

The Order of Creation as Moral Law and as It is Applied by the New Testament Writers to the Role of Man and Woman*

By David P. Kuske

[*The Central Conference of the Western Wisconsin District requested the publication of this essay.]

Whenever a question arises about God's will in regards to a certain aspect of a Christian's life, there is always a tendency for us to think in terms of rules instead of a general principle. For example, many a pastor has had this experience when teaching about the sin of cursing in connection with the Second Commandment. The children of the confirmation class are often more interested in having a list of the expressions which they may or may not use than in learning why it is that cursing is a sin.

Two decades ago the principles of fellowship were being thoroughly studied and discussed in our synod because they were at the center of our problems with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. At that time, too, there were discussions of fellowship in which pastors or laypeople seemed more interested in knowing whether the "rules" would allow them to pray any longer with their Missouri Synod relatives than in wrestling with the scriptural principles involved.

There is the same tendency in the recent widespread study and discussion of the role of man and woman according to God's Word. There is the tendency that we request that someone, somewhere set down a list of rules for us which settles for us exactly what a woman can and what a woman cannot do. This would be a serious mistake for several reasons:

1. It would tend to focus our attention on the subordination of woman according to God's will without giving equal attention to the corollary of the responsibilities God places on man as the head of the woman. The latter must get as much attention as the former if we are really going to live according to God's will in this whole matter.
2. Such a list of rules would inevitably lead to a piety such as the rabbis created with their codes, an outward piety which completely lacks the inner attitude of love required by the principle of the moral law of God which is involved. This is the way man-made rules often destroy the biblical principle they are intended to fortify,
3. The drawing up of such a list of rules would betray a lack of understanding in regard to the liberty of the Christian in the New Testament because the New Testament church has no binding legal rules and regulations from God except the moral law.

What we need, then, is not a list of rules regarding the role of man and woman, but a clear understanding of the basic principle, the order of creation, which underlies this aspect of our lives as God's people. To help get this whole matter in proper focus, we should review the moral law in its essence and its relationship to the commands we find on the pages of the New Testament. Then, we will look at the order of creation as moral law. And, finally, we will consider how this principle, the order of creation, is enunciated and applied by the New Testament writers particularly in regard to the relationship of man and woman to each other.

Six Quarterly articles served as special sources for this paper. They are:

1. January 1915 - *Gottes Wille und Befehl* by John Schaller;
2. January 1916 - *Gibt es im neuen Testament gesetzliche Verordnungen?* by August Pieper;
3. January 1917 - *Wie erkennt man ein Moralgebot?* by Hererman Meyer;
4. January 1943 - "Our Christian Liberty and Its Proper Use" by Edmund Reim;
5. January 1960 - "The Law Is Not Made for a Righteous Man" by August Pieper;

6. January 1968 - "Ministering to God's Free People" by Armin Schuetze.

I. The Moral Law: Its Essence and Its Relationship to New Testament Commands

The moral law appears in Scripture in the form of many outward commands, but the outward form and the outward action, which is commanded, is never in itself a moral precept. In reality the moral law commands only one thing, an inner attitude, love. This is the simple yet very important truth which Jesus taught the Pharisees when he referred to the love of God and love of neighbor and said "all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Mt 22:40). Paul stated the same truth in an even more concise way in Romans 13:10, "Love is the fulfillment of the law."

Thus Jesus and Paul also remind us that moral law and the outward form of the Ten Commandments cannot be identified as one and the same. The Ten Commandments were part of the Sinaitic Law Code which was to serve as a temporary chaperon for the people of Israel only until Christ came (Gal 3:24,25). The New Testament shows us that the Ten Commandments in their outward form as given by Moses do set forth the kernel of God's holy will which is expressed in love. Therefore, we may choose, as Luther did, to use the Ten Commandments as a tool to teach what is God's will for all people of all time. Yet as we do so we must carefully guard against carrying the ceremonial laws attached to the Third and Ninth Commandments into our instruction, and we must never lose sight of the fact, as Luther's explanations remind us again and again, that all the outward actions which are commanded flow from a single inner attitude of the heart, love. It is this inner attitude which is the real essence of the moral law.

This inner attitude of perfect love is lacking in man by nature since the fall. God created man and woman in his image so that their thoughts, feelings and will were in complete harmony with his own. But the fall into sin brought about one very important change. Since man by nature was no longer in perfect harmony with God's law, the law became a demand from outside of man. Mankind still has God's law written in the heart (Ro 2:16), but mankind's understanding of God's holy will is so darkened by sin that people without the guidance of God's Word follow a way of life which is separated from the life which God wills (Eph 4:18,19). Sinful man in his natural state removes himself so far from the knowledge of God's will that he has no idea of how love expresses itself (Ro 2:21 -32; 3:10-18).

It is only to make his holy will clear to sinful man that God resolves his law of love into individual commands in his Word. But the commands in Scripture which are an exposition of God's law of love do not bring about a God-pleasing obedience in a sinner when his conscience is pricked by hearing these commands or reading them. In some people the commands of God's law may bring about an outward obedience motivated by the fear of God's punishment; in others they will stir up resentment which will lead to deliberate disobedience (Ro 1:32; Eph 4:18,19). In both groups, God's law does bring about an awareness of sin.

But when the sinner by God's grace is converted and becomes a believer in Christ, he is restored in God's image and God gives the Christian a new heart. The Christian's new man needs no exposition of God's moral law in the form of commandments because the new man walks by the Spirit in perfect love. Paul describes the restored image of God in the Christian as a renewal of knowing God according to his nature which is love (Co 3:10; Ro 5:5) and according to his will which is love (Eph 4:23,24). It is this characteristic of the new man in the Christian of which God spoke in the Old Testament when he promised to remove the stony hearts of his people and give them a new spirit so that they carefully keep his laws (Eze 11:19,20) or when he promised to write his law into the hearts of his new covenant people so that nobody has to teach them to know the Lord (Jer 31:33ff). Paul speaks of the regenerated child of God as a new creation in whom the old has gone and the new has come (2 Co 5:17) so that the new man says "no" to ungodliness and worldly passions and lives a self-controlled, upright and godly life (Tit 2:11,12; Gal 5:24,25).

What is the relationship of the gospel and the moral law in the regenerated believer? The gospel does not set aside the moral law or setup its own outward forms, but it fills the established order with its spirit. The gospel teaches the Christian God's love; the gospel creates love in the Christian; the gospel empowers the

Christian to do works of love. It is only because the Christian is not completely spiritual and must daily struggle with his flesh (Ro 7:12ff; Gal 5:17) that he needs instruction from God about the moral law. The flesh is rebellious and lazy; it is not inclined to see the seriousness of sin; it will mislead a person as to what is a good work in God's sight. Therefore, the Christian because of his Old Adam needs the law as a curb, a mirror and a guide. The new man needs no guide to know how God wants him to live, no lash to move him to serve his Lord, no threat to make him submit to his Savior's will.

This is why Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount and why the apostles preached the law; not to establish a new code of laws for New Testament believers which they are obligated to do, but only to give a clear guide for the Christian in his struggle between his Old Adam and his new man. Christ and the apostles make clear the right attitude of a believer's heart toward God, the kind of attitude which only they as members of God's kingdom can have. By nature we might wish that God had laid out for us a set of rules such as he gave the Old Testament people, but in his new covenant, the gospel covenant, such a set of rules has no place.

Under God's covenant the Christian lives and walks in the spirit and so is bound only by the law of Christ (Ga 6:2; Jn 13:34; 15:12), the perfect law of love, the law of freedom (Jas 1:25; 2:12), the royal law (Jas 2:8). Any attempt to bind New Testament Christians by any other law than the law of love is an attack on the perfect freedom Christ established in the New Testament.

We might summarize the fourfold freedom of Christian liberty as follows:

- deliverance from the yoke of the law (Ac 15:10);
- freedom from all ceremonial restrictions (Gal 4:10; Col 2:16);
- freedom from all human rules (Col 2:20,21);
- conscious freedom from all guilt and condemnation (Heb 9:14; 10:22).

It is of this freedom that the inspired writers often speak. "Now that faith has come, we are *no longer under the supervision of the law*" (Ga 3:25). "You are *not under law*, but under grace" (Ro 6:14). "You *died to the law* through the body of Christ" (Ro 7:4). "If you are led by the Spirit, you are *not under law*" (Ga 5:18). "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a *yoke of slavery*" (Ga 5:1). "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there is freedom*" (2 Co 3:17). "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (To 10:4). "There is now *no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life *set me free from the law of sin and death*" (Ro 8:1,2).

The freedom of the New Testament is not a fleshly one, but a spiritual freedom. The Christian dies to the law so that he might live for God (Gal 2:19f). He does not use his freedom to indulge his sinful nature (Gal 5:13); he does not see the fact that he lives under grace rather than under law as a license to sin (Ro 6:14). Instead, he knows that he has been released from the law so that he might now serve in the new way of the Spirit (Ro 7:6).

Compelled by Christ's love he voluntarily places his whole life in service to the One who died for him and rose-again (2 Co 5:14,15). Freedom means he now gladly offers the parts of his body as instruments of righteousness (Ro 6:13,14); yes, he gladly and completely becomes a slave of righteousness (Ro 6:16; Ro 6:18) and a slave of God (Ro 6:22).

God's moral law, the law of love, is no longer law for a believer according to his new man (1 Ti 1:9). No longer is God's holy will a demand from outside of him, that is, an alien will coming to the believer to make demands backed up by the threat of punishment if he fails to do them. Rather for the believer the moral law of God sets forth the eternal principles which rest in the very nature of God and with which his new man is in perfect harmony. On the pages of Scripture the perfect law of love is explained and applied for us Christians in various situations of life in the form of commands, directions, exhortations, warnings or rules of conduct, only because, as was noted earlier, we have the Old Adam adhering to us and so are not entirely spiritual. When the Christian, motivated by that love which the Holy Spirit creates in him by the gospel, conforms his life to these

directives, he does not lose his liberty. Rather he proves the true freedom of his new man who asserts himself over the Old Adam and renders royal honor to the God who set him free.

But it would be a mistake to think that every New Testament directive is in some way an exposition of God's moral law. There are also gospel directives. Because of the limitation of human language, both law and gospel directives are expressed in an imperative. Therefore, in their outward form they cannot be distinguished, and anyone who does not understand the difference between law and gospel will confuse these imperatives. It is important to look at this matter more closely. There is one *chief difference* which distinguishes gospel directives from moral law and, then, two other differences which are corollaries:

1. The moral law reveals God's *holy will* and *demands of man* that he measure up to it; gospel directives reveal God's *saving will* and at the same time *give Christians the ability* to do what God encourages;
2. The moral law is God's will for all people of all time; gospel directives are only for the Christian;
3. The moral law is directed at the Old Adam; gospel directives are addressed to the new man.

One great gospel directive is, of course, the Great Commission. It applies to every Christian until Christ's return. It is the one great task of the church. All other gospel commands or arrangements which relate to the use of the means of grace by Christians are in some way related to this one great gospel directive. We will give attention to these a little later.

The command to preach the gospel to every creature, to baptize all nations, and to celebrate the Lord's Supper are not moral law. They are not killing, damning imperatives which fill us with fear and dread because of our sins, but they are imperatives by which God influences and activates us as Christians. By these directives God sets in motion the activity of gospel preaching and the use of the Sacraments.

The fact that carrying out the Great Commission is also a fulfillment of the law of love should not lead to its being confused with moral law. That is the logic of the Old Adam who knows only law. It is true that the Second Commandment also includes this directive that God's name be proclaimed in its fullness and truth. The difference, as noted earlier, is that the Second Commandment is spoken to all people, it demands something of all people and it condemns all people because they are not able to measure up to the perfection which God demands. On the other hand, we readily agree that it would be a total misuse of the Great Commission if a Christian, in a conversation with his unbelieving neighbor, tried to lay the Great Commission on the unbeliever's conscience and told him that this is what God demanded of him and that he was damned if he did not do it.

This can be illustrated even more clearly by the other great gospel directive, the directive to believe. We dare not make this law; otherwise we would be guilty of *teaching synergism* (presenting the gospel directive as something God demanded of man that he perform, thus making it a human accomplishment). All of the directives which have to do with the change of the relationship between God and man are gospel directives, not moral law. Man by nature cannot understand the message of the cross (1 Co 2:14). When he hears the imperative to believe, he thinks he understands. But this directive has nothing to do with the Old Adam of the Christian, it is completely strange to his nature, he cannot grasp its meaning. The Old Adam can understand only law imperatives and so that is what he assumes this is also. As a result he either opposes this directive or looks on it as a duty he must perform by his own power. But if the directive to believe were in any way a proclamation of moral law and thus taught synergism, then man's enslavement would not be as complete as Scripture says. Christ's redemptive work did not make us perfectly free and our faith in Christ is not entirely a gift of God's grace. We see all of these errors taught by Roman Catholicism because of its failure to distinguish clearly the differences between moral law and gospel directives.

Reformed theology makes the same error. When faith is made the condition of forgiveness, then the promise of the gospel is made contingent upon a human accomplishment and the gospel is a proclamation of the

conditions under which man can secure for himself the remission of sins. Though the Reformed may appear to be emphasizing faith and letting it come into its own, they have really turned the gospel into law. In our preaching we, too, must be on constant guard lest we fall into the error of putting before our people a general amnesty which is dependent on certain terms, which they must fulfill before God will be fully gracious to them. To preach such a gospel would be to perpetuate the error of turning gospel imperatives into law imperatives.

The gospel directive to believe (Ac 16:31—“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved”) and the gospel conditionals (Mk 16:16 —“whoever believes and is baptized will be saved”, or Ro 10:9—“if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”) do not tell us to search our hearts for the feeling of faith and thus lead us to have faith based on something we do. Rather, they are words which are means of grace by which God, at the same time as he directs us to do something, also by his grace enables us and leads us to do what his saving will direct. They are words of spirit and of life, which are means by which our Savior invites and persuades men to believe the gospel message of full and free forgiveness. And here, again, the fact that believing is at the same time a fulfillment of the law of love (First Commandment) should not lead us to confuse gospel directives with moral law.

But, what about the directives regarding the public ministry, Christians meeting together for worship and such activities as church discipline, fellowship, giving, praying and the like? Very simply, these directives either serve the Great Commission or they encourage the graces in the life of a Christian, which are direct results of God’s grace being embraced by the Christian in faith.

God did not institute the public ministry as a law ordinance but as an institution, which is to serve the command to preach the gospel. God does not surround this institution with a whole group of ceremonial laws as he did the Old Testament priesthood. General qualifications and duties are given in Scripture, but they are merely to safeguard the institution as one which will serve the command to preach the gospel, and they are so general that they allow both men and women to serve in a wide variety of forms of the ministry. Our freedom to create or drop forms of the ministry to meet what our needs are at any given time or place is a clear witness to our freedom from law in this matter.

The same is true of the form of the church, God directs us to meet together to use the means of grace, but whether we are to do this in a house or in a church, whether in small or large groups is not regulated by ordinances. We are not told a specific day on which we are to meet; we are given no order of service to follow. Some hints are given that Scripture readings, sermons, singing and prayers might serve us well, but we are not told which portions of God’s Word to read and no specific way to pray is ordered, except for an example which serves only as a model for us. And even this “Lord’s Prayer” is given in two slightly differing wordings in Matthew and Luke. All that God does is admonish us that, when we gather to use the means of grace, all things be done decently and in order and that all we do or say be faithful to his Word. We readily understand that these directives are not laws which restrict the amazing liberty we have in regard to the form of our gathering but are spoken by God only in the interest of making our gathering one in which the means of grace are used as a blessing for us.

When we engage in mission work, Scripture does not give us a specific way that is to be done, other than to tell us to use the means of grace. The instructions for the practice of church discipline are not a law made up of a one-two-three formula, which demands that we follow a certain outward procedure. Rather, we recognize the three steps as hints how we might carry out the gospel directive to do all that is possible to bring a sinner to repentance. Matthew 18 is fulfilled, not when we have taken the three steps, but only when we have done everything possible to restore the fallen sinner to repentance. The principles of fellowship in the New Testament are to safeguard the use of the means of grace from the leaven of false doctrine.

What about Paul’s instructions on Christian giving? These are not laws which demand something of the Corinthians and us, but a persuading and urging to diligent and untiring giving. Note how Paul surrounds these directives with the message of God’s love for us in Christ (2 Co 8:7-10; 9:6,7). Thus he is addressing our new man, who, harassed by the Old Adam, needs strengthening by the message of divine love. Nor is it legalism to

adopt voluntarily a method of systematic weekly giving such as Paul suggests to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 16:1,2. Paul clearly disavows any conclusion that any of these directives are to be taken as law when he says in 2 Corinthians 8:8, “I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love.” We in our liberty as individuals or as a congregation might choose to use a monthly system instead of a weekly system, or for that matter no system based on the calendar at all. But the scriptural directives give us hints how we as Christians can grow in the grace of being cheerful givers. They are not laws which demand something from us, but gospel directives which invite and enable us to grow in the grace of giving.

Perhaps it would be helpful at this point to remind ourselves that passages such as Galatians 6:7 which reprove and warn against slothful giving are not gospel directives but law. They do not work the grace of giving in us, but they point out our sin and address our Old Adam with the threat of God’s punishment. In the same way all reproofs and warnings about unbelief or the fruits of unbelief belong to law (Formula of Concord: *Triglot*, p 957).

We need constantly to be on our guard that we do not let these reproofs and warnings induce us to turn the gospel directives into law. Making demands out of Christ’s imperatives to preach the gospel, to baptize, to attend communion, to believe, to gather for worship, to pray and the like, demands which we would then direct to people’s Old Adam with the threat of God’s punishment if they do not comply, instead of using them as Christ intended, as means of grace to build them up and empower them to do his saving will—this would be a horrible misuse of these gospel imperatives.

We will not fall into this grievous error if we but remember these summary points:

1. The New Testament Christian is free from the law, but his freedom is a spiritual one in which he does not set aside God’s holy will, but according to his new man he joyfully, voluntarily and completely serves God according to the law of love;
2. The essence of the moral law is love. The only reason God’s moral law is written in the New Testament is because the Christian still has his Old Adam and so he does not have a heart and mind in perfect harmony with God’s holy will. Since he is not completely spiritual, he needs to hear the moral law as a curb, a mirror and a guide as he daily must struggle anew with his flesh;
3. There are no other binding regulations beyond the moral law in the New Testament. The gospel commands are not new laws. Gospel commands do indeed appear in human language in the same form as law commands, but it is only the Old Adam (to whom the gospel is totally foreign) who will make moral or ceremonial laws out of gospel imperatives. The Christian according to his new man knows the difference between law and gospel and, therefore, will understand these gospel directives not as demands which condemn but as powerful invitations and encouragements graciously revealing God’s saving will and at the same time graciously enabling him both to believe the saving gospel and to share it with others.

II. The Order of Creation Is the Moral Law Viewed Particularly as to the Relationships It Establishes Which Apply to Mankind for Life on this Earth.

The term order of creation seems to be of rather recent vintage. Prof. Franz Pieper used it once in his *Christian Dogmatics* (p 524). Some argue the German word he used means “creator’s order”, not “order of creation” (cf. *Scho’pferordnung* vs. *Schoepfungsordnung*). Fritz Zerbst used the expression “order of creation” more often in his book *The Office of Woman in the Church*. The suggestion is made that the idea for the term comes from Luther, particularly the words, “Here consider your station (*Stand*) according to the Ten Commandments . . . “ It is argued that for Luther the terms *Stand* and *Ordnung* were interchangeable. Some feel

it would have been better that the term had never been coined, because, they argue, the term “order” has several distinct meanings and so confuses more than it clarifies.

Rather than spend a lot of time on the origin of the term or on the question of its value as part of our theological vocabulary, the only profitable thing for us to do, it seems, is to be sure that we all understand the use of the term in the same way.

The expression “order of creation” although it has been used in recent literature primarily to refer to the subordination of woman to man, is not limited to this one earthly relationship. The term “order” does become confusing when speaking of this matter because this term might lead us to begin to think of the order (in time) in which God created man and woman, i.e. man first, then the woman. This is not what the term “order” in the expression “order of creation” is referring to. It is rather referring to the relationship God established between man and woman. To be sure, the relationship of subordination is related to the order in time in which God created man and woman (1 Ti 2:13) but the use of the term refers only to the former, not the latter.

As was noted just above, this expression has been used most often to refer to the relationship of man and woman, but it refers to more than just this relationship. It refers to all those relationships God established among people for life on this earth with which we must concern ourselves in the application of the moral law. Scripture addresses itself first of all to the relationship which God established between man and himself, and then to the relationship of one human being to another. Scripture addresses those relationships whenever it explains or applies the moral law, the law of love. But this law and the relationship or order it prescribes, were not established at Mount Sinai or with the appearance of various New Testament passages. The moral law was written in the heart of man at creation and thus these relationships were established by God at that time. Thus, the term “order of creation” was coined to refer to the relationship God established at creation for mankind’s life on this earth.

What is of particular interest for us in the order God established are the relationships which include subordination. Does subordination imply inferiority? Mankind’s Old Adam might think so and might lead to subordination among people based on inferiority either real (e.g. mentally retarded or physically weak people subordinated by mentally or physically superior people) or imagined (black people subordinated by white people). But the subordination God commands is not ordained because of inferiority, but as a blessing. Children are not told to be subordinate to their parents because they are inferior. Note that when their parents grow old, children are commanded by God to care for their parents. Children are told to be subordinate so that God can channel physical and spiritual blessings to them through their parents. Likewise, the members of a congregation are not urged by God to subordinate themselves to the pastor because they are inferior. They called their pastor to be their minister, their servant. God wants the pastor to serve them with the gospel, and he wants the members to subordinate themselves so that he can channel spiritual blessings to them through their minister. God does not tell the people of a nation to subordinate themselves to the government because the people of the nation are inferior. Every believer in any given nation is more precious to God than any unbelieving government official to whom he is commanded by God to submit. God commands submission to our government so that he can bless us with an orderly society through the government officials.

The command given to slaves to submit to their masters is not the same as all of the above because the subordination in this case is man-made, not God-ordained. But since it was a part of Roman society which the government regulated, God commanded those who were subordinated by slavery to obey rather than rebel against their masters.

Some would like to place the subordination of woman to man into the same category as slavery. They argue that it was part of Roman society that woman was considered inferior and that woman was, therefore, to be subordinate. But such an argument is neither true to history nor to Scripture. Yes, there was many a Roman man who, moved by his Old Adam, denigrated women and abused them. But there were also many Roman women who were highly honored and who, moved by their Old Adam, reached for and acquired positions where they wielded power over men.

Scripture does not command the subordination of woman based on the structure of Roman society, nor does it base this command on the inferiority of woman. Sometimes this latter has been argued on the basis of 1 Timothy 2:14 where we are told that Adam was not deceived but Eve was. But the compound form of the verb (ἐξαπατάω) used with Eve, over against the simplex form with Adam (ἀπατάω) does not carry with it the connotation of intensifying the action or meaning of the verb when speaking of Eve; it only underscores the fact that the action took place in Eve's case, whereas with Adam it did not. The emphasis in this verse is not to highlight a major weakness of woman over against man, but rather, verse 14 uses the actions of both Adam and Eve in the Fall as proof, in addition to the order in which God created Adam and Eve (v 13), of the admonition given in verses 11 and 12 that women are to be subordinate to men in a learning-teaching situation. Both Adam and Eve stepped out of their God-given roles in the Fall—Eve took the lead and Adam followed—with terrible consequences. This is the point of verse 14, and it should not be used to argue that Scripture bases the subordination of woman on her inferiority (cf. *WLQ* October 1981).

Some also may cite 1 Peter 3:7 in arguing the inferiority of woman, but this would be even farther afield because the statement that the woman is the “weaker vessel (KJV)” or “weaker partner (NIV)” is used not as a reason for the woman to subordinate herself, but as a reason why the Christian husband should be considerate of his wife. This verse does make it clear that Scripture recognizes a real difference between man and woman, but it does not ascribe inferiority to her, and it especially does not make that a reason for her to subordinate herself to man (cf. the October 1981 *WLQ* for a thorough treatment of “weaker partner”).

Scripture leads the subordination of woman back to creation, and therefore it is part of the order of creation and thus also moral law. It is God's creation of woman as man's helper, not God's statement at the Fall which ordained that woman subordinate herself to man. This is confirmed by all three New Testament passages which treat this subject. In 1 Corinthians 11:8, to prove the assertion of verse 7, that the woman is the glory of man (i.e. that her conduct should bring glory to man as her head and not dishonor him, cf. Vv. 3-6), the apostle goes back to creation and says “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.” In 1 Corinthians 14:34 the apostle asserts that women “must be in submission” because this is what “the Law says.” Paul surely is not speaking of the Sinaitic covenant in addressing the Gentile Corinthians; Paul is referring to the only law which is binding for New Testament Christians, namely the moral law which was written in man's heart at creation.

In 1 Timothy 2:13, in proving that woman was to be resolute in her self-restraint (ἡσυχία) and not to have authority over a man, Paul goes back to creation: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve.”

In the next verse (2:14) Paul does also add the Fall as a second proof because the tragic results of Adam's and Eve's stepping out of their God-given roles does show clearly the dire consequences of disregarding God's will in this matter. But the words spoken by God at the Fall, “your husband shall rule over you,” did not begin woman's subordination. They were a statement by God that woman's position as a beloved helper to man (which God had arranged in love as a blessing for both her and man) would be affected by the state of transgression which they had entered by sin. Woman's position of subordination would still be a blessing for her, especially if the new man in both man and woman prevailed and the relationship between them were guided by faith-born love. But in the state of transgression woman's subordination would also be a burden because the man's Old Adam would be eager to abuse it and her Old Adam would rebel against it. God's announcement at the Fall that woman's subordination would now be a heavy burden as well as a blessing is an announcement that this burden would serve as a chastening, a purposeful reminder from God of sin and its curses and of God's promise of the Savior from sin.

To summarize then, the order of creation is a term referring to the moral law, particularly in regard to the relationships it establishes which apply to mankind for life on this earth.

God did establish subordination as one of these relationships, not because of inferiority but as a blessing. The subordination of woman was also established by God as part of the moral law at creation. The *purpose* “for man” (1 Co 11), the *manner*, “out of man” (1 Co 11), and the *time* “man first” (1 Ti 2) of woman's creation attest to this truth. In Eden woman's subordination was a blessing, and it continues to be a blessing just

as every other subordination which God ordains is meant as a blessing (i.e. parent-child, pastor-congregation, government-people). But since the Fall, the relationship in which woman is subordinated to man is, like all the other God-ordained relationships of subordination, deeply affected by sin. The Old Adam of the man selfishly abuses this relationship; the sinful flesh of the woman rebels against it. It is to the Old Adam in us, then, that God in his word addresses the repetitions and applications of this moral law. And, by God's announcement at the Fall, the burden woman bears in her subordinate role as a result of sin is also a chastening.

III. The Subordination of Woman to Man as this Principle Is Enunciated and Applied in the New Testament to Various Situations

There are numerous passages in which this moral principle is repeated and applied. It should not surprise us that the passages which deal with marriage will include a reminder of this principle, for in marriage man and woman are united as one. To help the Christian husband and wife in the struggle with their Old Adam, God speaks to both in the interest of guiding them in the way he wants them to conduct themselves in their united state. If, led by their new man, they follow God's commands, they will find joy and blessing in the unity of their marriage; to the degree that their Old Adam is not drowned daily, the unity of their marriage will be spoiled.

We note that in speaking of the role of man and woman in marriage, God does not tell the husband what to demand of his wife or the wife of her husband. Instead, God tells the wife that she is to subordinate herself, and that the husband is to love his wife unselfishly. The church's glad and willing subordination to its self-sacrificing Savior is given to the wife as her model; the Savior who in love gave his very life for the church is given to the husband as his model. It is this "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:21) which the apostle urges, *not the demanding* of one another.

While this application of the principle to marriage is most explicit in Ephesians 5, it is also stated in very similar terms in such passages as Colossians 3:18f and 1 Peter 3:1ff. The latter passage is of special interest because in citing Sarah as an example, Peter says she "*obeyed Abraham and called him her master.*" Normally the New Testament writers use ὑποτάσσω (ὑπὸ = under, τάξις = arrangement) when referring to this principle; in speaking of Sarah's example Peter uses ὑπακούω, a stronger term for subordination, the one usually used of the relationship of children to parents or of slaves to masters.

By addressing only Christian husbands and wives, is the New Testament saying that this principle applies only to Christians and not to husbands and wives in general? No; we recognize that Scripture does not address unbelievers in this matter because they are neither ready to listen to what God says, nor could they understand and respond in a God-pleasing way. Only the new man in the Christian is able to do this. But this does not mean that unbelieving husbands and wives are exempt from this principle. Their sins against this principle are sins against God's moral law for which they stand accountable to him.

The next major situation to which God applies the principle is the life and work of the church. We note again that God is addressing only Christians and that he addresses them on this matter in regard to an activity which is of vital interest to God, namely, the work of the church, the use of the means of grace. Again, it should be obvious that by doing this Scripture is not limiting the principle as applying only to Christians or as applying to the lives of Christians only when they are gathered around the use of the means of grace. If we would draw the latter conclusion, we would be saying that this is a ceremonial law—that is, a law which applies only to the members of the Christian church—and we would be denying our New Testament freedom from all ceremonial laws (cf. Part 1).

The fact that God applies this principle in the life and work of the church does not make it a gospel directive either. As we noted earlier, gospel directives are not demands of the moral law, but the New Testament writers clearly identify this principle as originating in the order God established at creation and thus as something which "the Law says" (1 Co 14:34).

There has also been a suggestion to limit the principle, as God applies it in the life and work of the church, to married Christian men and women. This attempt finds its basis in the fact that the Greek words ἀνὴρ and γυνή can mean husband and wife, as well as man and woman. There is one basic flaw in this attempt. In Greek, ἀνὴρ and γυνή normally refer to male and female. Therefore, the syntax and the context of any given passage must combine to show clearly that the meaning is husband and wife; otherwise the meaning male and female is the sense. In the three pertinent passages (1 Co 11, 1 Co 14, 1 Ti 2) the syntax and context not only *do not* combine to indicate the meaning husband and wife; rather they *do* combine to clearly indicate the meaning man and woman. (cf. *WLQ*, April - July - October, 1981). Returning to what was said a moment ago, what we have in these three passages (dealing with the role of man and woman in the life and work of the church) is the application by God of this moral principle to a second area of the Christian's life in which God is vitally concerned. And in each passage it is extremely important that we separate the principle from the application lest we fall into the error of making moral or ceremonial laws out of the application.

We investigate 1 Timothy 2 first. The moral principle is expressed here with the terms: ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ, ἐν πᾶσιν ὑποταγῇ and οὐ ἀσθεντεῖν ἀνδρός. The first two express what a woman is to do, namely, that a woman's whole conduct (cf. v12b εἶναι) is to be one of resolute self-restraint and full submission; the third expresses what a woman is not to do, namely, she is not to assume authority over a man. The special application of the principle in this passage is not only to the learning—teaching activity, especially in church, but to life in general also (note: the whole context of 1 Ti 1-3 is not only applicable in church but to the Christian life in general as Paul makes clear in 3:14,15).

Paul does tell the woman she is to learn. This in itself was a striking statement because both Jewish and Greek societies discouraged women from learning. Woman is to learn, but in doing so she is to exhibit a spirit of resolute self-restraint and of full submission (πᾶσιν ὑποταγῇ). In regard to the activity of teaching, Paul gives a carefully circumscribed prohibition. He does not prohibit teaching absolutely, otherwise he would be making this a ceremonial law (applicable only to Christian women) or a moral law (applicable at all times to all women). In the New Testament we have complete liberty from all ceremonial laws, and woman is not commanded to abstain from every kind of teaching (a moral law). This latter is clear from such passages as Titus 2:3-5 where older women are urged to be teachers of what is good so that their training of younger women might bear rich fruit and Colossians 3:16 where Paul urges all Christians to teach one another by singing spiritual songs.

Paul circumscribes the prohibition to teach with an explanatory clause introduced by an exegetical οὐδέ (cf *WLQ*, October 1981). Woman is not to teach if this involved assuming authority over a man. For this reason Paul uses the term διδάσκω which carries the connotation of a master or authority figure (διδάσκαλος) instructing the students who are under him (cf. Mt 10:24 “a student is not above his teacher”).

What do we learn from 1 Timothy 2 for our lives today by this application of the moral principle of woman's subordination to the activity of learning and teaching? We are not given a set of rules, which gives us answers for all the learning-teaching situations in life. Is it proper for a woman to ask a question or contribute an insight in a Bible class discussion? Is it proper for a woman to teach boys in a senior high school or first year college math class? These and many other questions are not answered for us in an absolute way.

In drawing the lessons from this passage for our life today we must be careful that we do not make it say any more or less than it actually says. The passage says that this moral principle of God regarding the subordination of women which was established by God in creation (v 13) and reaffirmed in the Fall (v 14), has an application in any learning-teaching activity involving man and woman. In both her learning and teaching activity a woman is to observe carefully God's moral principle that she subordinate herself. The apostle leaves it to Timothy to determine how the principle applies in each individual case which might arise (3: 14,15).

And this is exactly the use God wants us to make of the passage: not to set up a code of rules, but to examine every learning-teaching activity involving man and woman in the light of God's moral principle and, then, to conduct ourselves according to God's holy will. We may be pressed by both men and women to declare as a general rule whether this or that learning or teaching activity is proper or not. In regard to some activities,

such as that of the office of a pastor, where teaching in the form of exercising authority over men is inherent in the office, we might venture to give a general answer. But not without making clear that it is not the holding of the office of the pastor which God forbids for a woman (cf. a congregation of women) nor is it the fact that one of a pastor's duties is teaching which makes it wrong for a woman to be a pastor. In other words, even where we can give a general answer, we will have to stress the underlying moral principle lest our answer be misunderstood. But in most instances we cannot give a general answer; rather we will have to examine each individual case of a learning or teaching activity in the light of the moral principle. In this way we have the opportunity to teach the people who may be pressing us for a rule to practice their freedom in Christ from rules. We can teach them to practice their freedom by gladly, willingly and completely conforming every learning or teaching activity to the moral principle and thus to prove the true freedom of their new man by rendering royal honor to the Savior who set us free.

In 1 Corinthians 14:33b-40, likewise, we must be careful not to make the application of the moral principle in these verses into a rule. Paul is not saying that women are to be absolutely silent in the churches, because the same apostle elsewhere tells women to sing (Col 3) and to pray and prophesy (1 Co 11) in church. All that Paul is doing is applying the moral principle to the situation where one person's rising to speak would necessitate the silence of another speaker (v 30) or where one would rise to judge what was spoken by another (v 29). Paul tells the Corinthians that such actions would violate the will of God that a woman be in submission, as the law says (v 34).

We would be completely misusing the passage if we established a ceremonial law for the church of our day by imposing silence on women in the church. Do we have any situations that parallel the one addressed in I Corinthians 14? Perhaps, if in a Bible class we ask a woman to judge the answer which a man gives to a certain question or a discussion—application. But even if we determined that the situation were somewhat parallel, we could not make a general rule but would have to examine each instance in the light of the moral principle. As with 1 Timothy 2, then, I Corinthians 14 simply teaches us to examine whether the practice of our Christian freedom conforms to God's holy will for the relationship of man and woman.

The lesson we learn from 1 Corinthians 11 is exactly the same. In this instance the application is made to a local custom, Paul disavows in verse 16 that this is a custom which he is making into a law for all Christian congregations, the wrong NIV translation, "we have no other practice," and the ambiguous KJV translation, "we have no such custom," notwithstanding. The custom in Corinth of women wearing their hair uncut (or of wearing a veil) was a custom in that society which gave expression to the subordination of woman to man. It made no difference that the Corinthian society subordinated women for a different reason with different results than God's principle did.

For Christian women to cut their hair (or appear in public without a veil) could only be understood by others in that society as a denial of the principle. Thus to refuse to follow the custom would be an action by which the Christians would be making a confession to the pagan Corinthians that the God of the Bible has no such principle. To practice their freedom from human rules in this instance would be a denial of the order of creation.

Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that they must observe the custom of the society especially, but not only, in their public worship activities of praying and prophesying. If they came together for worship in that society and did not observe this particular custom, a man's covering his head would dishonor Christ and a woman's uncovering her head would dishonor man. Thus it would also sadden the angels (v 10) whose will is in perfect harmony with God's. In urging them to keep this custom of Corinth, Paul carefully and in great detail spells out God's order of creation. He does this so that the Corinthian Christians do not misunderstand and misuse the subordination of women as the pagan reasons for and the pagan results of the Corinthian custom might lead them to do. Paul fills the custom as practiced by the Corinthian Christians with the totally different relationship which God's moral principle establishes. In the Christian practice of the custom the woman was to render a glad, voluntary and complete submission to man (v 10), and the man was to avoid any abuse of his position (vv. 11-12).

What we learn from 1 Corinthians 11, then, is that any custom in our society which gives expression to a principle of God's moral law is a situation in which we will forego our Christian liberty from human rules and voluntarily subject ourselves to the custom. We will do this in order that we do not deny this principle before the unbeliever, and also so that we do not trouble our fellow Christians or the angels by refusing to follow the custom. This could easily happen because such action would raise questions about our obedience to the will of God which is expressed by that custom. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11, does not teach us to make rules out of those customs, but as 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 did, it teaches us to practice our Christian liberty according to our new man by observing the order of creation in every circumstance of our lives.

What does Galatians 3:28 ("There is neither ... male nor female") teach us about the order of creation? Nothing, because that verse is gospel, not law. It does not abolish the earthly relationship in which we find ourselves but it teaches us that they mean nothing in respect to our new relationship to God, which was a result of Christ's redeeming work. The gospel never abolishes God's law, but it fills the established order with its spirit. In reality, then, Galatians 3:28 provides the gospel basis and thus the motivation for a Christian man and woman to practice their Christian freedom in conformity with every part of God's moral law, including the role of man and woman. In summary, then, the New Testament passages which enunciate and apply the principle of the subordination of woman do not give us a set of ceremonial laws which apply only in church or a set of rules for us to follow in general. They simply underscore the fact that this principle is part of the order of creation which applies to all people at all times, and they remind us as Christians to apply this part of God's moral law to every situation in life where the relationship of man and woman comes into consideration.

Conclusion

A set of rules for us to apply to every situation would violate freedom God gives us in his New Testament covenant. A general principle which we are asked to apply to all the situations of life gives us the opportunity to practice our spiritual liberty in which we voluntarily conform our lives to God's will in love and thanks to Christ.

Such liberty means that again and again we will want to go back and consider the moral principle itself and its application in each and every situation. Our Old Adam will be urging us to conclude that, since God does not expressly forbid this or that, therefore, we can do whatever we want. Our new man, however, will want to do that, and only that, which in each situation conforms to God's will and redounds to his glory.

Not every Christian will come to exactly the same conclusion in each and every instance. This will be true especially in those instances where another moral obligation of a woman (e.g. her training of the children when her husband is careless or contrary in this matter, or when she inherits a vast fortune) forces her to make a choice which of the moral obligations she must act on and which moral obligation she can fulfill by the way in which she carries out the action. We must recognize that in applying the role God ordained for woman to situations in daily life, we have only a general principle and much is left to our conscientious Christian judgment. This does not mean we will go far apart in making applications of the principle, because if we truly understood the principle and put it into practice in the spirit of faith-born love, we will find in most instances that our consciences guided by God's Word will come to the same conclusions. If we differ slightly in what we all recognize as "gray areas," (e.g. high school senior boys being taught by a woman) these differences will not disturb us. We will simply respect each other's conscience because we know we agree in the principle.

If our study of the role of man and woman leads: 1. to a better understanding of the moral principle, 2. to a review and strengthening of our understanding of the difference between law and gospel imperatives and 3. to reaffirming the understanding that our Christian liberty means that in the New Testament there are no legal regulations beyond the moral law, our time will have been well spent. Hopefully, this study has helped to that end.