeking to clarify for themselves. This will not surprise those who lived through our synod's adoption of a statement on fellowship. Discussions of fellowship did not end with a resolution by synod, but continued for quite some time thereafter in many areas and individual congregations of our synod.

It is not out of place, therefore, that we briefly address this question again, especially as we seek to apply it in a specific way. As was indicated at the outset, we will discuss the principle in this paper, not just in general, but particularly with an eye toward its application here at MLC.

Our synod's statement outlines the principle with these theses and antitheses (emphasis ours):

Thesis 2 (Creation). In love God established distinct male and female responsibilities (Ge 2:7,18,22). . . These responsibilities involved headship for man and submission for woman. These roles demonstrated God's unchanging will for the complementary relationship of man and woman with each other. Two NT passages attest to this: 1 Co 11:3,8,9 and 1 Ti 2:12,13.

Thesis 4a (The Fall). All commands of God and all roles established by God are for our good (1 Jn 5:3, Ps 19:8,11).

Thesis 10 (Headship). Scripture teaches that headship includes authority (1 Co 11:3,10; Col 1:18; 2:10; Eph 1:22; 1 Ti 2:11,12). Authority should not be used to dominate but to serve others (Mt 20:25-28).

Thesis 11 (Headship). Christ exercised his headship with sacrificial love (Eph 5:25), humility (Php 2:5-8), and service (Eph 5:28,29), and asks all believers to carry out their roles of authority in the same way (Mt 20:25-28).

Thesis 13 (Headship). Believers in Christ live under his headship with willing submission, respect, obedience and love toward those in authority (Eph 5:21-6:9).

Thesis 17b (In the Church). The Scriptural applications that a woman remain silent (1 Co 14:34) and that a woman should not teach a man (1 Ti 2:11,12) require that a woman refrain from participating in these gatherings in any way which involves authority over men.

Thesis 18b (In the Church). Only men will do work that involves authority over men (1 Co 11:3-10, 14:33-35, 1 Ti 2:11,12).

Thesis 19 (In the Church). All Christians, men and women, are to use their God-given gifts to serve each other (1 Pe 4:10). Women are encouraged to participate in offices and activities of the public ministry except where the work involves authority over men.

Antithesis 11. We reject the opinion that the word "head" as applied to Christ and man in the NT does not include authority.

Antithesis 14. We reject the claim that the biblical statement "women should remain silent in the churches" (1 Co 14:34) forbids all speaking by women in the assemblies of the church.

The role relationships according to Scripture (theses 2, 11, and 18b), like other God-given general principles, are simple to state. Man is to act toward woman as a loving, self-sacrificing head. A person's head is vitally connected to the body, guiding and directing everything involving the body with a deep concern for, and in the best interest of, the body. This is man's role in his complementary relationship with woman. Woman is to

act toward man in willing, self-sacrificing submission. A person's body is vitally connected to the head, and it is guided and cared for by the head. This is woman's role in her complementary relationship with man.

The headship role, as Scripture indicates according to thesis 10 and antithesis 11, includes authority. But thesis 11 indicates that headship authority is to be practiced in a loving, not a selfish or arbitrary, way by man. This is made clear by a number of passages. In 1 Co 11:11 God says that man is not "independent of woman", that is, when he acts with his authority as man, he dare not ask only what he thinks is good for himself but also whether what he is doing is also good for the woman. In Mt 20:25ff., Jesus indicates that a Christian never revels in the authority he has over others but rather sees it as an opportunity he has for loving service to others. The rulers of the Gentiles, Jesus says, love to "lord it over" others in the exercise of their authority. But that is not the way a Christian acts. Instead the child of God becomes great by serving others, following the example of the Son of Man who did "not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." This is the pattern God urges every Christian to follow whenever they exercise authority of any kind.

Since this is the pattern God wants a Christian to follow whenever he exercises authority, the application Paul makes of man's headship role to husbands doesn't say something that is unique to marriage. The attitude and action that God urges a husband to show as the head of his wife is merely an application of the attitude and action God desires man to show in his role of loving headship in general. In Eph 5:25, Paul cites the sacrifice Christ made for the happiness of the church as the model for the man to follow in marriage. According to this application of the general principle, God indicates that he wants man to be willing to sacrifice anything, even his own life, for the happiness of the woman. Peter adds (1 Pe 3:7) that men in marriage are to "be considerate" of their wives, "treat[ing] them with respect" as "heirs with you of the gracious gift of life." This application, too, is a pattern for men in general to follow in their complementary relationship to women.

What does this mean for the male members of the MLC faculty? It lays an important responsibility upon them, one that could be considered an even greater responsibility than the role God gives the women of the faculty. If Christian men do not act as loving, self-sacrificing heads toward women, it will be much more difficult for women to carry out their role. The key to the role relationships in God's scheme of things obviously begins with the actions of the head.

The men of the faculty will be tempted by their old nature to use their God-given role in a selfish, chauvinistic way toward the women of the faculty. Instead, they need to see their faculty headship role as one that is not to be carried out independently of the women. As in any gathering of Christian men and women, what the men do must not only be for their own good and happiness but also for the good and the happiness of the women of the faculty. Rather than reveling in their authority men will follow the example of their Savior and see their authority as an opportunity to serve others. This means being willing to sacrifice anything that is dear to themselves for the good of others, including sacrificing for the good of the women of the faculty.

But how does one know what is good for others or how to provide happiness for them if one doesn't consult with them to find out? Though women will choose to be silent rather than oppose a man in open faculty debate (1 Co 14:34), consideration and respect for the women as co-heirs of the gracious gift of life means that no faculty decision will ever be made without taking into account the concerns of the women of the faculty. This isn't any different than what God wants us to do in a congregational setting.

No one is suggesting that all this will be easy to do, but Christian men who accept their role of loving, self-sacrificing headship will find a way to do it and then do it willingly.

The woman's role of submission, as Scripture indicates according to thesis 2 and 13, means being under authority. This is made evident in a number of passages. In 1 Ti 2:11,12 God says that a woman is to "learn in quietness and full submission" and, therefore, not to "have authority over a man." 1 Co 14:34 indicates that women "must be in submission", and verse 38 adds that this "is the Lord's command." In Mt 20:25ff. Jesus indicates that greatness in God's sight is not what the world thinks, namely having authority over others. Instead greatness in God's sight is found in submitting oneself in humble service to others just as Christ did in saving us.

Therefore the applications that Paul and Peter make of the role relationship to wives don't say something that is unique to marriage. The attitude and action that God urges a wife to show toward her husband as her

head is merely an application of the attitude and action God desires women to show in their complementary relationship toward men in general. In Eph 5:23,24 Paul urges married women to place themselves under the authority of their husbands as their loving, self-sacrificing heads. Peter adds (1 Pe 3:1-6) that when a married woman acts with “a gentle, quiet spirit” toward her husband, this is “beautiful”, “of great worth in God’s sight”, and doing “what is right”. These applications of the general principle to women in marriage are God-pleasing patterns for all women to follow in their complementary relationship to men.

Submission does not indicate or even imply in any way that women are inferior to men. Rather, according to thesis 4a, Scripture indicates that any role relationship in which God places us under others is for our good. To put this truth in perspective, consider some of the other examples in which God placed people in submission to someone else. In his humiliation Christ willingly submitted himself to God’s will (Jn 4:74, 5:30, 6:38). God wants us as citizens to submit to the authority of our government officials (Ro 13:1,5) or as members of a congregation to the authority of our church leaders (1 Co 16:16, He 13:17). Peter urged the younger men to willingly be submissive to those who are older (1 Pe 5:5). In none of these instances does submission imply inferiority; neither does it do so when it is used of woman’s complementary relationship to man. God’s command that men are to be a loving, self-sacrificing heads in their complementary relationship with women also makes this abundantly clear.

Submission does not mean that women cannot use their talents to God’s glory. Rather, according to thesis 19, women along with men are encouraged to use their God-given gifts in activities and offices of the church where what they do does not involve authority over men. Again, Jesus words in Mt 20:25ff about greatness in God’s eyes affirms this point. The people of the world see lording it over others by the exercise of authority as making a person great. A Christian woman knows from Jesus words that the way “to be become great . . . and to be first” is not to have authority but to use her gifts as a “servant” and a “slave” to others.

What does this mean for the female members of the MLC faculty? It lays on them the responsibility of living a role of submission toward men that many unbelieving women reject. The old nature of the women faculty members, with a large prompt from the attitude of many women in contemporary society, will tempt them to rebel against this role of submission. Instead, they need to see, as the quote from Grudem mentioned earlier points out on the basis of Scripture, that this is not a matter of better or worse, superior or inferior, but simply a difference of roles established by God for the happiness of both man and woman.

God wants men in their headship role to do what serves the good of all including the women of the faculty. When the men consult with them, the women of the faculty will not hesitate to express their thoughts, but they will do it in a gentle and quiet spirit. They will rejoice in the opportunity to use their talents to help train young college students to serve God with their whole life. They will serve faithfully in whatever courses they are called to teach and will show the students that they are glad to do this in a role of submission. In so-doing, they will also serve as role models for the women students at MLC. Daily they can model for these students how Christian women carry out the complementary relationship God has given them towards men. The male students, too, will profit from seeing this example of Christian women gladly and willingly living out their God-given role.

No one is suggesting that all this will be easy to do, but Christian women who accept their role of quiet, gentle submission will find a way to do it and then do it willingly.

One final thought about the question of what the principle is. We always need to be sure to distinguish what is application in Scripture from the principle itself. The commands in 1 Co 14:34 that women are to be silent in church, and in 1 Ti 2:12 that a woman is not to teach a man, are not absolute statements which have universal application. Whenever a woman speaks in church, or whenever a woman teaches a man, without stepping out of her role of submission, then these actions are not forbidden. But these applications can serve as guidelines for us when we have a contemporary situation that is similar to the ones Paul addresses in these two passages.

Paul’s command that the women be silent in church is limited by the situation in Corinth which led Paul to give the congregation there this command. When the Corinthians came together to worship, anyone could get up and address the assembly (v26). For the sake of order (v33) Paul laid down a number of restrictions in regard

to this practice. After two or three had shared a message with those present, others were to critique what had been said (v29). If one person was speaking and a second person stood up to speak, then the first person was to stop and sit down (v30). It is in this setting (where people rising to speak were to judge what was said earlier and where rising to speak would be telling another person to stop speaking) that Paul also adds the command that women are to be silent. Because of this setting, for women to rise and speak would be to step out of their role of quiet and gentle submission (cf. the in-depth treatment of this passage in the Quarterly, Vol. 78, p176ff).

Paul's command in 1 Ti 2:12 that a woman is not to teach a man is also limited by the context. Paul adds the explanatory phrase "or to have authority over a man" which would be better translated as the GWN did "to teach in such a way as to have authority over a man" (cf. the in-depth treatment of this point in the Quarterly, Volume 88, p64ff). Teaching a person can be done in an authoritative way (i.e. "with the right or power to enforce obedience" - Oxford Dictionary) or in a non-authoritative way (e.g. simply explaining something more clearly to someone who is less knowledgeable.) The former is what Paul forbids in 1 Ti 2. The latter is what Scripture says Priscilla did together with her husband Aquila in teaching Apollos (Acts 18:26). It is also the kind of "teaching and admonishing" Paul urges all the members of the congregation to do for one another in Col 3:16.

Obviously, both of these applications (silence in church, not teaching a man) are of interest for the matter at hand because they are applications that can provide some guidance in drawing up guidelines here at MLC. More will be said about them later. The point here simply is that the applications made in these two passages are not the principle. These applications are pertinent at MLC only because what women faculty members do here is similar in some ways to the situations that led Paul to say what he did in these two passages.

### **WHERE DOES THE PRINCIPLE APPLY?**

This is another question that is basic to the point under discussion here today. The synod statement addresses this question in these theses and antitheses (emphasis ours):

Thesis 3 (Creation). God established roles for man and woman in his creative plan before he united them in marriage and before they fell into sin (Ge 2:7,18,22; 1 Co 11:3,8,9).

Therefore God's assigned roles apply beyond the marriage relationship and in every Period of history.

Thesis 20 (In the World). Christians also accept the biblical role relationship for their life and work in the world (1 Co 11:3; Eph 5:6-17). Christians seek to do God's will consistently in every area of their lives. We will therefore strive to apply this role relationship principle in our life and work in the world.

Thesis 21 (In the World). God leaves a great deal to our conscientious Christian judgment as we live the role relationship in the world. In Christian love we will refrain from unduly binding the consciences of the brothers and sisters in our fellowship. Rather, we will encourage each other as we seek to apply this principle to our lives in the world.

Antithesis 6. We reject the opinion that male headship and female submission apply only to marriage or only to marriage and the church (1 Co 11:3, 1 Ti 2:12).

Antithesis 8. We reject the opinion that the principle of role relationships applies only to some people, only for some periods of history, or only to certain aspects of Christian life.

Antithesis 9. We reject the opinion that in the church assemblies only matters pertaining to the Word of God are authoritative.

Again the scriptural answer to the question of where the principle applies is not complicated but simple and straightforward. God does not divide our lives as Christian into categories. So God's will for our lives applies to our whole life. Scripture does not, and so we dare not, divide our lives up and categorize things so that we begin to say that God's will applies to us at certain times in our lives and other times it doesn't, or that it



applies to one part of our lives but not to another part. God's will in regard to the roles he has assigned man and woman are not any different. The CHE essay presented to the synod in 1979 said it this way:

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

Why is this pertinent to instruction at MLC? Simply because when people restrict the complementary role relationship of man and woman to marriage and the church, a corollary that usually follows is that the only thing a woman cannot do in the church is to teach God's word to a man in an authoritative way. This leads to the conclusion (as LC-MS seems to be doing, cf. Dr. Samuel Nafzgefs essay, "Women in the Church") that the application of woman's role in the church involves only the office of the pastorate.

In 1 Co 11:3, Paul says that the man is the head of the woman. In 1 Co 14:34, he says that women are to be in submission. In 1 Ti 2:12, he says that a woman is to have a quiet spirit, to be in full submission, and not to have authority over a man. These statements are universal principles, not principles restricted to Christian men or women in the church.

A basic rule of interpretation is that a principle stated in Scripture is universal if it fulfills the following three qualifications (Cf. the in-depth treatment of this subject in the Quarterly article, "What in Scripture is Universally Applicable," Volume 91, Number 2. The questions after each point are the way Dr. Brug expressed these same three points in his Northwestern Lutheran column "Your Question Please", October, 1994.)

1. The people about whom the statement speaks includes all mankind. (Does the context of the passage limit who is addressed?)
2. The immediate and wider context of Scripture do not limit the statement in scope or time. (Does another statement of Scripture limit the application of the command?)
3. The rationale for the statement indicates it is God's will for all people. (Does the text give a reason for the command that applies only to certain people or to all of us?)

The three passages cited above qualify on all three counts.

1. In each passage Paul uses the words man and woman in the generic sense. He is speaking of all men and all women, not just married men and women, not just Christian men and women, and not just the men and women in Corinth or Ephesus. Some people argue that the words  $\alpha\upsilon\eta\rho$  and  $\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\eta$  mean "husband" and "wife" rather than "man" and "woman" in 1 Co 11 and 1 Ti 2. In regard to the 1 Co 11 passage, an unpublished article by Dr. Brug ("Can the Reference to Male Headship in 1 Cor 11 Be Limited to the Relationship of Husband and Wife?") gives several reasons why  $\alpha\upsilon\eta\rho$  and  $\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\eta$  mean man and woman in this passage. The following is a capsule summary of three key points made in this paper.

- a. The common statement that  $\alpha\upsilon\eta\rho$  may mean "man" or "husband" and  $\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\eta$  may mean "woman" or "wife" is quite misleading. The basic meaning is "man" and "woman." Biblical Greek indicates the narrower meaning "husband" and "wife" by adding direct modifiers such as possessive nouns or pronouns (e.g. "his woman") or indirect modifiers such as the verbs "marry" and "divorce" (e.g. "divorce a woman"). [computer study of these two words by Pastor M. Riley]
- b. If a word has a wider and narrower meaning, we must assume the wider meaning unless the context requires the narrow use of the term. The context of 1 Co 11 not only doesn't require the narrow meaning, it requires the wider meaning. This is most evident in v12,

“For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman.” [Substitute the words “husband” and “wife” and note the nonsense that results: “For as wife came from husband, so also husband is born of wife.”] The wider meaning is also evident from verses 8 and 9 where Paul speaks of the manner and purpose of the creation of woman (not the manner and creation of the wife). The meaning in the other verses must be the same as it is in these verses because all the verses in this passage (vv 4-12) are tied together in meaning by the conjunctions at the beginning of each verse (several δε’s, quite a few γαρ’s, δια τουτο, πλην).

- c. The meaning “husband” and “wife” would lead to the very doubtful interpretations that in this passage Paul is addressing only the husbands and wives of the congregation, that verses 4-7 say only wives were to have their head covered and only husbands were not to cover their heads, and that verses 13-15 say that long hair is the glory and the covering only for wives.

Some use a quote from Luther in regard to 1 Tim 2:12 to assert that in this passage Paul is speaking about a wife teaching her husband. Luther makes the suggestion that woman here means “wife” in order to avoid a conflict with Priscilla and Aquila’s instruction of Apollos. But Luther is trying to obviate a problem which is not a problem if one recognizes the scriptural distinction between authoritative and non-authoritative teaching. We should also note that later in this same context (Luther’s Works, 28:276ff), Luther indicates that 1 Tim 2:12 is speaking of man and woman, not husband and wife, when he says, “He forbids teaching contrary to a man or the authority of a man . . . He wants to save the order preserved by the world - that a man be the head of the woman, as 1 Cor 11:3 tells us.” He indicates the same thing in another place (Luther’s Works, 20:242) in this comment on 1 Tim 2:12: “Now reason is fine to look at, even as a woman is when compared to a man; but it is not good for teaching or having authority, even as a woman is forbidden to teach or have authority, 1 Tim 2:12.” Furthermore, points a and b under #1 above (the basic meaning of the words, assuming the wider meaning unless context clearly narrows it) also apply here. The immediately preceding verses (how women dress themselves) also clearly indicate that the context is not limited only to wives.

2. No other passage of Scripture limits the statement of the universal principle in these passages (1 Co 11:3, 1 Co 14:34, 1 Ti 2:12) in regard to scope or time. Some people mistakenly argue that the passages which speak of the role relationship in marriage limit the passages which state the universal principle. Others mistakenly argue that since Scripture does not make an application to all people in society there is no universal principle.

Applications do not limit a universal principle. Paul and Peter do apply the role relationship to husbands and wives (Eph 5, 1 Pe 3). But this application to marriage does not limit the universal truth any more than the application of objective justification to believers (subjective justification) limits the universality of justification.

The lack of applications does not limit a universal principle either. If Scripture never spoke of the role of man and woman in regard to society, this would not place a limit either in scope or time on the passages which state the role relationship in universal terms. Furthermore, Scripture is not entirely silent about the role of man and woman in society. In 1 Co 11 it is clear that in speaking about the man-woman role relationship Paul is addressing a matter that involved a custom of society. The matter of covering the head (or wearing the hair long) and of not covering the head (or cutting the hair) was a custom of the Corinthian society. He urged the men and women of the congregation to observe this custom as it was observed by the men and women in Corinth because it gave expression to the headship/submission roles of man and woman. That it was a matter of Corinthian society and not a matter of the church at large is

evident from verse 16 when Paul says that none of the other churches are bound by what he has commanded the Corinthian men and women to do in this regard.

3. The rationale given in these three passages for the statements about the complementary relationship of man and woman also indicate it is God's will for all people. As was mentioned earlier, some argue that the reason Paul commanded the submission of women was the influence of the pagan society on the women of the congregations in Corinth and Ephesus. Whether this is true or not we don't know because Paul doesn't say anything that suggests this is the reason for what he commands. What we do know is that in each passage Paul bases what he says about man and woman on the role relationship God established at creation.

In 1 Co 11 Paul says that the reason man is the head of woman is because God created woman from man (v 8) and because woman was created for man (v 9). In 1 Co 14 he says that woman is to be in submission because this is the Lord's command (v 37). In 1 Ti 2 he says that a woman should not have authority over a man because Adam was formed first, then Eve, and because of the departure from this order in the fall into sin. Thus the rationale in each case indicates that the complementary role relationship of man and woman is God's will for all people.

To summarize, the principle applies to all men and all women at all times and in every part of their lives. Therefore, the guidelines for men and women teachers here at MLC cannot address the matter only from the viewpoint of what men and women should or should not do in teaching God's word. Nor can the guidelines address this matter only from the viewpoint of what men and women should or should not do as teachers in a church school. The question is primarily one of what all men and all women should or should not do in their God-given complementary relationship to one another.

### **HOW DOES THE PRINCIPLE APPLY?**

This question, of course, is where the rubber hits the road, as the saying goes. The synod statement addresses this question in a general way in several theses and antitheses. Each will be cited, and then comment will follow from the personal viewpoint of this writer on the ramification of the thesis or antithesis for the establishment of guidelines here at MLC. Please note the emphasis on the words "personal viewpoint."

The point was made near the beginning of this paper that when we move from any principle of God's word to its application, there are three basic possibilities. Some situations will be so clear cut that Christians will all agree without much discussion on how the principle applies. Another situation may be a borderline case where, for the sake of order, Christians after a good deal of discussion will agree on an application that will help establish some necessary uniformity of practice. Still other situations maybe unique enough that each needs to be considered at the tune and in the setting that it takes place.

Some of the situations that will be discussed fall into the second category, and one or more may even fall into the third category. The opinions offered are not meant to deny this. Instead, they are offered in the hope that they might contribute to a discussion of this matter that avoids either an approach that becomes a license to sin or an approach that unduly limits the practice of Christian freedom.

Thesis 12 (Headship). In applying the principle of role relationship, the church will emphasize the duties and responsibilities of men. God holds Christian men accountable for the use of the authority he has given them and will grant his blessings when men exercise this authority out of love for Christ (1 Pe 3:7; Col 3:19).

The application of this thesis was addressed somewhat earlier on page 6. There the point was made that the men of the faculty will not carry out their work independently of the women. Rather they will always be as

concerned about the good and the happiness of the women faculty members as they are for themselves. No faculty decision will ever be made without taking into consideration any concerns the women might have, and the men will be willing to sacrifice what is dear to themselves for the good of the whole faculty. It would seem that this thought should receive a prominent place in the guidelines that are developed since as thesis 12 says, “In applying the principle of role relationship” we want to “emphasize the duties and responsibilities of men.”

It goes without saying that if any male faculty member conducts himself at any time in a disrespectful, chauvinistic way either toward women in general or toward the women of the faculty, this should become a matter that calls for admonition on the part of the administration.

Thesis 13 (Headship). Believers in Christ live under his headship with willing submission, respect, obedience, and love toward those in authority (Eph 5:21-6:9).

The application of this item, too, was addressed earlier on page 7. The faculty women need to avoid thinking of their role as a power struggle of the inferior over against the superior. Instead, in the light of God’s word they know it is simply a different role given them by God. When the men consult with them, they will not hesitate to express themselves but will do so in a quiet and gentle spirit. As they serve as instructors in the courses they are called to teach, they will show the students they are glad to do this in a role of submission. In this way they will also serve as role models for the women students, demonstrating how a Christian woman carries out her complementary relationship towards men.

This matter of women teachers serving as role models should not be dismissed as something of minor importance. The women students at MLC will be serving as teachers and staff ministers in our synod’s congregations. As such it will be important that they know God’s will in this matter and willingly carry out this role in a God-pleasing way in their work. Women teachers at MLC can serve as a real blessing in modeling woman’s role for these future workers in our congregations.

Obviously, this important function that women teachers can play here at MLC dare not be used as an excuse to have them do something that is contrary to God’s will. But to say that men teachers can do anything a woman teacher might do certainly doesn’t hold true when this point is given the attention it deserves.

Thesis 18 (in the Church). In church assemblies the headship principle means that only men will cast votes when such votes exercise authority over men. Only men will do work that involves authority over men (1 Co 11:3-10; 14:33-35; 1 Ti 2:11,12).

Antithesis 14. We reject the claim that the biblical statement “women should remain silent in the churches” (1 Co 14:34) forbids all speaking by women in the assemblies of the church.

This thesis and antithesis have some rather obvious applications in regard to the interaction of women faculty members with the men on the faculty. Many things a faculty decides are matters that involve nothing more than a consensus of opinion. Often the votes that a faculty takes are nothing more than a poll to find out what the majority would prefer to do in any number of routine matters such as on what day and at what time the faculty will meet, in what order the faculty members will carry out a duty they all share, etc.

Some votes, however, are matters of curriculum, or policy matters that require everyone to do something in the same way. Often the discussion of these items involves lively debate in which one person expresses a strong position over against another. In the light of 1 Cor 14 (where Paul commands silence on the part of women rather than to publicly critique what a man has said), it is difficult to see how women can take part in a discussion where they would be challenging and contradicting the views of men. At the same time some men on the faculty should make themselves knowledgeable of any concerns women faculty members might have and should express these points in the debate. Perhaps this should be made a duty of each department head.

Faculty voting, then, is an item that probably falls into the third category, that is, a situation which is unique enough that each occurrence needs to be judged on its own. The decision when to vote could be left up

to the judgment of the women of the faculty as is the practice in a number of teacher conferences in our synod. This requires a sensitive conscience on the part of the women faculty members - a conscience that guides them in what to do as each issue to be voted on comes before the faculty. Experience in various teacher conferences and here at MLC shows that women who know and accept God's will have sensitive consciences and act accordingly.

Any woman faculty member stepping out of her role in faculty discussion or faculty voting would call for admonition on the part of the administration. If it is felt that something should be said about this matter in a guideline, perhaps the best thing might be to repeat what thesis 18 says with a couple concrete examples noted in parentheses, like this, "Only men will cast votes when such votes are an exercise of authority over men (e.g. matters of curriculum, policy matters, etc.)."

The matter of women serving on faculty committees at MLC is similar to what was just said about faculty discussions and faculty voting. If a faculty committee is a service or fact-finding committee, there is no reason why a woman faculty member could not serve on such a committee. If the committee's function, however, involves faculty supervision or policy making, then clearly a woman serving as voting member of that committee would have difficulty in avoiding actions that would violate the biblical principle. Having a woman serve as an advisory member might serve the committee well in some cases (e.g. curriculum discussions involving courses taught by women), but this advisory status should be real and not merely a dodge aimed at evading God's will.

The last part of this thesis ("Only men will do work that involves authority over men.") speaks to the matter of women serving as administrators, department heads, and chairmen of faculty committees. Administrators serve in a leadership role at MLC and so should be men according to the role relationship God has established. Serving as a department head or chairing a faculty committee is also ordinarily a leadership position. If being a department head means nothing more than polling the department as to when it wants to meet, then the biblical principle is not involved. But even in this case, for the catalog to speak of a woman as the chairperson or "head" of a department could only cause confusion and certainly become a matter of concern for anyone in synod who would understand the word "head" in its normal meaning of serving as one who has authority.

Thesis 19 (In the Church). All Christians men and women, are to use their God-given gifts to serve each other (1 Pe 4:10). Women are encouraged to participate in offices and activities of the Public ministry except where the work involves authority over men.

This thesis is the most difficult to apply. At the elementary and secondary level, having women serve as teachers is no problem (though as high school principals in the late 60's and early 70's we spent a lot of time discussing this matter at high school principal meetings). But at the college level of teaching it places two things in tension with one another. On the one hand, we want to use the God-given talents of women in every God-pleasing way we can to serve the church in training its future ministers. On the other hand, a question presents itself that rightfully gives us pause: Are college students already men and women, or are they still in the process of becoming men and women?

### **The Matter of Age**

Earlier it was noted (page 2, guideline 5) that in 1973 the CHE addressed the matter of age by saying, "Generally speaking, we . . . recognize manhood where the state so recognizes it, e.g. in a legal sense." While we would agree that age in the legal sense is an important factor, there are also two more factors that also must also be considered: how this question is answered socially in our culture and the factor of students in a college setting.

Let's look first at manhood in the legal sense. Unless I'm mistaken, our two colleges prior to amalgamation assumed that this age is 18 and operated accordingly. But is 18 really the legal age of manhood in

our society? I must admit that in pursuing this matter a bit I expected to find a “yes” answer to this question. Instead, I found that the answer is not all that well established because many of our states distinguish between what is called legal age and age of maturity.

The book *National Survey of State Laws* (Washington D.C.: Gale Research Inc., 1993) surveys the laws that have age restrictions. It has a section titled “Legal Age” or “Age of Maturity” on pages 279-291. In explaining these terms, the author says that states choose a certain age by trying to gauge the time in life when a young person has the capacity to form proper intent. “Capacity” is defined from two viewpoints: 1) Mental capacity, or the capacity to form intent to commit an act; and 2) Maturity, or the measure of ability to form legal intent. The latter, in most states, is the primary determinant for the age when various actions are permitted by the young person himself or when the state is allowed to take actions that affect a young person. In other words, legal age and age of maturity are based primarily on when a person “can be held accountable for actions.”

Most states use age 18 for such items as: capital punishment, compulsory education, marriage without parental consent, making a will, and voting. Some states use age 18 for both the legal age and age of maturity. However, the majority of states distinguish between the two.

The majority of states set 21 as the age of maturity. Basically this means they do not permit the young person to make a decision which might have a serious impact on others. Two thirds of the states do not permit consumption of alcohol by young people until age 21. Most don’t permit people to serve in a position such as an attorney until they are 21. Many have restrictions on the purchase of certain types of guns until 21. Over half of the states don’t allow people to serve in the lower house of their legislature until 21, and many have a minimum age of 25 to 30 to serve in the upper house. Most have age 30 as the limit for serving as governor.

The age limit of 21 for serving in a state legislative body has faced many legal challenges. *The Guide to American Law* (NY West, 1985) says that in deciding these cases our courts have decided that “. . . age is a reasonable basis of discrimination in the attempt to ensure maturity, experience and competence in office.” (Vol. 1, page 130) The matter of age serving as a gauge for maturity is even more evident in the U.S. constitution which sets 25 as the age limit for serving in the House of Representatives. The statement of George Mason, one of the framers of the constitution, has been quoted against suits that have been brought to end this age limit. He said that the political opinions of twenty-one year olds were “too crude and erroneous to merit an influence on public measures.”

Sociologists in general agree with Mr. Mason’s comment, though they say it much more politely. In speaking of the socialization of people in American society, ages 17 to 22 are often identified as a period of transition from adolescence to adulthood. *Sociology* (NY: West, 1988), a textbook written by Jon Shepard, says: This transition “ends when the individual starts to *make a life within the adult world*. Between 22 and 28 a young person forges a temporary link between himself and the adult world that involves, among other things, choosing an initial occupation and establishing a new family through marriage.” (p 118)

The point of this tangent into law and sociology is to show that assuming that 18 is the age when a person is considered an adult in our society is not a cut and dried matter. A national law (based primarily on the argument that if young people are old enough to die for our country they are also old enough to vote) does allow people to vote at that age. One can also argue that a boy may be an adult mentally and physically at age 18 - mentally because at that age he can do thinking that involves problem solving on the adult level, and physically because, although he may not have reached his adult weight, he has reached his adult height.

However, the majority of states, and sociologists who study the development of people in American society, assume that there is more involved in becoming an adult. They stress such things as emotional maturity (i.e. the ability to make decisions that are based more on a rational assessment of a situation than on one’s personal emotions) and the time when one begins to make a life for himself in the adult world. These key items in becoming an adult don’t usually occur until age 21 and after.

If these latter items were always given due consideration in this matter, most people in our synod would agree that many a young college student, especially a freshmen and sophomore, really isn’t an adult in the sense of being a mature and emotionally stable person. It is true that in many WELS congregations 18 year old males

are allowed to be voting members, but it is a rare 18 year old college student who would be listened to seriously if he were to express an opinion about any item being debated in a meeting.

Where does all of this lead? Age is obviously something that needs to be considered. Scripture gives us a clear application of the principle which says that a woman is not to teach a man in an authoritative way (1 Tim. 2). But when does a “boy” become a “man”? Scripture doesn’t answer this question, and the most one can say based on state and national laws is that the time period between ages 16 and 25 are a period of transition from adolescence to adulthood.

So we are left to making a judgment about when a boy becomes a man. As was illustrated earlier in this paper in discussing the application of a number of other items that are borderline cases (e.g. the matter of initiation rites for college freshmen), there may be a good deal of strong disagreement no matter what decision is finally made. But this borderline matter does need to be addressed in order to establish some kind of uniformity of practice and to avoid confusion both here at MLC and in the synod at large.

One line that might be drawn is graduation from MLC because it is only at that point that the MLC student “begins to make a life for himself in the adult world.” The guideline might say something like this:

When we consider both the legal and social aspects of our culture, the most that can be said about students in a college setting is that they are in a time of transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Another line that might be drawn would be between the junior and senior year on the grounds that the senior year sets the teaching ministry student apart from the other students. This is when he goes to practice teaching and has some courses that address him more as a graduate than as a student. Or perhaps the line would be one drawn between the sophomore and junior year using age 21 to establish the general guideline.

If the guideline adopted would use age 21, this obviously would make the matter of women teaching freshman and sophomore classes a moot point. There will most likely be those who will disagree with such a guideline because they feel age 18 should be used or because they might assume that what underlies any other decision is an unwillingness to apply what Scripture says about the role of woman.

It should be self-evident that no guideline adopted in this matter should be based on taking an easy way out which a particular approach provides. Nor should a decision be made that begins to eat away at the edges of what God says is his will and becomes a license to sin. At the same time, it is equally important that the decision should not be one that unduly limits Christian freedom by denying women the opportunity to serve God with their talents where this is permissible according to God’s will.

Any of the three suggestions mentioned above would be a proper age to use as a guideline for a number of reasons:

1. Any of the three would be a middle ground that takes into consideration: a) what the majority of states use as the age of maturity; b) what most sociologists agree is an age that marks the middle ground of a young person’s transition from adolescence to adulthood; and c) that the words and actions of many college underclassmen indicate that dormitory life is not very conducive to developing adult maturity.

2. Therefore, those who may disagree with anything other than 18 as the guideline cannot say that in using one of the three a decision has been made which is arbitrary or a sign of doctrinal weakness.

3. Any of the three would be a guideline that sets a limit in a borderline case and so confesses that we recognize there is a principle which we mean to uphold. At the same time any one of these guidelines would avoid denying women the opportunity to serve God with their talents where the responsible board feels this is permissible.

Antithesis 9. We reject the opinion that in the church assemblies only matters pertaining to the Word of God are authoritative.

This antithesis speaks in limited way to a couple other questions that need to be considered:

- 1) Is all teaching of God's word always authoritative teaching? And
- 2) Is teaching in general always an activity involving authority?

### **Authoritative and Non authoritative Teaching of God's Word**

The antithesis says that authoritative teaching is *not limited to* matters pertaining to the word of God. A truth that underlies this antithesis is that teaching God's word is usually authoritative teaching. But it is also evident from Scripture that not all "teaching" of God's word is authoritative.

The men who wrote the books of the Bible wrote with the authority of God himself because what they were writing was what God gave them to write. What Scripture teaches is not a bunch of religious thoughts which have a lot of different meanings from which people have to sort out for themselves the right meaning as a result of an exchange of opinions. Nor is Scripture to be taught this way.

Consider the words of Paul to two young pastors. To Timothy he says in regard to the way of salvation, "Command and teach these things." (1 Ti 4:11) To Titus he says in regard to how God wants his people to live, "These are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority." (Titus 2:15) It is also significant to note that in both cases Paul is speaking to young, men who, besides instructing Christians in the truth, also had to deal with false teachings and false teachers.

Much of the teaching of God's Word here at MLC is also authoritative teaching. Not because it is being done in a school setting with grades being given for the class, but simply because of the goals of the religion courses and the manner of teaching that these goals require. The goal is not merely an increase of biblical knowledge which could be accomplished by roundtable discussions of portions of Scripture. The goals also include such things as leading students to interpret Scripture properly, to distinguish clearly between biblical truth and human error, to judge everything in life from the viewpoint of the Word, and to know the difference between reason and faith and the proper role of each. Accomplishing these goals involves indoctrination in a good sense - not brainwashing but instruction which imbues the student with the Lutheran viewpoint that in all these things it is God's inspired and inerrant word that governs what we believe and teach.

Obviously this biblical "indoctrination" carries over into other courses - courses that deal with history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, literature, and any unit of a course that deals with the origin of man, the universe, and the development of human knowledge. Here, too, as in the religion courses, the teacher must use the authority of God's word to evaluate and make judgments in regard to human actions and ideas. This does not mean the teacher will use only lecture to teach the course. The skillful use of questions and discussion can often be even more effective in leading students to a biblical viewpoint in regard to human actions and ideas. But no matter what the method, where the Scripture speaks clearly on these things, the teacher will have a definite conclusion to which he wants to bring the class. And a key part of the process will be to lead the students to reject improper methods of Bible interpretation, errors that attack God's truth, ideas that undermine God's word, and the invalid use of reason.

But not all teaching of God's word is authoritative teaching. In Mt 28:19,20 Jesus urges all Christians to "make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything" he commanded. This sharing of God's message of salvation with those who don't know their Savior is something every Christian man and woman is to do. Paul urges all the members of the congregation in Colosse (Col 3:16) to let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly as they teach and admonish one another. In 1 Co 11:5 Paul permits women to prophesy if they have their heads covered. This prophesying could not have been authoritative speaking because a couple chapters later (chapter 14) Paul addresses the matter of women speaking when it would be a matter of stepping out their role of submission and he forbids it. What Priscilla did together with her husband Aquila in "explaining . . . the way of God more adequately" to Apollos is presented by Luke in a positive way. The point is that it is possible for women to, "teach" God's word to men in a non-authoritative way, as these four passages show.



There will be occasions here at MLC when a woman does such non-authoritative teaching of God's word. For instance, in a math or music class being taught by a woman, a student might ask a question which needs to be answered on the basis of Scripture. For her to use a Scripture passage to answer, or for her to explain a scriptural truth to the students in answer to the question, would not necessarily mean she is stepping out her God-given role even if there were a man present. A parallel in a congregational setting would be a woman explaining something from God's word to a husband and wife whom she is visiting in an evangelism call. Both the woman evangelist and the teacher in the college classroom can in each instance do the kind of non-authoritative "teaching" of God's word that Priscilla did and which Paul urged all the Colossians to do.

Summary: Teaching God's Word is often an exercise of authority. This kind of teaching can be done only by men when men are present. There is also the kind of "teaching" which Scripture indicates every Christian, whether male or female, may do. Female college instructors are not violating the headship principle when they do this kind of "teaching" of God's in the classroom or in other contacts they may have with male students.

### **Authoritative and Non-authoritative Teaching in General**

Some people suggest that it is sophistry to draw a distinction between authoritative and non-authoritative teaching. But this distinction is one that Paul himself makes in applying the role relationship principle to teaching. In 1 Ti 2 Paul does not say a woman isn't to do any teaching. What he forbids is any teaching that is an exercise of authority over man.

This brings us to the second question posed at the beginning of the discussion of antithesis nine which deals with teaching in general being authoritative. Recall that the CHE guideline number two (page 1) drawn up in 1973 said that teaching need not necessarily involve the exercise of authority. So we need to ask: Are there courses that are part of the MLC curriculum which a woman could teach without doing authoritative teaching? Perhaps the example of a woman directing a congregation's choir (which includes men) is helpful in demonstrating that this question can have a positive answer.

Any number of our congregations have women choir directors, and we do not necessarily consider these women to be stepping out of their God-given role of submission. Why not? Simply because if a woman choir director is truly conscious of what God says about woman's role, it is likely that she will direct the choir in a manner that is different in some ways from the way a man might do it. Neither a man or a woman choir director would act in a dictatorial manner. But a woman choir director will be especially careful how she corrects the men who sing in the choir when they do something wrong musically. She won't raise the volume of her voice to urge the men to sing quietly when the music says pianissimo. Nor will she chide men when they sing the wrong note or when their singing goes flat. Instead, she will explain in a quiet and gentle way what pianissimo means and will work with them to improve their skill in hitting the right notes. I personally have sung in five choirs where the director was a woman who "taught" us how to sing music and did it without stepping out her role.

The courses at MLC that teach mathematical skills, language skills, keyboard and instrumental skills, physical education skills are really much the same as what a congregational choir director does: explaining what is new or unknown and working with students to help them develop certain skills. The content of these courses is not being judged by the teacher or the students. Teaching these courses is essentially a process of sharing knowledge and guiding the development of some basic skills. A test in these courses simply measures the advance of the student (or lack of it) in the knowledge and skills shared by the teacher with the student in the course. This does not make these courses inferior courses, but it does make them courses of a different kind - that is, courses where, speaking somewhat simplistically perhaps, it might be said that all that is involved is knowing the right things and/or knowing the right way to do things as this is established by the nature of the course itself.

Nor does distinguishing these courses from the others deny that these courses are taught from a Christian viewpoint. The motivation for learning in these courses is also developing ones knowledge and God-given skills so one can use them to God's glory. Also, one goal of such courses is to lead students to stand in wonder and

amazement at the power and wisdom of our Creator. But teaching from a Christian viewpoint in these courses does not include judgments regarding Bible interpretation, biblical truth and human error, what is right and wrong according to God's will in living our lives, or the proper role of reason over against faith.

I undoubtedly need to state the point of all this for the subject at hand more clearly. My point is this. Each of the courses cited is not the kind where in and of itself the teacher has authority over the students. Of course, the teacher might very well pontificate, and a woman who would do this would be stepping out of her role if she has "men" in the class. But a woman teacher could also "teach" such a class without stepping out of her role.

But doesn't the teacher have to give a grade in these courses, and isn't doing this a matter of authority? Not necessarily. The correctness or incorrectness of the students' daily work and answers on tests is not really determined by the teacher. Instead, it is established by the nature of the course itself (e.g. either you know how to organize German words in a sentence properly or you don't, either you play the notes of a piano or organ piece correctly or you don't.) On the other hand the answers to at least some, and in some cases even most, of the questions in a religion or history or sociology or literature course - especially if they are essay questions - is going to be a judgment call on the part of the teacher which a student might rightly challenge at times. If at the end of the course a student's grade were a borderline pass/fail situation, a woman teacher would undoubtedly avoid any perception of exercising authority by passing a student who was a man rather than failing him.

I don't know how many of you have sung in a congregational choir directed by a woman or observed a woman teacher here at MLC who has had men in her class. That these women do things differently in these situations than men do them is a given. But it is a matter of record that women can "teach" certain things to men in a non-authoritative way.

Bottom line? Even if the decision were made by the board that all male college students here at MLC are to be considered men, there are some courses that could be taught by a woman who understands and willingly accepts the role God has given women in their complementary relationship to men.

This is not really only my personal opinion either. Back in the late 60's and early '70's, the principals of the area Lutheran high schools were wrestling with the question whether women could teach seniors in high school (a point which you may remember the 1973 CHE statement included as one of the questions being raised at the time, cf. page 1). This question came up since seniors turn 18 and since they have generally reached their adult height. The general consensus was that these two things did not yet mean they had reached their manhood. But another point that was discussed at length was the matter of what courses a woman might teach seniors. It was the consensus that there were several which would not involve a woman in a violation of the biblical principle.

Summary: Women college instructors are not violating the headship principle if men are present in a course they teach which is a setting out of skills, techniques, and information established by the subject matter itself.

### **Class Management**

Another question involving authority is the matter of class management. "Doesn't teaching always involve class management, and doesn't class management always involve acting with authority?" The first part of this statement is true, but not necessarily the second. Class management doesn't always involve acting with authority.

Obviously the action of punishment for wrongdoing does of necessity involve authority. If the person dispensing this action doesn't have the authority to do so, the person receiving the punishment isn't very likely going to accept the punishment. But Christian class management does not rest on the threat of punishment as the primary basis to bring about good behavior.

Any wrongdoing on the part of a student calls for admonition, but admonition does not always mean that a person in authority is dealing with a person under authority. Scripture often urges us as Christians to admonish one another, not because we have authority over one another but as an act of love to try to lead another person

to repentance. So admonition in and of itself is not an exercise of authority. We admonish in the hope that the Spirit will work genuine repentance in the heart of the person and that fruits of repentance will follow. In Matthew 18, the congregation moves from admonition to excommunication only after the person has demonstrated that he is clearly impenitent.

So teaching doesn't always involve punishment. At the elementary level it often does. At the adult level it seldom if ever does. In our Lutheran elementary schools, teachers are always admonishing and at times carrying out various kinds of follow-up disciplinary action. On the other hand, pastors who teach adult Bible classes never have to punish. Why is there a difference? Obviously, one reason is because of the maturity of the adult students. Another reason surely is that the adult students want to be in class instead of being compelled to be there by law.

Each of these two factors plays a major role in the whole matter of class management. High school teachers, I'm quite sure, have to admonish and carry out follow-up disciplinary action a lot more with freshmen than with seniors. Freshmen are quite immature and agree with each other that they don't want to be in school. Seniors are not mature by adult standards, but they are still much more mature than freshmen. And the reality of facing up to leaving high school in a few months (and all that this means for them) makes many seniors a whole lot more serious about getting what they can out of school.

For these two reasons my guess is that though admonition may be necessary at times as part of college teaching, punishment is infrequent, especially in the classes here at MLC. MLC students were recommended to this college on the basis of both their God-given talents and their Christian character. Very few of them came because they felt they had to; the vast majority are here by choice. Graduating from high school and going away to college adds to the maturity that started developing in the last couple years of high school. The self-discipline needed by a college student is at times missing in some freshmen college students, but they either learn it in a hurry, or they don't last very long in a college setting.

If a teacher has a consistent problem with order in the classroom in a college such as this, that is a clear sign of a poor teacher. On the other hand, a college teacher, even in a Christian college, will have to admonish students from time to time about some things, e.g. about the wasting of a God-given opportunity by sleeping in class, about laziness or the waste of time if either was the reason for not getting work done on time, or about the failure to use God-given talents to the fullest as indicated by the quality of their work.

But any admonition, if it is truly to be Christian admonition, is not a matter of a person in authority holding the threat of punishment over the student's head. Punishment may be necessary at times, but in a Christian setting we want class management, including dealing with improper behavior, to rest on admonition that seeks to bring genuine repentance and the fruits of such repentance.

The point is that even if the board's decision is that all the male students at MLC are to be considered men, a woman teaching a college class in which a man is present does not have to carry out class management in a way that is contrary to God's will. Admonition for any loss of opportunity, waste of time, laziness, failure to use God-given gifts, etc. is in place for any Christian to give to another Christian. A woman teacher, no different from any man teacher, should give such admonition in concern for the spiritual good of the student.

If an incident would take place that calls for disciplinary action in the form of a punishment (e.g. cheating on a test), a woman teacher would admonish the student but could leave it up to the department head or some other responsible person to administer the punishment that he deemed appropriate.

This observation is also made from experience. First as a vice-principal in charge of discipline and then as a principal, I did this very thing on occasion for a couple of the women teachers on the staff of two area Lutheran high schools. It was usually a situation that involved one of the junior or senior boys. I don't recall any more if this practice grew out of a discussion of the role of women teachers or just because these teachers were quite small in stature and the boys of that age towered over them. Whatever the reason, we practiced disciplinary action in this way, and it worked very well.

The point is that the office of a woman (or for that matter a man) teacher at a college does not have to include the activity of punishment in order for the office of professor to be one that is God-pleasing. This can be delegated to someone else, and in practice at times it has been without any detrimental effect. Scripture does not

set down what duties any office in the church must include. In Christian freedom, the calls we extend to public ministers of the Word vary greatly according to service the church needs a certain person to carry out in its name. The office of a college professor, for example, does not include many things that a pastor in a congregation is usually called to do: administer the Sacraments, excommunicate, teach the Word to people of all ages, evangelism outreach, etc. To extend a call to a woman college professor which does not include the punishing of a male student in her class for cause is not in any way doing something that is unscriptural in regard to the divine call of a professor at our synod's college.

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps it would be good to repeat one rather basic truth that has been mentioned several times in the course of this paper. In all the applications of a biblical statement that expresses God's will for a certain aspect of our lives, we need to steer carefully between two unscriptural paths: nibbling at the edges of God's will, and unduly restricting Christian freedom by forbidding things which are not clearly contrary to God's will. The matters of when a boy becomes a man, non-authoritative teaching of God's word, courses that can be taught in a non-authoritative way, and class management - these are obviously the areas where we need to steer carefully between two unscriptural paths when applying the God-given roles of man and woman to professors here at MLC.

This point is made in a general way in a 1990 essay by Dr. John Brug titled "Application of the Scriptural Principles Concerning the Service of Women in the Church." Some of the things he said are as appropriate for the narrower subject addressed in this paper as they were for the wider context addressed by Dr. Brug.

The emphasis added is mine.

The biblical principles were given in order to be applied. We cannot be satisfied to come to an agreement on the principles, but then to be negligent or indifferent in applying them. But coming to an appropriate degree of conformity in this matter will not be an easy task .... Any changes we make in our customary practices will result in a certain amount of confusion and resistance. But we cannot allow this fact to paralyze us so that we do nothing.

We must carefully and prayerfully evaluate our practices and find a proper balance between legalistic codifying which deprives women of permissible and desirable opportunities for service and moral laxity which erodes the biblical principles. We can have harmony without complete uniformity of practice, but it is unlikely that we can preserve harmony without mutual consultation and some degree of agreement what our practices will be....

Even when we have reached the judgment that there are areas in which we can offer women more opportunities for service without violating scriptural principle, we will have to exercise care that we do not create offense by failing to provide adequate information and opportunities for discussion before we put new practices into effect. We have to educate our people to the difference between changes which are in harmony with God's will and changes which are a capitulation to unscriptural feminist demands.

. . . There are gray areas in which different local conditions and different attitudes among the participants make the difference in determining whether a given practice is acceptable and desirable. Difference of attitude cannot make black white and white black, but there are gray areas which require us to walk carefully and humbly. All of us . . . need to pray for wisdom, patience, and humility as we work together to remain faithful to the principles of Scripture and to provide all of God's children with every opportunity to serve him which is consistent with his will.