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THE ROLE AND PLACE OF WOMEN IN
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN
TANZANIA -- MBULU SYNOD
IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

A Research Project Submitted to the
School for Graduate Studies, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Religion

By

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Advisor

INTRODUCTION

It is frequently argued today that women have at last achieved their rightful place of equality with men. They have come a long way in this twentieth century. For example, in the Tanzanian government it is difficult to find a Cabinet without at least one or two women members. In most African countries, women are now found as company directors, medical doctors, professors, lawyers, judges and so on. In the Southern Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (E.L.C.T.), a woman serves as an Executive Secretary of the Diocese. Two decades ago this position was not open to women. In comparison, however, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania--Mbulu Synod (hereafter referred to as E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod) has not yet involved women in this or similar ways.

The intention of this research paper is to investigate the appropriateness of the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod in not involving women in certain positions of church leadership, especially in permitting them to serve as elders in local congregations. Even though this subject is an issue in the field of Practical Theology, other theological disciplines will provide essential resources.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND THE NEED FOR THE STUDY

Need for the Study

There is a continuing disagreement among the members of the E.L.C.T. --Mbulu Synod on the question of women elders. Some believe that the Bible excludes women from being church elders. Others believe that it is not the Bible as such, but St. Paul's prohibitions which were applicable only in his days. This has been a subject of lively debate during the last ten years at the annual Synodical Conventions. The debate has raised a number of important questions. Central to this dialog has been the question of the role of the Bible in structuring the faith and life of the church. In such cases the change is not a matter of differing views of what the text of Scripture says, but rather differing views of how the Synod is to interpret the truth of the Bible.

Obviously, depending on the position one takes on various interpretations, St. Paul's statements can be made to mean different things. Thus, this research seeks to re-examine relevant Biblical texts in their historical context in order to offer a Biblically accurate conclusion for consideration.

Among the questions to be addressed are the following: Does what the New Testament teach concerning the role of women in the church apply to every generation? Do these teachings apply only to the author's time and culture? Are there certain teachings that have precedent over others which seem to differ in their meaning?

Dealing with these questions is especially pressing since in the E.L.C.T.--Mbulu Synod, women are allowed to serve as evangelists even though they may not be congregational elders or otherwise exercise authority over men. For some, this might seem in modern terms as prohibiting women in the military to accede to the lesser rank of Captain, while allowing them to be promoted to superior rank of Colonel. Many pronouncements and assumptions have put women in the place of a second class citizen in the Kingdom of God. Too often women are limited to jobs dealing with education of children or special women's ministry regardless of their inclination, talents or training, and are likely not permitted to make use of all their Spirit-given gifts. Thus, the need for this study is intensified.

Scope and Limitation

As noted at the outset, the main purpose of this research is to relieve the confusion in the ELCT--Mbulu Synod about the role and place of women. However, in order to give a broad overview of the place of women, it is important that materials on women be presented both in their positive and negative details, because the ELCT--Mbulu Synod has emphasized negative examples and passages from the Bible concerning women rather than positive examples which do exist. It is accepted that the Bible is the written Word of God worthy of the closest attention and which demands our obedience. Therefore, it is important to draw out the truth which the Bible reveals rather than pouring into the Bible one's own opinion.

Chapter One is intended to explain the problem and the need for study. Chapter two will study the New Testament teachings and consider

the evidence of the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, the practice of the early church, the testimony of the Book of Acts and Paul's epistle concerning the role of women. This is particularly important for an effective understanding of Paul's contribution, about which a wide variety of opinion exists. Chapter three will try to show the relationship between the New Testament teaching and what is being practiced in the ELCT--Mbulu Synod. The final chapter summarizes the observation and conclusion of this research. The Bibliography at the end is intended to help provide those who are interested in this subject with materials for further study.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania--ELCT

The foundations of this church were laid in different regions by Lutheran Mission Societies from Europe and America, between the years 1848-1950. The first missionaries came from Germany in 1848 and belonged to separate mission societies. These were the Berlin Mission Society, the Bethel Mission and the Leipzig Mission. From America was the Augustana Lutheran Mission. The Norwegian Lutheran Mission, which assumed responsibilities for the work that had been started by the Swedish evangelical Mission Society prior to World War II, arrived in Mbulu District among the Iraq tribe in 1950.

Today the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) consists of sixteen units in Tanzania and one in Kenya with the status of "Synod" and "Diocese," of which Mbulu Synod is one. This church adopted a merger constitution on June 19, 1963 which governs the common life of ELCT. The officers of the church are the Presiding Officer (Mkuu) who is a pastor and bishop of the Northeastern Diocese and the Secretary

who is a layman. Both are elected by the ballot of the General Assembly of the church for a term specified in the by-laws. The Executive Secretary and Treasurer are appointed by the Church Council.

CHAPTER II
WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE
EARLY CHURCH

Women in the Jewish Context

In Hebrew rites, women were seen as "unclean" and were segregated to a certain section of the Temple during the service. This separation meant that the woman could only listen, not speak in the service. Every Hebrew man recited a prayer to thank God that he had not been born a slave, a pagan or a woman.¹

A first century rabbi, Eliezer, went so far as to say that the words of the Torah, the Hebrew Scripture, should be burned rather than entrusted to a woman. Later on, within the Christian community of the early church, women were accepted as prophets and teachers, but this was after the church had broken away from its predominantly Jewish character.²

In Hebrew literature there are at least two traditions about the nature of women. The first, which attempts to describe the original state of humanity before the fall, is positive and depicts woman as the equal of man if indeed not the perfect of humanity. The second tradition attempts initially to explain the actual subordinate condition of women in society after the fall negatively and describes the woman as inferior to man because of disobedience.³ The role and place of women in the religious life of Judaism will be considered under three separate headings: Individual worship, public worship, and teaching or learning.

Individual Worship

The rabbis considered that the commands of the law were generally applicable to women with the exception of all positive precepts for which there was definite time assigned. With the exception of such positive commands it was expected that a woman would live an obedient and pious life.⁴

Public Worship

Matters were somewhat different with respect to public worship. When the temple of Herod was still standing, the women were restricted to the Court of Gentiles and the Court of Women. They had only a bit more freedom in the Synagogue than in the Temple. Synagogues were the local places of prayer and worship for Jewish communities. In them, prayers and benedictions were offered and Scripture read and expounded. In order to pronounce benedictions and recite certain prayers, a quorum of ten free adult men was required. The presence of women and slaves was of no significance for the quorum. This rule explains why Paul could not go to a synagogue at Philippi, but rather went to the women who gathered there.⁵ Regular attendance at the Synagogue was not compulsory for women, although they were allowed to come to any service. Their part in the service was strictly receptive. Even the oral reading of the Scripture was not permitted even if they were able to do so.⁶

Teaching and Learning

The passive role of women in worship is related to the rabbinic estimate of their ability to learn and to the propriety of teaching

them. Women were permitted to attend synagogue because Deuteronomy 31: 10-13 specifically required that women and children be included. The rabbis opposed women as teachers in schools and even in homes except as teachers of their own children. Although they attended worship, prayed and obeyed God, women were shut off from almost all other aspects of religious life. This picture of women in the Talmadic era is relevant also for the time of Christ.⁷

It is clear that the role and position of women in the Jewish context are presented in a situation in which the subordinate role of women within patriarchal and Israelite society hardened to a considerable degree, and in which women were relegated to a position of inferiority. The rabbis continued many old traditions and produced new ones which they thought would guard their people from sin.

As twentieth century people, it is necessary to appreciate the great difference between the ways in which the cultures of both the Old Testament and the New Testament was understood insofar as women were concerned and what is being practiced today. Israelite women enjoyed a personal relationship with the Lord and were required to attend certain of the public ceremonies, but did not lead in public religious exercise or function as priestesses. Within Judaism women were excluded from worship and religion, being considered unfit to learn or inappropriate to teach. These teachings can be evaluated against the transitional cultural situation of the Roman era. Some grasp of the increasingly conservative tendencies developing in Judaism is necessary in order to review Jesus and St. Paul in their proper perspective, for their teachings are not in line with the

Judaism of their day nor are they an adaptation of the Greek and Roman practices. Their views are closer to those of the Old Testament and yet both are shaped by something quite new.

According to Jewish thought, it seems that the special and supreme sphere of women was the home. There, her position was always one of unchallenged dignity. This seems to be a paradox. On the one hand there is the well known saying of the synagogue service: "Blessed art thou O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has not made me a woman."⁸ This prayer of the synagogue service supports the idea of a special sphere. Immediately following that prayer which was offered by men is one offered by the woman who said: "Blessed art thou O Lord our God, King of the Universe who has made me according to thy will."⁹ Legally, the position of a Jewish woman occupied a more dignified position than her status would suggest.

In the home the Jewish woman's position was one of dignity and responsibility. She was her husband's conscience, charged with the task of encouraging him in all holiness. Children, who were a sign of the blessing of God in a marriage, were the special charge of the mother. Subordination, subjection, dignity and responsibility correctly describe the various aspects of the private life of a Hebrew woman, but in the sphere of the home her place was beyond question a prominent one.¹⁰ For a Jewish woman, public life was practically synonymous with religious life. All the people, including women, were part of God's Covenant relationship which He introduced through Moses. That women were surely a part of this relationship is made clear by the special protecting commandment given concerning them.

The Mosaic law expected the presence of women at the sanctuary at the festal seasons, for daughters and maidservants were to join with sons and manservants (Deut. 12:12;16:14). Women were present in the congregation when the Law was read in the time of Nehemia. Likewise, they were at the feast which David made in honor of the recovering of the Ark (II Samuel 6:19). Hannah and Peninnah, who went yearly to the gathering in Shiloh, are examples of women participating in public prayer (I Samuel 1:1ff; 2:19ff). Furthermore, women could take part in the sacrifice; the fact that they were forbidden to eat the flesh of the sin offering indicates that they were permitted to share in other offerings and there is no question but that they offered sacrifices for purification (Leviticus 6:29; 10:14; 15:19-23).¹¹

Women in the Ministry and Teachings of Jesus: The Gospels

Since Jesus is the founder of Christianity, there is a certain primacy about the Gospels; that is, it is logical that the life and teaching of Jesus should determine how the teaching of the followers of Jesus should be interpreted, not the other way around. If Jesus strongly stressed justice for women, but Paul or Peter did not, it would be logical for subsequent Christians, who by definition are followers of Jesus the Christ, to place great stress on justice for women, and to interpret Paul's and Peter's lack of stress as something to be expected in the followers as a falling short of the example of the leader.¹¹

In fact, in Christian history, the restrictive statements concerning women in Pauline and Petrine writings often were much more

influential than the very liberating statements and actions of Jesus concerning women. Furthermore, what is known of the life and teachings of Jesus has come down to man already filtered through his followers so that the distinguishing between Jesus' teaching and that of His followers is not as simple as was earlier thought.¹²

The thing to notice about Jesus and women in all four Gospels is that, nowhere does Jesus treat women as inferior. Jesus clearly felt especially sent to the typical classes of "inferior" persons, such as the poor, the lame, sinners and women, to call them all to the freedom and equality of the reign of God. But religious men in Jewish culture thought just the opposite. For example, St. Paul wrote: "Man is the head of women. . . . Man is the image of God. . . . but woman is a reflection of man's glory" (1 Cor. 11:3-7). Josephus said that women were in all things inferior to men and they were treated as inferior by the rabbis. For example, Rabbi Eliazar, who lived in the first century said that rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman.¹³ These negative attitudes are quite startling. It becomes still more extraordinary when in addition the attitude of the Gospels is considered. With the knowledge of the Gospels, it is easier to make the vital distinction between the religious truth that is to be handed on and the time conditioned categories and customs involved in expressing it.

In late Biblical pseudepigraphical early rabbinic and contemporary Jewish material like those of Philo, Josephus and the Dead Seas Scroll, that women were generally held to be very inferior

to men. With this idea of inferiority, there is no reason to assume that Jesus' followers and the Jewish Christian sources of the Gospel would not also have held these common views, except for Jesus' influence.¹⁴

Jesus' attitude toward women is expressed by the Gospel language attributed to Him in an extraordinarily vigorous and manifold fashion:

- (1) In the Gospels, Jesus often uses women in His stories and sayings, something most unusual for His culture and others.
- (2) The images of women Jesus uses are never negative, but rather always positive in dramatic contrast to His predecessors and contemporaries.
- (3) These positive images of women are often very exalted, being associated with the "reign of heaven" and likened to the chosen people and even to God.
- (4) Jesus often teaches a point by telling two similar stories or using two images, one of which features a man and one a woman. This balance among other things, indicates that Jesus wanted it to be abundantly clear that His teaching, unlike that of other rabbis, was intended for both women and men. It is obvious that He wanted this to be clear to men as well as to women, since he told these stories to all his disciples and at times even to crowds.¹⁵

The Gospels

In all four Gospels, Jesus is never reported as acting or speaking to women in a derogatory fashion. He always treated them as equal individuals and persons. He testified in His practice and in His doctrine that He saw woman as created by God equal to man, endorsing the view of Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female, He created them."¹⁶

The Parables

The parables of Jesus often deal with the life and conduct of women. For example, the parable of the Woman and the Leaven (Matt.13:33);

the lost coin (Luke 15:8ff); the women grinding at a mill (Matt. 24:40). In the first two of these parables, the part of the woman in the parable represents the action of God the Father. In the latter it counterbalances the illustration of the men in the same field or in a bed, indicating that men and women have the same status in relation to salvation. The parable of the wise and foolish virgin, drawn from Jewish marriage customs, illustrates the need to be ready for the coming of the Son of God on the part of both men and women (Matt. 28:1-3). Jesus himself spoke to women in public. Unconcerned about Jewish rules He even taught them, for example, in the house of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), and the woman of Samaria (John 4:7-27), (note the astonishment of the disciples that Jesus was talking with a woman in verse 27).¹⁷

Healing

Jesus gave proof of His compassion and power in His healing of women no less than of men: Peter's wife's mother (Matt. 8:14ff; par Mk. 1:29ff; Luke 4:35f). Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-43), and the woman with the issue of blood (Matt. 9:18-26), who, because of her plight, not only suffered much but would have been virtually unclean and cut off from the community. Lazarus was raised in response to Mary and Martha, his sisters (John 11:38-44).

Followers of Jesus

Women disciples are not found in the circle of the twelve (apostles), but this may well be due to the Twelve being chosen as the counterpart of the twelve tribes of Israel. However, women were to be found among

the followers of Jesus. They were more prominent than the men in their love, care and courage after the crucifixion (Matt. 27:55ff, par Mk. 15:40ff; Lk. 23:49). Luke describes the preaching ministry of Jesus in the following terms:

Soon afterward he went on through the cities and villages preaching. . . and the twelve were with Him and also some of the women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary called Magdalene from whom seven demons had gone out and Joan, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward and Susanna and many others who provided for them of their means (Lk. 8:1-3).¹⁹

This latter point suggests that the traditional role of the man as the provider was here reversed. Also, from the above passage it is clear that Jesus had a female group of disciples who, along with men, followed him wherever he went in order to learn from him. They had to leave home and family and travel openly with a "rabbi," an unheard of breach of custom. Jesus not only condoned, but obviously encouraged this flouting of a sexist custom. These women disciples were such a prominent part of Jesus' life that all three of the synoptic Gospels mention them. They were: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the Mother of James, and Salome the mother of the sons of Zebedee, James and John (Matt. 27:55-56, Lk. 8:1-4). These very women were chosen by Jesus to be the first witnesses to His resurrection. They were the first people to see the empty tomb. Mary Magdalene is the first person to see the resurrected Jesus (John 20:11-18); then other women met Him (Matt. 28:8-10).

As a result of being the first women to see the resurrected Jesus, Mary Magdalene was sent by Jesus to witness to the male apostles, and she is referred to as "the apostle to the Apostles." The term "Apostle" in reference to Mary Magdalene occurs often in the well known ninth

century account of her life by Rabanus Maurus in which it is written:

Jesus commissioned her an apostle to the apostles. She did not delay in carrying out the office of the apostolate to which she was commissioned. Her fellow apostles were evangelized with the news of the resurrection of the Messiah. She was raised to the honor of the apostolate and was commissioned an evangelist (evangelisto) of the resurrection. Even the acerbic Bernard of Clairvany in the twelvth century refers to her as the apostle to the apostles.²⁰

Besides the strong positive tradition about Mary Magdalene in the Canonical Gospels, the orthodox Christian writers quoted above, and others, there is a similarly strong tradition about her among Gnostic Christians in the third or fourth century Manichean documents. There, Mary Magdalene is sent by Jesus as a messenger (angelos) to evangelize (eungelizein) the male disciples, with all possible skill. This tradition of Mary Magdalen's superiority to the male disciples begins even earlier in the apocryphal Gospels named after her, Gospel of Mary, probably a second century Gnostic Christian document. In it, after Jesus commanded the disciples to go and preach the Gospel and then left them, the men played the stereotypical female role, not knowing what to do they cried. Whereas Mary played the stereotypical male role, confidently knowing what to do and encouraging the men. At first she succeeded admirably, but then, as she expounded her specialized knowledge from Jesus, jealousy was engendered among the male disciples, particularly Andrew and Peter, who attacked her for thinking that she, a woman, might have better access to the truth of Christ than they did as men. Mary responded bluntly and was supported by another apostle, Levi, who rebuked Peter for being so hot-tempered and attacking Mary Magdalene. In the end, they all went off to preach the Gospel, so that Mary Magdalene prevailed. (Gospel of Mary, New Testament Apocrypha, vol. I, pp. 342-344).²¹ [It

should be noted that Mary Magdalene is Mary from the town of Magdala. There is no solid reason to identify her with the Mary of Bethany - [Lk. 7:37-50].

When Paul repeats the list of official witnesses to the resurrection in I Corinthians 15:5-8, he mentions specifically only the men because according to Jewish law, only certain men could testify officially about a person. Jesus in contrast wanted women to learn and to testify before others about God's actions on earth. He wanted these women whom he had taught to go on to evangelize. That is why they were chosen to be the first witnesses to the resurrected Jesus.²²

Christ's omission of women apostles is significant. It is not just a prejudice of His time. To urge that Jesus' choice of apostles was determined by culture is to ignore the fact that God chose the culture and time in which His son was to be born. No detail escapes God's consideration. Jesus' choice is consistent with the Old Testament teaching that a woman is to submit herself to her husband. The explicit application of the principle which relates directly to the choice of the male apostolate is stated in I Timothy 2:11-12. To have had women with Him is an unprecedented happening in the history of that time. Jesus knowingly overthrew custom when he allowed women to follow Him. It is unconvincing to acknowledge that Jesus radically broke custom in this regard, but conceded to it by not allowing women to preach or teach.²³

Apparently, the rigid patriarchal system, which Jesus did His best to dismantle (cf Matt. 10:37-39; Luke 14:26), was so pervasive in the lives of the majority of Christians that they were blind to His choice. They automatically gravitated toward the most restrictive subordinationist passages of the New Testament. Christianity early

became so intent on identifying itself by differentiating itself from the world around it that it often vigorously rejected the pagan world including denying high status for women.²⁴

One additional partial answer to this puzzle of Jesus' lack of women apostles is suggested by Johannes Leipoldt. He writes:

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, many Hellenistic Jews became Christian because they felt repelled by the intensified observation of the rabbinic prescription that developed in the attempt to preserve Jewish identity. These Hellenistic Jews, being used to less rigorous observance found in Christianity an environment which was familiar and receptive. They of course brought with them the strongly subordinating attitudes toward women that were then prevalent in Judaism, even Hellenistic Judaism.²⁵

Whether or not, or to whatever degree, that may be true, the receding eschaton, the final day, imminently awaited by Paul and the other early Christians, doubtless played a major role in the early decline in the status of women in Christianity. As long as the parousia, the second coming of Christ, was expected at any moment, the need to develop organized structures in the community of believers was felt very little. But as that expectation faded, the need for structured pattern of community life was increasingly sensed. In an almost inevitable development these "Second generation" Christians naturally turned to the newly forming church structures. In the Greco-Roman society of the Roman Empire, despite advances, women were almost entirely excluded from political life. Hence in following this Greco-Roman model (e.g., "diocese" and Parish are originally Roman civil administrative terms), the church set up authority structures that almost entirely excluded women.²⁶

Jesus' Teaching About Women

After exploring Jesus' attitude toward women it is necessary now to turn to a consideration of specific teachings of Jesus about women. His

teachings remain consistent with his attitude and behavior.

Concerning women's position Jesus did not teach specifically about women's role in life. He gave no commands that applied to women only. His teachings were directed to men and women equally, except for those times when He taught the disciples by themselves. He gave no directions about housekeeping or about a woman's place in the synagogue. Of course, society at that time said a woman's role was to be a wife and mother. Jesus did not teach that women should not continue in the roles of wives and mothers, but he made it clear that they were not to be considered as pieces of property or as inferior beings. Jesus accepted the services of women in several different instances (Luke 8:2-3; Matt. 8:14-15, Lk. 10:38-42; John 12:1-8), but he never taught that only women were to serve others, regardless of sex, race, or station in life.²⁷

Jesus directed his disciples to serve the crowds when He miraculously fed the five thousand (John 6:11-13); He did not ask a group of women to come and serve everyone. He asked Peter and John to prepare the room and food for Passover meal, not His women followers (Matt. 26:17-19; Lk. 22:8-13). But it is necessary to add that Jesus did not ignore the needs, problems and attributes of women in His teaching. Jesus praised women publicly for their faith, devotion and love and took these opportunities to teach those who were near at hand about these qualities. He praised Mary of Bethany for choosing the best activity (Lk. 10:38-42), and for honoring Him (John 12:1-8). He praised a poor widow for her devotion and sacrificial giving (Mark 12:43-44).²⁸

Contemporary Christians approach the question of the role of women with a particular set of issues in view. They are generally concerned

about authority relationships and about those dealing with the home and church in particular. The teaching of Jesus is singularly unhelpful in these areas. He does not discuss marital authority, nor does he lay out a hierarchy for the church. It remained for the apostles to discuss these matters within the context of the emerging church, after the resurrection and ascension of her Lord. The teachings of Jesus is not, however, irrelevant to our topic. It can be summarized in the following points:

1. Considered as persons, women have a natural place in Jesus' teachings. They illustrate both faith and unbelief. They received His chiding and His blessing. Rabbinic teaching tended to use them only as negative examples.

2. Women were not only Jesus' hearers, they were also His followers. A group of them travelled with Him and His disciples - Luke 8:1-3.

3. Women had a prominent role as witnesses to the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of the Lord (Matt. 27:61; Matt. 28:1-7; Mark 15:40-16:7).

4. With the exception of the calling and appointment of the male apostles, the Gospels do not command on office or authority structures for the followers of Christ either before or after His death. We must look elsewhere in the New Testament for such information.

5. In the teaching of Jesus we can readily see aspects which set him apart from the Judaism of His day. These are some aspects which show lines of development which reach back to the Old Testament teaching and still others which presume a new reality coming into being with His own ministry of the Kingdom of God.

6. Apart from the disciples whom he called for a special purpose, Jesus seems to have made no distinctions between classes of persons in His bringing of the Good News of the arrival of the Kingdom. Women stand alongside men in the universal invitation to enter the kingdom through Christ: "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50). It is this, of course, which is echoed by St. Paul in his great proclamation of who may enter the Church: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female for you are all one in Christ, Jesus. If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's Seed and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28-29).

7. The antipathy between groups, such as Jews and Gentiles, is often still with us. The very barriers Jesus dismantled have later been rebuilt, barriers between clergy and laity, man and women.

However, no matter how extensively people try to pour cement into the former foundation, the living temple will grow up and crack the imitation.²⁹ There is no doubt that Jesus' treatment of women was a radical break with status quo. His teaching makes it clear that it was not because of their sex that women or men are important, but that their relationship with God, matters most.

Paul's Teaching on Women: The Epistles

When we focus on the question of the role relationship in the teaching-ruling functions in the church, it is appropriate to ask if that question is dealt with explicitly in the New Testament. If it is, one must concentrate attention on such didactic passages. That is basic to the proper handling of the Scriptures and the resolution of any question and will prevent from drawing erroneous conclusions from passages that treat the subject only incidently. In this case, careful attention will be focused on the following four passages:

1. I Timothy 2:11-15, which most clearly gives both the apostle Paul's verdict and his reason for that verdict.
2. I Corinthians 12:2-16, which explains the significance of that reason.
3. I Corinthians 14:33b - 38, which presents the apostle's command and his reason for it in more general terms.
4. Galatians 3:28-29, which echoes Paul's great proclamation of who may enter into the church.

I Timothy 2: 11-15:

The setting for I Timothy 2:11-15 is a letter in which Paul instructs Timothy about the life of the church. Paul says explicitly that he is writing so that Timothy may "know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (I Timothy 3:14-15). In chapter two, Paul first writes about prayer, referring in particular to the responsibility of men. Then he turns to women and speaks of the need for modesty in dress, for a repudiation of ostentatiousness and a concentration instead on the adornment of good works (Timothy 2:9-10).³¹ After a general statement that requests women to learn in quietness and all subjection, which is

the keynote found in the wife-husband relationship (Eph. 5, 1 Peter 3), he then makes that aspect of subjection more explicit by a definite negative: "But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man; but to remain quiet"(verse 2).

Paul is here stating his own position and practice which corresponds to his inherited Jewish idea of the order of Creation and the fall. The question to be asked is whether the inferences that Paul draws here are to be regarded as universally normative in the light of cultural and educational changes, even by those who regard the premises of the argument as an expression of the antological structure of human relationships. That which is prohibited is teaching (didaskein) and having dominion (authentein). The prohibition is that a woman may not teach and have authority over a man. In Titus 2:3-4, it is written: "Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderous, or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. They can train younger women to love their husbands and children.

It has been suggested that this prohibition applies only to wives, not to women in general. It is true that the Greek words used here for man and woman (aner and gune) can designate not only man and woman in general but also husband and wife in particular. But, there is no evidence in the larger context that the terms are meant to be restricted in the passage or that they become more restricted in the verses under consideration.³² The Apostle Paul gives his reason for such a vigorous prohibition: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over man, she must be silent, for Adam was formed first, then Eve. Adam was not the one who was deceived, it was the woman who was deceived

and become a sinner" (I Tim. 2:12-14).

The first statement is that the order in which God created man and woman (Adam and Eve) expresses and determines the relationship God intended, and the order of authority. The one formed first is to have dominion, the one formed after and from him is to be in subjection. St. Paul develops this argument and its implications in I Corinthians 11.

The second statement is related to the Fall and the fact that Eve (woman) was beguiled. Paul does not expand and develop this argument and we must be content with this brief statement of it.³³

The components of these verses are sometimes separated, thus requiring that women: (a) learn in silence, (b) be in all submission, (c) not teach, (d) not exercise authority over men. When they are separated in this fashion the grammar is not well understood. The damage is further increased if the same words are taken out of context. In such cases, the prohibitions and injunctions become generally or universally applicable and men and women who wish to obey Scripture insist that women never under any circumstances teach and that they always in every circumstance submit to men. A close look at the context and Paul's wording can set one free from such a misunderstanding.³⁴ Paul has been discussing the conduct of Christians in the gathered congregation in which unholy conflict may mar the prayers of men and in which ostentatious clothes may damage those of women (verse 9). Paul's remarks are not directed to life generally, but to the gathering of God's people and even to a specific situation during that gathering. Women were certainly free to speak in the Pauline churches (cf. I Cor. 11); Paul is speaking only of a teaching situation here in 1 Timothy 2.³⁵ Verse 11 calls for quiet and submissive learning.

Verse 12 forbids teaching or exercising authority over men. The two are visibly parallel. Quiet learning inversely parallels teaching and full submission inversely parallels exercising authority. Both verses have the same situation in mind, one in which women are not to teach authoritatively, but are to learn quietly.

Focusing on this passage, Julian Station says that in verse 12 Paul was still speaking about the marriage relationship. The phrase "teach or exercise authority" in the Greek means acting independently of and domineering over someone. It is the picture of the wife becoming a dictator in a marriage and acting wholly without her husband's guidance or leadership. She would be acting outside of God's guidelines established at Creation and would get into trouble just as Eve did when she acted independently of her husband (I Timothy 2: 13-14). To "remain quiet" does not mean "do not speak" in Greek. It means self restraint, tranquility, and a quiet life-style³⁶. Several Greek words can be translated by the noun or verb form of "silence." Epistomizo and Phimo can mean to silence someone as a punishment or rebuke (see Titus 1:13-14, I Peter 2:15; Matt. 22:12). Paul does not speak of such silence in I Timothy 2.

In this passage Paul employs the noun, hesechig, which means "I am silent" "I rest" or "I cease from labor." Silence might or might not have anything to do with not speaking. Consequently, when Paul commands that women learn in silence, he is commanding them to be learners who respect and affirm those who teach them. The women have not been silenced out of punishment, but silenced out of conviction that their teachers are worthy of respect.

I Corinthians 11:2-16

The reason Paul gives in I Timothy 2:3-14 are developed in I Cor. 11:

2-16. In this passage, Paul discusses the freedom that the Corinthian women felt they had over and against the order that God has ordained and expressed in nature. Paul argues that freedom in Christ does not overturn that order and that particular expression of it in Corinth and the Apostolic age. He begins his argument about the role and relationship of men and women by placing it in the hierarchy of headships: "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (v. 3).

This chain of subordination with its implication is apparently given to help the objection some bring to the headship of man in reference to woman. Just as Christ is not a second-class person or deity because the Father is His head, so the woman is not a second class person or human being because man is her head. The argument is now advanced in verses 8-10 on the grounds of the order for the headship of men in reference to woman. "For man does not originate from (EK) woman, but woman from (Ἐκ) man" (verses 8 and 9). Here, the apostle cites the order of creation explicit in Genesis 2:18-25 and the reason for woman's creation: to be a helper to man (verse 18); to establish and define the divinely determined role relationship. To put it in a composite of words from Genesis and I Corinthians, man was not created to help and be the helper of women but woman was created to help and be the helper of man. This order is not based on the fall and curse (Genesis 3:16), but on the order of God's creation.³⁷ Paul concludes this section by saying that this order ought to be in evidence "because of the angels," apparently referring to the supernatural beings who desire to see God's order preserved and God's glory displayed.

The position taken by Paul in this passage is in accord with established

custom in the church of God and that it has to do with traditions handed on by Him from the early church to the present churches. Tradition (Pardosis) signifies both doctrine (I Cor. 11:23; 15:1; Romans 6:14) and practical, rules of living especially in 2 Thess. 2:15 and 3:6.

St. Paul gives foremost position in his discussion to the head (cephale) concept. The origin of this concept has not been determined. In the Old Testament and in the Septuagint³⁸ cephale always implies "a plurality or an organism," but not in this Corinthians passage. Gnosticism emphasizes in the cephale concept the idea of "fundamental rule over the body" and of oneness with the body. This is close to what Paul evidently wants to express, namely that for man, woman and Christ there is something which has been ordained over them, something which either has been established in Creation or which in either case expresses the will of God.³⁹ In order to understand Paul, it must be borne in mind that the relationship between the sexes always has its center in marriage. In all his pronouncements concerning the position of women, Paul's central concern is for the preservation and protection of marriage. In Corinth, both marriage and church regulation seem to have been called into question.

Concerning the "veil," references to contemporary use of it and parallel passage from the history of religions do not serve to clarify greatly these striking directives given by St. Paul. Evidence is abundant for use of the veil as an expression of sorrow and a mark of the bride. In Judaism men prayed with covered head, but women laid off the veil in the synogogue. In paganism, the Romans covered themselves when sacrificing, while the Greeks, also Greek women did not. All this, however, casts little light upon this passage. If the thought suggests itself that Paul fashioned his directives after Jewish customs of worship it must be noted that he in fact

advocated customs which were directly contrary to Jewish customs, and that furthermore, prophesying was not involved in Jewish customs of worship, therefore, did not serve as the basis and motive for Paul's directive.⁴⁰

Of what significance could these customs have been for the Christian congregations?

The considerations and explanation advanced by Paul in this passage appear strange to people of modern times, not only because they are unable to determine with finality the custom to which Paul refers but also because the people of Paul's day felt much more keenly than do people of today that the outward demeanor of a person is an expression of his inner life, specifically, of his religious convictions and moral attitude. The reference to nature in verse 14 and custom in verse 16 should serve to strengthen the line of connection between the enunciated principle concerning the position of women on the one hand, and the regulation concerning the use of head covering on the other hand.

The legitimacy of connecting the theological pronouncements concerning the position of women with the custom of demanding the wearing of a veil can be attacked; and furthermore, since earliest times this custom was actually not adopted by the churches. However, the basic principle concerning the position assigned to women in creation finds expression throughout the New Testament as well as here and was maintained by the church throughout history.⁴¹

I Corinthians 14:33^b-38

First Corinthians 14:33^b-38 is the section which deals with the silence of women in the church, specifically within the worship services. At first glance the apostle's presumption that women will pray and prophesy (I Cor.11:5) appears to be in contradiction to his command for silence in this section.

Therefore, the question is what Paul means by requiring the silence of women in the church.

Since Chapters 11 through 16 of the I Corinthians book have to do with the regulation of the worship service, they do not demand that women be silent at all times. The silence mandated in this section does not preclude women from praying and prophesying apart from the worship service. It is not intimating that women may not participate in the public singing of the congregation or in the spoken prayers. Neither does the silence of women mean that women cannot give instruction outside the regular worship services.

It should be noted in this connection that Paul uses the Greek word (laleo) for speaking in I Cor. 14:34, which frequently means "to preach" in the New Testament and not (lego) which is a more general term for any kind of speaking.

The command to keep silent is a command not to take charge of the public worship service. The New English Bible (NEB) translates this section in this way: "Women should not address the meeting. They have no license to speak... it is a shocking thing that a woman should address the congregation." The Living Bible paraphrases that idea with "They are not to participate in the discussion."

At Corinth there might have been something of a dialogue sermon with various persons or officers of the congregations commenting on the sermon. Paul's prohibition is against the women's participation in this kind of activity. That Paul is forbidding women from the minor role of theological discussion in the church service seems to be the case from these words, "If there is anything they desire to know let them ask their husbands at home." But one might ask about single women or widows; who should they ask? And what of the husband who does not know the answer? Does Paul assume that every husband can

answer all of his wife's questions? To such particular questions the best answer is simply that Paul was not writing an exhaustive manual for inquiring women, but rather addressing a specific problem.

Most of the rules laid down in this passage have been properly understood by Christians for what they were: the use of Jewish liturgical practices to meet a particular situation. Some interpreters have tried to suggest that these verses should be separated from their surroundings because they speak in the language of absolute prohibition. This language belongs more to the tradition of household ethical codes.

In this section, the Apostle Paul offers the following reasons in refusing women permission to exercise leadership roles in the congregation.

1. It is not permitted by what he calls "the law," verse 34^b. Though not referring necessarily to the Ten Commandments, Paul is referring to the Torah, the entire written revelation of God, the Scripture. First Timothy 2:14, is a further application of what Paul calls "the Law" pointing to the account continued in the written revelation of the creation of Adam and Eve and their subsequent fall into sin.

2. He refers to his own apostolic office: "Did God's Word come from you? Or were you the only ones to whom it came?" (v. 36). Obviously, this is not a question asked for information, but a rhetorical question. Both Paul and the Corinthians knew where the authoritative Word of God originated. God has spoken through His apostle Paul.

3. He appeals to the Holy Spirit: "If anyone thinks he speaks for God or has the Spirit, he should know that what I write you is what the Lord orders (v. 37). If certain people in Corinthian congregation claimed to have some type of unique inspiration of the Spirit, then, with their gift of the Spirit, they should also have recognized that Paul is inspired

by the Holy Spirit so that he knows the mind of God (I Cor. 2:11-16).

4. Paul calls upon Jesus: "What I write you is what the Lord orders" (v. 37^b). The Greek word eutole (order, command) has the force of a divine decree that threatens punishment to all those who break it.

The current mores of the Greek culture did allow women to lead in worship. First Corinthians is written to a thoroughly Gentile congregation. It was the Jews and not Gentiles that forbade women to participate in the worship service. The pagan cults in Canaan from the time of the Jewish invasion had female gods and priestesses. Aphrodite, a Hellenistic form of the Pheonician sex deity Astarte, was found in Corinth. Therefore, Paul could hardly just be expressing custom in not letting women participate in church leadership, since custom, not only allowed Gentile women to participate, but encouraged them to lead in the worship. Since Paul in I Cor. 8 speaks of the Christian's relationship to idols, it is safe to assume that the desire of women to participate in church leadership in the Corinthian congregation is directly traceable to the pagan influence of the priesthood of the temple of Aphrodite.

In verse 38, Paul threatens excommunication to those who favor giving women the leadership role in the congregation: "If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized" (verse 38). Whether this is interpreted to mean that Paul is cutting him off from the congregation or that God is no longer recognizing such an individual as a Christian is not clear.

Galatians 3:28-29

Galatians 3:25-29 asserts that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Some scholars take this to be an allusion to an

early baptismal formula (cf. I Cor. 12:12ff; and Col. 3 ff). Commenting on this, Scroggs says:

To enter the Christian community thus meant to join a society in which male-female roles and valuation based on such roles had been discarded. The community was powerless to alter patterns interrelationships were to be based on this affirmation of equality.⁴²

Salvation does not alter the ordinance of creation; rather it redeems it. In Christ man and woman are redeemed from false stereotypes, stereotypes which inhibit their true relationship. Thus redeemed, they are enabled to become what God intended them to be when He created them in His image, a fellowship of male and female. The restoration of this true fellowship of the sexes is one of the ways to "put off the old man and put on the new man who is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Christ"(Col. 3:10).⁴³

This passage of Gal. 3:28-29, provides the framework within which any and all differences or relationships must be seen and considered. Here the apostle Paul, recognizing the difference between Jew and Greek and male and female, affirms that they are all brought into one new being in Christ Jesus so that they are all one with His word, He removes any ethnic, national, racial, social, or sexual characteristic as determinative of one's spiritual standing in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ and nothing else brings one into spiritual unity with Christ and into equality with one another.

From the point of view of these four key passages, it is clear that the apostle Paul laid down a universally normative regulation that prohibits women from ruling and teaching men in the church. These passages are not illustrations but commands, with the exception of Gal. 3:28-29 in which Paul speaks of equality of male and female in Christ.

The exclusion of women from teaching and ruling office and functions of the church is I Timothy 2:11-15 and I Corinthians 14:33^b-38 must not be construed as all the New Testament evidence on the rôle of women in the church. Several passages indicate that women are involved in diaconal tasks and appropriate teaching situations. A sampling of those activities may be seen in the following: Older women are called upon to teach and train younger women concerning their responsibilities to their husbands and children (Titus 2:3-5). Wives are referred to in the midst of the description of male deacons (I Tim. 3:11); Phoebe is designated "a servant (diakonon) of the church which is at Cenchrea." (Romans 16:1). Paul refers in I Corinthians to women praying or prophesying (I Cor. 11:5); and Priscilla and Aquila that inseparable husband and wife team, in a discreet and private meeting, expound to Appollos, "The way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26).

The second point to be noted is that I Corinthians 11:2-16 seems to allow women to pray and prophesy aloud and I Corinthians 14:33^b-38 seems to command complete silence on the part of women in the church. How can these passages be reconciled?

Some suggest that I Corinthians 14:33^b-38 is a secondary insertion which was not written by Paul. The major reason for their argument is that it interrupts the thought of Chapter 14 which is concerned with the exercise of Spiritual gifts, and that it supposedly contradicts I Corinthians 11:2-16 in which Paul, it is said, clearly accepts without question the right of women to lead in worship.⁴⁵ Those who affirm I Corinthians 14:33^b-38 at the expense of I Corinthian 11:2-16 do not disregard the entire passage. Their argument is exemplified by the following quote from John Calvin:

But it seems to be unnecessary for Paul to forbid a woman to prophesy bare-headed, since in I Tim. 2:12 he debars women from speaking the church altogether. . . . For when Paul takes them

to task because they were prophesying bare-headed, he is not giving them permission, however, to prophesy in any other way whatever, but rather is delaying the answer of that fault to another passage.⁴⁶

Supporting this argument, George Gunter says:

As St. Paul does not concern himself with this question (whether women may pray or prophesy) at all in I Corinthians 11, we do not know whether in this case the praying and prophesying by women in church at Corinth is permitted or disapproved in principle... but in I Cor. 14:33^b-38 a thorough discussion and an enunciation of the principle occurs. . . while he merely puts "glossololia". Within proper bounds, St. Paul absolutely forbids women to speak at all.⁴⁷

This line of reasoning misses the emphasis of I Corinthians 11:2-16 which is behavior when praying and prophesying. It is not right to suggest that in chapter 11 Paul gives rules for a practice which he will subsequently condemn.

A third point to note in the passages is that both the covering and the silence are cultural expressions which no longer apply. But in I Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul cites the way in which God created man and woman as the basis of the order God established between them; this basis is an unchangeable and irreversible historical fact. In I Corinthians 14:33^b-38, the foundation of his argument is the law which imposed silence on the women in the synagogues as a sign of their subjection. Paul's command for women to ask at home may be intended to give them opportunity and encouragement to get answers to their questions and this was intended for the whole church at Corinth.

So far, Paul's negative attitude toward women has been clear. In attempting to assess his positive attitude one must not make the distinction between those Pauline letters which have something significant to say about women. These are Romans; I Corinthians, Galatians, and to a much lesser extent, I Thessalonians, Ephesians and Colossians. In these epistles,

Paul teaches that women are as free as men. He treats them as co-workers in the spreading of the Gospel, and refers to them as apostles, deacons and rulers. In Romans 5:12-14 and I Corinthians 15:21-22, Paul refers to the first sin in Eden. In doing so, he attributes the sin to Adam, only to balance sin by a single man with redemption by Christ. This is understandable since Adam in the Genesis story is the "first" man. However, such an explanation is quite different from much of the interpretation prevalent just before and during Paul's time, which made not Adam, but Eve the source of sin and death. It is also different from I Timothy 2:14, where it was said: "It was not Adam who was led astray but the woman who was led astray and fell into sin." Paul is clearly aware of Eve's having been seduced by the serpent (2 Cor. 11:3), but does not make her the source of sin and death; that responsibility he lays on Adam.⁵⁰ It is clear, therefore, that Paul's attitude toward women was partly positive and partly on the borderline between positive and negative.

Mindful of these positive and negative declarations of St. Paul, it is clear that one need to take into account specific directives in the Scriptures concerning the status of women in the church as well as their theological foundation. That theological foundation which dares not to be distorted or ignored in attitude or action is that both men and women have been created in the image of God (Genesis, chapter 1 and 2).⁵¹ The concept of Creation which is God's work and will as revealed in the creation of humankind is critical for dealing Scripturally with the issue of male and female identities. Also of great importance is the concept of new creation, God's work and will as revealed in redemption. Two more formal terms have come into general theological usage to indicate these realities: The order of creation and the order of redemption.

The Order of Creation

This refers to the particular position which by the will of God, any created object occupies in relation to others. God has given to that which has been created a certain definite order which, because it has been created by Him, is the expression of His immutable will. This relationship belongs to the very structure of created existence.⁵²

The book of Genesis teaches that woman is a special creation of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18-24). Although in Genesis 1 and 2 there are two accounts of the creation of mankind, they both express this truth. Some scholars have argued that man was created in God's image and woman in man's image so that the image of God in woman is a reflected image. Others have suggested that since God reveals Himself as male (the Father and Son), woman must be excluded from participation in the image. There is no basis here for suggesting a superiority-inferiority relationship. The Lutheran theological tradition has identified the imago Dei in the narrow sense with the original righteousness that all mankind, male and female enjoyed.⁵³ Luther wrote: "The image of God is this: that Adam had it in his being and he not only knew God and believed that He was good, but that he also lived in a life that was wholly Godly, that is, he was without the fear of death of any other danger, and was content with God's favor."⁵⁴ The New Testament continues to uphold this teaching of equality of the image of God in both sexes (I Cor. 11:7; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24). This equality is a spiritual equality of man and woman before God and it does not preclude a distinction in identities between man and woman.

The Order of Redemption

The order of Redemption refers to the relationship of the redeemed to God and to each other in the new creation established by Him in Jesus

Christ (Gal. 6:15, 2 Cor. 5:17). This new creation constitutes participation in a new existence, in the new world that has come in Christ. It is a relationship determined by grace.

These two terms "order of creation" and "order of redemption" were popularized by Emil Brunner in his work, The Divine Imperative.⁵⁵ However, the concepts which these terms denote are of long standing importance in the Lutheran theological tradition. Luther, for example, spoke of the social relationship, such as marriage and family, people, state, and economy in which everyone finds himself, including the Christian, and in which he is subject to the commandments which God gave as Creator to all people. Husband and wife, parents and children have their own respective position in relation to each other.⁵⁶

Women in the Early Church: The Testimony of the Book of Acts

When Jesus left the earth to return to heaven he did not intend for His message or mission to be forgotten or finished. He commissioned His band of followers to go throughout all the world to tell the Good News, and to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). No longer was God's message to be restricted to the Jews, it was to be extended to all people.

The book of Acts records the beginning of the church (the organization of Jesus' followers called "those of the Way," "Brethern", the Saints, "Christians"), the spread of the Christian message and the work of particular preachers, evangelists and leaders. The epistles shed even more light on the life of the early Christians, the joys and problems within the church, and persecution and false teachings, and exhort them to live in Christ's Way no matter what happens in the world around them. During this period, women had an important part in the founding of the church, a phase of the

activity which is often overlooked.

Immediately after Christ's ascension, women gathered with the apostles and disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem in order to pray with them.⁵⁷ In the very first weeks of the history of the church there were not many women converts, but that condition did not last long. After the death of Ananias and Sappira, more believers were added to the Lord in multitudes, both men and women, and at the time of the first scattering, women were mentioned as particular objects of the persecution.⁵⁸

When the Gospel reached Samaria, again the record mentions the women who believed it and who were baptized along with men. When the Christian message went to Europe, women again are prominent in the record. The first European convert was a woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira. Among the women who gathered with Lydia at her house and who were converted in the early days of the mission in Philippi were Enodia and Syntyche (Philippian 4:2).⁵⁹ Harnack⁶⁰ and Vincent⁶¹ both suggest that two congregations met in their respective houses. Whatever was their position in the Philippian church, they held a place of honor and usefulness, perhaps even in evangelistic work, since they are said to have wrestled together with Paul in the Gospel.⁶² Both in Thessalonica and Berea, there were honorable women among those who believed (Acts 17:4-12), who were probably reached with the Gospel simply because the social position of women was higher and more free in Macedonia than in most parts of the civilized world. In Athens one woman, Damaris, is mentioned among the few converts whom Paul had in that city (Acts 17:34). It is in the story of the work at this period that Priscilla is introduced. Priscilla is mentioned along with her husband six times in the New Testament and in four of these instances

her name stands first. Her ability to instruct the cultured Greek Apollos is probably only one of the many ways in which she served with the church, for she could hardly be excluded from the rank of teacher, although whether she exercised a public teaching ministry is an unanswerable question.⁶³

Before describing the ministry of women in the early church, it is necessary to consider the antecedents of this ministry in the New Testament. Together with limitations which prevented women from preaching and assuming authority over men in assemblies there is good evidence for an exercise of women's ministry in the New Testament, particularly in Paul's epistles.

In Romans 12:3-8, Paul listed the different categories of ministries that were utilized with the New Testament church as:

- Prophesying = inspired speaking
- Ministering = serving, working
- Teaching = Instructing, guiding, causing to understand.
- Exhorting = Encouraging, comforting, advising.
- Giving = Sharing materially
- Ruling = Standing before, being set over another as
organizer, administrator or elder.
- Showing mercy = Loving kindness, having compassion.

In Ephesians 4:6-16, Paul listed in addition to those mentioned above:

- Apostles = One sent forth, probably on a specific mission.
- Evangelist = A messenger of the Good News.
- Pastors,
Teachers = A shepherd who guides and feeds the flock, such
as an elder.

In I Corinthians 12:28-30, Paul mentions also miracles, gifts of healing and tongues as being special ministries.⁶⁴

The responsibilities which involved women in the roles of leadership and serving in the early church are as follows:

Deaconesses (Servant, helper): Some believe that this was a specific office in the early church. Others hold that it is used in Romans 16:1 as a general term indicating a servant. If this was an office, it is not known for certain what the duties were but it would probably have involved some type of service to the members of the church. Phoebe was called a deaconess by Paul (Romans 16:1). She was to be received by the church in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints (I Thess. 5:12-13). Paul told the people to help her with whatever she needed and called her a helper. Prostatis in verse two is not the same word that is used for deaconess in verse one (diakonos). The feminine form of the word as used in verse two was often used to refer to a patroness. Perhaps she had acted as a champion for the right of Paul or others, or perhaps she was Paul's patroness who helped him financially (Luke 8:1-3).⁶⁵

Apostle (One sent forth): Junias was referred to in Romans 16:7 as Paul's kinsman (one of the same race), fellow prisoner, an apostle, and one who had become a Christian before Paul had. The scholars differ as to whether Junias was a man or woman. Even the virulently misogynist fourth century bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom noted: "Oh, how great is the devotion of this woman that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of the apostle."⁶⁶ Whatever the case, Junias must have been quite an active Christian and was in prison for a time because of his or her faith.

Teacher (One who instructs another): Priscilla was both a supportive wife and a very active member of the church. She and her husband

were instrumental in starting the churches at Corinth, Ephesus and probably Rome. They had a church meeting in their home in Rome (Romans 16:5). She and Aquila were referred to by Paul as his fellow workers (Romans 16:3), a term which he also applied to Timothy (Romans 16:21) and Luke (Philemon 1:24). Paul mentioned that they both had risked their lives for him and should be thanked by all the churches (Roman 16:4). Paul in his epistles to Timothy did not permit a woman to teach or exercise supreme authority over a man, but Priscilla taught the great Apollos the Gospel (Acts 18:26). Priscilla's teaching the Gospel along with her husband Aquilla to the brilliant preacher Apollos reveals something of the range of women's involvement in early Christianity (Acts 18:24-26).

John Chrysostom AD 337-407, who often spoke very negatively about women, was clearly very impressed with Priscilla and the fact that she was greeted by Paul first, before her husband Aquila. He referred to the significance of this fact when preaching on the second letter of Timothy, (2 Tim. 4:19). He wrote his homilies on the topic and delivered them with a few days of each other. A brief excerpt follows:

It is worth examining Paul's motive, when he greets them, for putting Priscilla before her husband. Indeed, he did not say salute Aquila and Priscilla, but rather salute Priscilla and Aquilla (Rom. 16:3). He did not do so without reason. The wife must have had, I think, greater piety than her husband. This is not a simple conjecture; its confirmation is evident in the acts. Apollos was an eloquent man, well versed in Scripture, but he knew only the baptism of John, this woman took him, instructed him in the way of God and made of him an accomplished teacher.⁶⁷

Prophetess (Inspired spokeswoman): In his sermon on Pentecost, Peter said that women would be prophesying when the Holy Spirit came, as well as quoting Joel in Acts 2:7. According to Paul's writings it is evident that women of the church prayed and prophesied (I Cor. 11:15), Phillip's

four daughters were prophetesses (Acts 21:9).

Woman as a Disciple: In the early church, there was a woman called a disciple (Mathetria) the feminine form of (Mathetes), the Greek word for disciple. Could she perhaps have been one of the "seventy-two" sent out by Jesus in Luke 10:1-12? Again a woman is centrally involved in a resurrection story. "At Jaffa there was a woman disciple called Tabith or Dorcas in Greek who never tired of doing good or giving in charity. But the time came when she got ill and died" (Acts 9:36-42).

Women Deacons: Already in the lifetime of Paul, AD 63, the office of deacon was established (Ph. 1:1). Women as well as men served in this "ordained" office. Later when Paul's first epistle to Timothy was written men and women deacons were both required to have parallel qualities:

Deacons likewise must be serious, not double tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for gain; they must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first, then if they prove themselves blameless let them serve as deacons (I Timothy 3:8).

Romans 16:1-2 calls Phoebe a deacon who helped many people including Paul himself and also in John 12:1-2. In Luke 10:40, Martha is called a deacon.

Although the status of women in the Christian church was not very clear in the first generation of the church, but there is evidence of the ordination of deaconess in the fourth century in the East.⁶⁸ Also, in the Apostolic constitutions, the prayers are given for the ordination of a bishop, then a priest, then a deacon, a deaconess, a sub-deacon, and a lector, followed by regulations concerning widows and virgins. Precisely the same terms, prayers, and action (laying on of hands) were used for the deaconess as for the bishop, priest, and deacon. If these

were "sacramentally" ordained, so was the deaconess:

Concerning a deaconess, [Bartholomew make this constitution: O bishop, thou shalt lay hands upon her in the presence of the presbytery, and of the deacons and shalt say: O eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of man and woman who didst replenish with the Spirit of Miriam, and Deborah and Anna and Hulder. . . .do thou now also upon this thy servant, who is to be ordained to the office of a woman deacon and grant her thy Holy Spirit and cleanse her from all filthiness of flesh and Spirit that she may worthily discharge the work which is committed to her to thy glory, and the praise of thy Christ, with whom glory and adoration be to thee and the Holy Spirit for ever, Amen.⁶⁹

It is now possible to draw certain conclusions concerning the role and place of women in the early church. Women were not merely converts to Christianity in its earliest phase, but also workers in the spread of Christianity. Their role was important, but it was not a leading one, which belonged to men. The spread of Christianity took place not only because they worked to promote it. They spread the Gospel; that is, they were evangelists. As for the public ministry, the practice of the Early church was that, women should keep silent in the church, and this practice continued without much variation throughout the first three centuries. Although the right for them to prophesy in private was exercised, it was excluded from the public gatherings of the church.

The early church saw the emergence of both men and women as deacons (Acts 16:15). The regulations concerning women in the writings of Paul, Clement, Tertullian and Cyprian indicate that they played an active part in the church throughout the period. Paul's use of the masculine term diakonos for Phoebe not only suggests the existence of an order of women deacons, but also that women were included in the same order as male deacons. This explanation makes the best sense of the injunction to women in I Timothy 3:11 which occurs in a discussion of the qualities required

in deacons. "The women likewise must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things." The nature of the work of the deacon is not clearly defined; but the etymological link between diakonos and the verb diakoneo, to serve, implies some form of service, which judging from the activity of the seven in Acts 6 and that of Tabitha and Lydia, may have been of a strong practical character. There is no doubt that the church is very positive regarding a diaconato in which Phoebe, the only woman called a diaconess in the New Testament, must have had a place of leadership in the early church at Cenchrea, however, it does not seem advisable to conclude that this leadership was anything more than acting as a patroness of the church. It cannot be proved that it included rulership nor is it proof that an official female diaconate existed in those days.

CHAPTER III
THE QUESTION OF THE ROLE AND PLACE OF WOMEN
IN THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN TANZANIA MBULU
SYNOD

An Historical Overview

Cultural Attitudes

Much of the cultural response to women still depends on a strain of fundamentalistic Biblical interpretation within large segments of the population. All African societies are not alike. They vary in their socio-political organization and cultural practice. However, it can be safely affirmed that as far as women are concerned, cultural attitudes are very similar. Traditional African societies are basically male centered. The position of the woman is on the whole subordinate to that of the man.

On the basis of marriage and motherhood, the woman derives respect and social status from her husband. The marriage is of primary importance to her and the prime interest of parents is to ensure that their daughter gets married. In this respect, it can be stated that in traditional African societies a "woman is because she is married." However, being a wife is only a first step towards the ultimate goal which is to ensure the continuity of clan or lineage, her own or her husband's depending on whether the society is matrilineal or patrilineal. A childless woman is believed to be under a curse in African societies. A man will marry another woman to bear him children if the first one proves to be barren.

The sister of a barren wife may be given in marriage to the husband to assume the wife's procreative responsibilities.

It can be said that in practically all traditional African societies, a woman remains an eternal minor. She is usually required to have a male guardian. In a patrilineal society this will be the father until the girl becomes married, and lives under her husband's protection. In matrilineal society, the lineage head or the woman's maternal uncle or older brother will be responsible for her. Even when she becomes married she will continue to enjoy the support and protection of the male members of her maternal family. The husband's responsibility is very limited. If she is not married, a kinsman will be her guardian. With only few exceptions, the position of women in traditional African societies is a subordinate one and her place is first and foremost in the home. In the author's view, there are positive values that can be strengthened and built upon in search for a whole and integrated community.

African Creation Myths

Most people are familiar with the Biblical creation myths, but very few know African Creation stories. It is true that only the Genesis creation stories are valid, and this is why some other stories are not seen to have any importance.

Myths in general, and creation myths in particular, are not limited to one people. Or rather, one peoples mythology cannot be considered more valid than another's insofar as each in its own way tries to understand its existence. For instance, the Israelites understand well the Genesis Creation accounts because it is God's history and relationship to them and to the community as a whole. They cannot be substituted to other people's stories.

African creation myths are built upon the concept of MUNTU. Muntu is not simply a word that means "person" but it is a concept which includes both the physical and spiritual persons in community. A Muntu is not possible without Bantu (persons or peoples) in a community or society.

The point of mentioning African Creation myths is to see the role and place given to women in all known African creation stories. In spite of the negative picture, traditional African creation myths may portray regarding the role and position of women, there are also positive values that can be strengthened and built up in searching for a whole and integrated community. African societies are community centered. Everything is organized in view of the cohesion of the group. As was mentioned above, Muntu is not possible without Bantu. In this context, the African woman enjoys a great measure of protection, a protection which is lacking in modern societies. With the introduction of Western values, or non-values, particularly individualism, the African woman becomes the property of an individual man and wholly subordinate to him. Formerly, African woman did not change her maiden name after marriage. But with the introduction of western culture, the woman is made to adopt her husband's identity and name and dowry system which had no commercial value, but which brought together two households, two clans or even two ethnic groups, has been distorted. Therefore, the African mythology of creation is in danger.

Women's Place on Congregational and Synodical Level

Since the E.L.C.T.--Mbulu Synod is a New Testament church, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the question of the role and place of women on congregation and synodical level from Biblical perspectives.

As was noted before, Jesus did not establish an ecclesiastical structure during His personal ministry on earth. It was only after the resurrection and ascension that the church began to wrestle with such questions, and it is still wrestling with them today.

Eldership and deaconate are religious offices practiced both in the Old Testament and New Testament time. They are among the Biblical foundation for the Christian ministry today.

To understand the character of Jesus' own ministry and to comprehend the meaning of the forms of ministry done with women in the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod it is necessary to have some knowledge of the forms of these religious offices or positions portrayed in the Old Testament.

Eldership in the Old Testament

The office of the Elder in Israel, as in other ancient near Eastern societies, was based upon the authority of age, and wisdom which presumably accompanied it. The Hebrew word for elder, Zagen literally meant "One who wore a beard." During the period of settlement, elders were chiefs of clans and heads of families. Somewhat later they formed the collective governing bodies of the towns. It was the elders, not the priests, who anointed David King (I Sam. 16:1-13). Elders continued to play an important role during the exile and in the Persian and Greek periods. Elders are portrayed in the Old Testament as representing the people before God at important moments in the history of Israel, for example at the Exodus and ratification of the Covenant at Sinai. The Elders of Israel were the forerunners of the elders of the synagogue. Synagogue elders were installed in office by prayers and the imposition of hands. They were given seats of honor in the synagogue and permitted to interpret the Torah.¹

In the synagogue tradition, there were two types of religious office. That of elders was held on the basis of age and patriarchal status within the community. Because of its patriarchal nature, this office was closed to women. The office of Rabbi, "teacher," which was religiously the more, important, was based upon learning and competence, wisdom, and knowledge. Theoretically it was open to women, although its exercise was in practice closed to women by contemporary social custom and by restriction on their access to the requisite education.²

Eldership in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the Greek word presbyteros denotes an older person, an elder. Despite the English derivative, it does not mean priest. In Judaism at the time of Jesus, every synagogue was governed by a council of elders called gerousia (in Greek). Besides administration, an important function of the Jewish elders was the preservation and interpretation of religious tradition. Officials, such as the leader of a village, were also called elders in the contemporary Mediterranean world. The Christian institution of the elders, however, derived primarily from the synagogue office. In the church of Jerusalem there were elders who associated with the apostles as the ruling authorities of the church (Acts 16:4-5). It was these elders who received the collection of aid sent by the church of Antioch. They were consulted on religious questions and participated with the apostles in official decisions (Acts 15:6-7). James and the elders received the report of the returning missionary Paul (Acts 21:18).

The book of Acts witnesses the appointment of elders in cities such as Ephesus. The elders were charged with the welfare of the congregation. They were to nurture, guard, teach, build up, and be examples to the

flock (I Peter 5:1-3; Eph. 4:1-12). In 2 Timothy 2:2; Timothy is charged to entrust leadership to qualified man who in turn have to teach others. These men are not just congregational members, but have formal responsibility for passing on correct teaching which is to be lived out in the lives of Christian (2 Tim. 1:13-14; 3:10-12). Such men were elders who directed the life and work of the church. Paul states that the elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor (possibly referring to wages) especially those whose work is preaching and teaching (I Tim. 5:1f).

In Titus 1:5-9, the appointment of elders was further delegated from Paul to Titus. This passage which lists the qualifications for the office(s) of presbyter and bishop is ambiguous as to whether one or two distinct offices are being described. It is probable that at this time what had originally been two distinct offices were in the process of merging into one and retained the title of bishop. Then, as the churches grew even longer, when the bishop was no longer able to manage all the affairs and preside over all the worship of his diocese by himself, some of his functions were delegated to lower clergy, to deacons in the first century and to other officials who took the title, but not to the mode of office of presbyters in the second century.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews calls upon his readers to be mindful of those who rule over them (Hebrews 13:7) and to obey those who rule over their souls, since they must give account (Hebrew 13:17). Paul charged the elders to watch over the sheep which God had placed in their charge. The author to the Hebrews charged the sheep to obey and noted that the shepherds are accountable for them.³

These texts from the letters to Timothy and Hebrews supplement what was seen in Acts and provide a picture of the elders as men who are involved in the direction of the congregations, and who are charged particularly with teaching, ensuring that the Word of God is faithfully taught and directing the outworking of the message in the life of the church. These tasks involve distinctive leadership and authority, extending to formal actions to rid the flock of the savage wolves whom the apostle warned would rise up within the flock (Acts 20:29). It is sufficient to see that the tasks are of instruction, shepherding, and exercising authority over men which Paul reserved to men in (I Timothy 2:1-14). The teachings of I Timothy 2 and the qualifications of I Timothy 3 restrict the office of the elders to men only.⁴

From this discovery the writer concludes that because of its patriarchal nature, the office of elder was closed to women in the Old Testament; neither was it open to women during New Testament times. That is why in Mbulu Synod, women are excluded from the office of eldership. It is the office of deacons which is still open to women in the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod. At this point, the writer sees the importance of study, meaning of the term "Deacon" and its practice in the New Testament.

Deacon in the New Testament

In the New Testament, one Greek word diakonia denotes service, and is synonymous with ministry. The term diakonos means servant, one who serves. The basic ministry of service is the following of Jesus, becoming his disciple (John 12:26).⁵ It can be used to describe the activity of one who serves the needs of another (Mark 9:35; 10:43). It can also describe one who represents or acts on behalf of another as his servant or minister (Acts 6; Eph. 3:7). The sense and idea of serving

others can come together in service to Christ as with the deacons of Act 6 who ministered to the need of the widows as representatives of the church. The term "deacon" points both to the actual function in serving and ministering to others and to serving Christ. The deacons of Acts 6 possessed a certain amount of authority in their distribution of food.⁶ A question arises, however, whether in this instance the authority is of a sort which given to women, violates the restrictions upon them as set by Paul in I Timothy 2:11ff. He seems to have had in view teaching and discipline rather than serving through distribution of goods.

The second meaning of the term diakonia is more varied in its meaning than the others. In some polities the elders are concerned with spiritual oversight of the congregation and for the faithful teaching of the apostolic message, while the deacons are responsible for ministering to the physical needs of the congregation and the practical demonstration of Christian love. In such situations, the deacons, as other believers, may be involved in teaching in the sense of sharing the word, but are not involved in teaching in the sense of having primary responsibility to ensure the faithful passing on of the word and to correct or discipline where that does not occur.⁷ In other polities the deacons do share in the spiritual oversight of the flock and are differentiated from the pastor or elder more by training and by the fact that they are not fulltime servants and teachers in the church. In such cases, the activities of deacons overlap the activities of elders in the exercise of authority and even in teaching.⁸

A third meaning and basic use of the term deacon occurs in churches which ordain men as deacons as a first step to the eldership or priesthood. In such cases, the authority involved depends upon the definition of the office by the particular church.

Other meanings of the term deacon exist and some churches combine more than one of the above. The E.L.C.T.--Mbulu Synod has preferred the second of the three understanding, which is that of deacons being responsible for ministering to the physical needs of the congregation and the practical demonstration of Christian love. As with all believers, they are involved in teaching in the sense of sharing the word, but are not involved in leadership. With this understanding of the office and practice of deacon in the New Testament, therefore, there is no violation of Biblical restrictions on authority if women serve as deacons in congregations. This fact helps to remove the problem of the Role and Place of women on the congregational level in the ELCT Mbulu Synod, since they are appointed as deaconesses. On synodical level, they are not members of Annual Assembly, since they are not appointed as church elders on the congregational level. In this case, the ELCT Mbulu Synod has taken a Biblical stand on matters concerning the Role and Place of women in the church for Paul taught that the office of the elder was restricted to men. The creational pattern of male headship in both home and church requires that women not exercise Spiritual oversight of the flock. They should not be in positions of authoritative teaching or exercising discipline over men. Paul did not make any appeal to cultural factors, such as to the relative lack of education, or to personality for women, or to the response which outsiders might have to women in such positions or to responsibility. The nature of his argument leaves virtually no room for modification of his conclusions concerning the above mentioned factors as a result of alterations in cultural situations.

While it should be clear that the office of elder is closed to women

in the E.L.C.T.--Mbulu Synod, the question rises as to what women can do on congregational and synodical levels apart from the position of being deaconesses. The modern pattern of women's work in the E.L.C.T.--Mbulu Synod is threefold:

There are, first, the great voluntary organizations of women in most of the congregations. The majority of these organizations are the channel through which many women give their service to the church. For many women, this is that part of the church which provides them with a real sense of Christian fellowship and the means whereby they learn more about their faith and how to live it. These organizations provide the means whereby, thousands of women, whose main pre-occupation is with their homes and families, can join with other women to use the small amount of their spare time in service for others. Some of these organizations raise large sums of money and hand them over to the church

authorities for expenditure. For instance, a certain women's group in Mugumu Parish, Serengeti, Mara region, because of its efforts and good management, enabled the congregation to buy a motorcycle for pastoral work. Therefore, the more vigorous the women's activities in a particular congregation the more an organizational group tends to be a witness for one who finds there Christian fellowship, worship and upbuilding of her faith.

Secondly, there are women who serve as full-time workers, who are usually paid and trained. This is the only part of the three-fold pattern with a long history in the Synod. By careful experiment over a period of years, the synod worked out a system of recruiting and training women at Wagma Lutheran Bible School, Mbulu, for work in parishes. Their

duties vary with the type of parish, and the degree of responsibility they are given depends on the minister and the parish council. The parish-worker combines an immense number of functions. Sunday School and youth work, Bible Study with women's groups, preparation for confirmation, home visiting, hospital visiting, religious education in schools--any or all of these tasks may fall to the parish worker. In a rather small parish she has to be a social worker and an evangelist, or she may find that she is mostly an administrative secretary to the pastor. In a very big parish by her training and experience, she is able to help both the all-round parish workers and the volunteers in village churches (Mitaa).

The third type of work of women in the ELCT--Mbulu Synod, consists of their growing participation in the management of the affairs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania as a whole. Here again, there is the issue of women and the ordained ministry. This is the latest part of the threefold pattern to emerge.

These are some of the primary roles performed today by women in the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod. The question is whether these are automatically open to women because they are not mentioned in the New Testament or whether each position is to be evaluated by the standard that women should not teach or exercise authority over men.

If I Timothy 2:12 does refer to the office of elders, the authority forbidden to women would not be authority in general, but the authority to rule the church, that is to exercise church discipline. If Paul is only forbidding eldership to women, other jobs in the church could be opened to women. One caution must be sounded concerning the opening of all other offices to women. In some cases, administrative offices,

boards of trustees, and even deacons may have assumed some of the duties of the minister or elder. In such cases, it would perhaps be better to re-allot those duties to the minister or elders, rather than refuse the jobs to women. This situation raises the question of church polity. Is there one form of church polity that is Biblical and that should be normative for the Christian church?⁹

There are no easy answers but the more church polity conforms to the Biblical picture, the easier it will be to see how Scripture applies and to find solutions for problems such as what women are allowed to do in the church. After all, men are not qualified by virtue of being men for the position of elders. Not all men are authorized to teach, or rule over others in the church. What if there is a situation in which there are no men qualified to be elders, but there is a woman who is trained and qualified: Can she be appointed to be an elder? This is one of the hypothetical questions raised about women participation in a mission area where work is still new.

It is most important in such a situation to affirm that God's rules cannot be accommodated to fit what appears to man to be an exceptional case. Nonetheless, it is presumptuous to assume that since God has chosen to rule and teach his church by men, He will always provide able men to perform those functions.

If the prohibitions of I Corinthians 14:33^b-38 and I Timothy 2:11-15 are understood as specifically concerned with the official instruction of the assembly and with the office of elder, then a wide range of activities in the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod are accessible to women, many of which have been open for quite a while. Only one other position of office needs special attention: Evangelist.

The noun Eungelistes occurs only in Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11 and II Timothy 4:5; the verb Eungelizo occurs frequently, and it is usually translated "preach" or "preach the gospel." Concerning those who evangelize, Susan T. Foh says that they are "angels, Jesus, John the Baptist, the twelve apostles, Paul, Philip, and Barnabus."¹⁰ In the New Testament, no woman is portrayed as evangelizing or preaching. This evidence is inconclusive, yet it suggests that the position of evangelist is not open to women. Consider Timothy as an example of an evangelist: here is a man who both teaches authoritatively and who has responsibility for the elders and the people of the church. He is told to "preach the Word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke and exhort, be unfailing in patience and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2). If such is the position of an evangelist, then it is closed to women. However, it is not clear whether Timothy's authority to teach and to discipline depends on his being an evangelist or on his close relationship with Paul or even on some other gift or office. Philip the evangelist who travelled as he preached the Good News, resembles the modern concept of the evangelist, a preacher who is not connected with a local church and who goes from town to town as an itinerant pastor-teacher. Philip was empowered to baptize (Acts 8:38) an act expressing the authority of the church.

The question is whether women can be evangelists. The Biblical data is scarce, but what there is, suggests a negative answer. There are two basic ways to conceive of the position of evangelist: as an elder not attached to a local congregation, or as a witness. We are all to witness to our Lord, so it seems that the former understanding is closer to the Biblical picture, if we consider who is to be evangelized.

The main function of the evangelist would be authoritative teaching or preaching, starting new churches, leading worship services and exercising church discipline.

To answer the question of women's participation on the congregational and synodical level in the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod, more basic questions concerning church polity, the format of worship and the duties of the laity must be raised and answered. For the Mbulu Synod does not waste the gifts of the laity as a whole, and as a result, it often misuses the clergy. To function properly, the Synod must employ the gifts of all members in all congregations.

The question must also, to a certain degree, be solved on the basis of what contemporary requirements demand. The fundamental point of view of the New Testament concerning the religious equality of women with men has by degree raised the social position of woman, and made her free to make a higher contribution also in the life of the church, a contribution she could not possibly have in the congregation of the early Christian church. But this question cannot be answered unless there is an understanding of what women are and what is their place in society. For there has been a revolutionary change in the place of women in society. Women not only live a very different life from that of their grandparents, but they think differently about themselves. Thousands of women expect the church to be a place where, free for a short period from the continuous demands of families which look to them for everything; they can find rest and refreshment for the soul, friendship and a simple outlet for their desire to help others.

One of the reports concerning the role and place of women in the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod summarized the activities of women in the following

words: "Serving meals at religious gatherings and social functions, touring as choirs, concert parties, entertainments and competition, organizing the Women's World Day of Prayer, etc."¹¹ The voice of a woman who is not caught up into the busy round of a vigorous congregation with more than half herself, once expressed: "We wonder whether the endless cups of tea which women do and are expected to prepare are the only or even the chief contribution which women have to make to the church."¹²

There is a large number of women who are Christians and members of our congregation but their share in the life of the church is limited by their feeling that their main work for Christ lies outside the actual walls of the church in society where they work. Often they feel that their situation is not understood in the church and they do not get from it the Spiritual nourishment which they know themselves to need.

Views of Women

Most women who were interviewed by the author said that they disagree with the position on the role of women held by the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod. They would like to see both men and women work together equally in all ministries. They want to follow the call of God and share their gifts and talents for the good of the church and the building of God's kingdom. They long for the new community in Christ which began at His resurrection and which has ever since been distorted through human sin and shortcomings. The factors of culture, custom, and tradition that exclude women from church ministry should be evaluated. The Bible verses that are used to prohibit women from leadership in the church should be studied and interpreted carefully.

In a conversation in April 1986, Miss Martha Matare, who is the Secretary for the Women's Department in the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod, voiced a demand for equal ecclesiastical rights and responsibilities for women. In support of her demand she said: "When the church has only men as leaders, church elders, etc., it is like unto a human being with only one eye. How can one expect such a church to grow and become something whole?"

According to this demand, it is clear that pagan women who find their way into the church, but then find the door of co-service barred to them, will turn about and offer their service where they are received with open arms.

Women in the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod are not interested in being second class citizens, either in a earthly organization or a heavenly city. They seek equal participation in church ministry, equal access to seminaries. Both in society and church, they are beginning to move out of men's shadows where they have usually done work for male superiors. This issue needs to be continually addressed.

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CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

As this study "The Role and Place of Women in the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod in the Light of the New Testament" stands, it is now time to ask "What light does the New Testament shed on the role and place of women in the E.L.C.T. Mbulu Synod?" An answer to this question is needed in order to systematize and draw certain conclusions concerning this study.

The author has come to understand that in the New Testament, there are not ministries of men and ministries of women. There are only ministries of Jesus in which men and women serve. In general, Christian ministry is portrayed as ministerial service. Apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors, deacons and elders--all serve the people of God, each with his or her own gift, for the building up of the Christian community in love. According to the New Testament, the exclusion of women from ecclesiastical ministry is in accord with neither the teaching nor practice of Jesus, nor with that of the first century church. The New Testament presents the call of Jesus as universally inclusive. It is not restricted by sex, marital status, social class, race, or nationality.

The exegesis of Paul's epistle has made it clear to the author that Paul is able to place women next to men in a manner totally unheard of in the Judaism of his time. He in no wise contests woman's position in the congregation, her participation in prayers, worship and learning, or her share in redemption. Nowhere does he invalidate Galatians 3:28. On the basis of religious and historical parallels, the author concludes that Paul's attitude and position with regard to the woman's question is far

removed from Judaism as it is from Greek emancipation endeavors. Paul never meant for women to remain at the beginning stage of growth as exemplified by women at Ephesus and Corinth. It seems to have been his design to have them mature as heirs according to God's promise.

First Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14:33^b-38 are important and complex passages. The injunction for women to be silent in I Corinthians 14:33^b-38 seems to contradict the idea in I Corinthians 11 that women were prophesying. This seems to run counter to other New Testament accounts of women prophesying as a mark of new age (Acts 2:17-18). From this point of view, there is no legitimate way one can separate prophesying, which women were doing in I Corinthians, chapter 11, from authoritative teaching and preaching. If women and men stand on equal footing in Christ, ecclesiastical equality certainly cannot be denied. If God has poured out his spirit on both the sons and daughters as mentioned above in the book of Acts, it will not help to erect a modern difference for women in the church. The Old distinctions and valuations based on sexuality do not count.

In this study, the author has come to learn that I Timothy 2:11-15 is the most difficult passage concerning the role and place of women in the church. From the author's point of view, the fundamental issue addressed in this passage is the false teaching which was plaguing the church in Ephesus. This false teaching and its teachers had women as a particular focus and encouraged them to radically violate appropriate and honorable behavior patterns for women. For those who oppose or limit the participation of women in preaching, teaching or exercising authority in the church today, this passage is the clearest and strongest Biblical text in support of their position.

The author has also learned that Paul fought hard for the right of Gentiles to have full equality in the church. To accept Gentiles into the church as second class citizens or to insist that one had to become a Jew in order to become an authentic Christian, denied the heart of the Gospel. But what the author is not sure of, is why Paul did not fight equally hard for the right of women in the church. Perhaps there was no movement in the early church to deny equal status in the church to women. Women were engaged in significant ministries in the church. They shared the common gift of the Holy Spirit, exercised the spiritual gifts that they had received for the benefit of the whole church, shared in the diaconate, engaged in pioneer evangelism and teaching, and took full responsibility for their rightful place in the church. Therefore, there was no need for Paul to defend what needed no defense. The danger for the church in Paul's day lay in the exact opposite direction from the church of today.

Concerning the relationship of Pauline literature to the material contained in the Gospels: according to the Gospels the attitude of Jesus toward women was essentially more liberal than was Paul's. In marked contrast with Judaism, the Gospel's record of Jesus contains no denial of rights to women and no intimation of their inferiority. Proof cannot be supplied from the New Testament or its times for the violation of the principles that women should be denied positions in the church. This fact must be upheld over and against all attempts to give a new interpretation to the passages in the First Corinthians and First Timothy. In its attitude toward the role and place of women in the church, the New Testament followed neither paganism, which had its priestesses, nor Judaism, which denied unto women the privilege of studying the Law. In

a manner peculiar to it, the New Testament assigned to women a position in the church which is in harmony both with the order of creation and with order of redemption. The relationship of man and woman in the church continued to be controversial after Jesus' death and resurrection. Some have joyfully received them, some have hated them, and some are confused about what to do with the role and place of women in the church today. This is a problem and cannot be ignored, for the women's question is becoming increasingly important in the whole church of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT).

Therefore, the author would rejoice to see Galatians 3:28 become a reality in action in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania--Mbulu Synod: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Thus, the E.L.C.T.--Mbulu Synod as the New Testament church, should heed the will of God and serve Him.

ENDNOTES

Chapter Two

¹ Alicia Fraig Fason, Women and Jesus, (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1973), p. 12.

² Ibid., p. 90.

³ Leonard Swidler, Biblical Affirmation of Women (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 75.

⁴ James B. Hurley, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective, (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), p. 70.

⁵ Ibid., p. 71.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 72-73.

⁷ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, The role of women in the Christian church. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), p. 8.

⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

¹¹ Swidler, p. 162.

¹² Ibid., p. 162.

¹³ Josephus. Against Opion 11.201 quoted in Charles Caldwell Rye in The Role of Women in the Christian Church, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), p. 163.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 164.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 164-165.

¹⁶ Fason, p. 11.

¹⁷ Colin Brown, New Testament Theology, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), pp. 1058-1059.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 1059.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 1059.

²⁰Migne Patrologia Latina, vol. 183, col. 1148, quoted in Leonard Swidler, Biblical Affirmation of Women (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 209.

²¹Ibid., pp. 210-211.

²²Aida Besancon Spencer, Beyond the Curse (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), p. 62.

²³Susan T. Foh, Women and the Word of God (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), pp. 92-93.

²⁴Swidler, p. 354.

²⁵Ibid., p. 354.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 350-355.

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²⁸Ibid., p. 111.

²⁹Ibid., p. 93.

³⁰George W. Knight, The Role Relationship of Men and Women in the New Testament Teaching (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), p. 17.

³¹Ibid., p. 18.

³²Ibid., p. 18.

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³⁴James B. Hurley, Man and Women in Biblical Perspective (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1981), p. 200.

³⁵Ibid., p. 201.

³⁶Station, pp. 131-132.

³⁷ Spencer, p. 22.

³⁸ Judges 11:11, 2 Chron. 19:11 and other passages.

³⁹ Zerbst Merkens, The Office of Women in the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 32.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 36-37.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 44-45.

⁴² Colin Brown, p. 1062.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 1063.

⁴⁴ Pheme Perkins. Ministering in the Pauline Churches, (New York: Pauline Press, 1982), pp. 27-28.

⁴⁵ Foh, p. 117.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 117.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 118.

⁴⁸ Swidler, p. 321.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 321.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 323-324.

⁵¹ Women in the Church: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relationship of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, 1985, p. 18.

⁵² ibid., p. 21.

⁵³ Mankind is also spoken of as created in the image of God in the broad sense, that is man and woman reflect from God a variety of attitudes such as self consciousness, the capacity for self transcendence and rationality --Ibid., p. 19.

⁵⁴ Martin Luther. Luthers Works American Edition, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 62-63.

⁵⁵ Emil Brunner. The Divine Imperative, trans. Olive Wyan, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), pp. 208-331.

⁵⁶ Women in the Church, CTCR, p. 21.

⁵⁷ Charles Caldwell, The Role of Women in the Early Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), p. 53.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 53-54.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 54.

⁶⁰ Adolf Harnack. The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries (London: William Norgate, 1908) p. 64, quoted in Caldwell, p. 64.

⁶¹ Marvin R. Vincent. Phillipians, Edenburg, T & T Clerk, 1897, p. 130, quoted by Caldwell, p. 54.

⁶² Caldwell, p. 54.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 55.

⁶⁴ Julian Station, pp. 270-271.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 270.

⁶⁶ The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Nicene and Post-Nicene, Fathers Series 1, 11:555. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965. quoted by Swidler, p. 290.

⁶⁷ Migne, Pastologia Greaca, vol. 51, cols. 191f, quoted by Swidler, p. 273.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 309.

⁶⁹ Roberts and Donald. Aute-Nicene Fathers vol. 7, p. 492, quoted by Swidler, p. 312.

70

CHAPTER THREE ENDNOTES

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⁷Ibid., p. 227.

⁸Ibid., p. 227.

⁹Susan T. Foh, Women and the Word of God. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 249.

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¹¹Women's annual report, Musoma, Tanzania, 1986.

¹²Synodical Assembly. Bweri, Musoma Tanzania, 1985

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