

5-1-1930

## The Position of the Christian Woman, Especially as Worker in the Church

P E. Kretzmann  
*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

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### Recommended Citation

Kretzmann, P E. (1930) "The Position of the Christian Woman, Especially as Worker in the Church," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 45.  
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol1/iss1/45>

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things?" 2 Cor. 2, 16. But we rejoice to be able to answer with Paul: "Our sufficiency is of God."

No man ever yet was sent out to the foreign field fully equipped to labor. Even St. Paul, the greatest of all foreign missionaries, experienced much spiritual growth. And it is our comfort and the comfort of every foreign missionary worthy of the name that the Spirit of God is with him, labors with him, and graciously continues to endue him with his gifts. No missionary should therefore despair because of his weaknesses and because of the lack of this or that specific requirement and gift for his high calling. Only let him look up to God for guidance and for help. Our Savior promises: "Lo, I am with you alway." Nor should any one who has secretly harbored the wish to be permitted to labor in the foreign field be deterred from volunteering his services for this great enterprise. If it is altogether in agreement with the mind of the Lord that one may "desire the office of a bishop," 1 Tim. 3, 1, it is no less proper for one to desire the office of a foreign missionary. But let us, who are charged by God to call and send out laborers, do it with the conviction and determination that only the very best men available should be sent out to the heathen as witnesses for Jesus Christ. FREDERICK BRAND.

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### The Position of the Christian Woman, Especially as Worker in the Church.

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The position of women in most heathen nations and tribes was and is one of almost unbelievable degradation and unspeakable misery. In most cases, even among the more enlightened nations of antiquity, she was nothing more than a mere chattel. Under the old Roman law, for example, a husband had absolute power of life and death over his wife and absolute control of her property. (Brace, *Gesta Christi*, 20.) In Athens, during the age of the orators, the woman was obliged to accept without questioning a position distinctly subordinate to the men, both intellectually and socially. "The life of the Athenian woman was not only exceedingly circumscribed and isolated, but she was actually treated throughout her life as a minor and under constant tutelage, being subject, at various times, to the authority of her father, brother, grandfather, husband, son, or guardian; she had practically no authority, except in the sphere of domestic economy." (Savage, *The Athenian Family*, 25.) As for the present-day savage tribes of Africa, Australia, South America, and elsewhere, even the most superficial acquaintance with the history and progress of missions will afford a view of a serfdom and slavery on the part of women which in many instances place her below the level of beasts in her intellectual and social sphere. In only a few of the Teutonic and



Scandinavian tribes was woman given a position of honor, as the consort and helpmate of man. (Of Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics sub vocibus* "Emancipation," "Marriage," etc.)

Turning now to the Bible, we have God's definite and unmistakable order, as laid down in connection with the creation of man and woman. The condensed and well-rounded account of Gen. 1, 27. 28 is supplemented in chapter 2 by a more detailed description of the manner in which man was created and that by which God gave Adam the woman as his wife. The words of the Lord before the creation of woman are distinctly given: "And said Jehovah Elohim, Not good is it for the man to be by himself; I shall make for him an assistant corresponding to him," Gen. 2, 18. The woman who was created by God out of the rib taken from the side of man was to be a helper, or helpmeet, for him corresponding to his needs, able to stand by his side, to support him. Her relation to him was not indeed to be coordinate, as though the two were to be in every respect on the same level; nor, on the other hand, was it to be subordinate in an absolute sense. She was to be at his side, in a subsidiary position, and yet more in the nature of an auxiliary. Luther's remarks on this relation are most pertinent: "In the human race the woman is so created that she everywhere and always is to be in the company of her husband. . . . The wife is thus obliged to her husband that she is to remain with him and must live with him as one flesh. And if Adam had remained in the state of innocence, this would have been the most pleasant relation between man and woman. . . . That is certainly a great praise and glory of man and wife, that the man, in the begetting of children, is a father, but the woman is a mother and a helpmate of her husband." (St. Louis Ed., I, 143 f.)

The Fall accentuated the subsidiary position of woman. When the Lord pronounced sentence upon the woman, He said to her: "Multiplying I shall multiply thy pains and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bear children, and to thy husband shall be thy desire, and he shall rule over thee," Gen. 3, 16. It was a double burden which the Lord hereby laid upon womankind, the pangs of birth and the submission to her husband. In the state of holy wedlock, which is here assumed to be the normal state of the adult woman, the act of parturition should be associated with pains of travail, as the Lord Jesus also states: "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow because her hour is come," John 16, 21. But a second factor was to be added to this burden, namely, that of having the woman's, the wife's, desire, her eager longing, directed to her husband, while he at the same time was to occupy the position of leader and ruler. She had emancipated herself from his guidance in listening to the tempting words of the serpent, and therefore she should be constrained ever to be mindful of the evil results of this false step. This is a fact, and



no amount of resentment can change this fact. As little as the human race as such can rightly resent the imputation of Adam's guilt and the fact of original or inherent sinfulness, so little can the fact of woman's position according to God's decree be changed. The Apostle Paul therefore states his conclusions with regard to woman's subsidiary position in two short sentences: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression," 1 Tim. 2, 13. 14.

In keeping with the narrative of Gen. 2 and 3 the order of God was upheld in the Old Testament. The position held by the women of Israel, according to the ethics of the inspired books, was one of honor and respect. Although woman occupied a subsidiary, if not a subordinate, position in the home and in the society, yet the ordinances of God prevented her becoming a mere chattel. Many of the laws pertaining to women really uphold her dignity and prove a very effective obstacle to the caprice of men. While divorce could be procured with comparative ease, especially in the later period, yet the respective ordinances, Deut. 24, 1—4, safeguarded the wife in a measure unknown among heathen nations; for the bill of divorcement was supposed to contain at least the alleged reason for dismissing the wife. Even the ordinance of the bitter water of jealousy, Num. 5, 11—31, contains strong elements in favor of the woman, since the humiliation attending an unfounded accusation must surely have deterred the average man from attempting to submit his wife to such an ordeal. The consideration likewise which had to be shown to the captive woman after she had been humbled, placed her far above her more unfortunate sisters in heathen surroundings, Deut. 21, 10—14. Polygamy also, although practised with God's permission, was to this extent carefully regulated by Him, Deut. 21, 15—17, but it was never sanctioned, as is indicated by Jesus, Matt. 19, 4. 5, where He refers to the original institution. The Bible consistently advocated monogamy as in keeping with God's creation and ordinance, Gen. 2 and 3. Ps. 128, 3 speaks of "thy wife," not of wives, and the same fact appears from Prov. 5, 18—20, where the singular is used throughout. Even the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* remarks: "The wife was placed in subjection to her husband; still, marriage was reckoned honorable, and a virtuous wife was deemed of more value than rubies, Prov. 31, 10—31. The mother was highly esteemed, and the widow was regarded as a worthy object of benevolence." (*Sub* "Emancipation.")

According to Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testament, the highest honor that could come to a believing woman was that of becoming a wife and a mother, and this status was regarded as the only normal status for the adult, normal woman. We know of the eagerness of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Hannah, the Shunammite,



and other holy women of old to become mothers, and this desire was shared by Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias. It is expressly stated of Ruth, the wife of Boaz, that *the Lord gave her conception*, and she bare a son, Ruth 4, 13. It is said of the Lord that "He maketh the barren woman to keep house and to be a joyful mother of children," Ps. 113, 9; and again: "God setteth the solitary in families," Ps. 68, 6; and again: "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house, thy children like olive-plants round about thy table. Behold that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord," Ps. 128, 3, 4. On the other hand, it is said that the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife, Gen. 20, 18. And one of the most terrible curses of the Old Testament is recorded by Hosea: "Give them, O Lord, — what wilt Thou give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts," chap. 9, 14. Nor was the attitude of the Lord changed in New Testament times, for the holy apostle writes: "I will therefore that *the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully*," 1 Tim. 5, 14. And to Titus the Apostle Paul writes: "That they [the aged women] may teach the young women to be sober, *to love their husbands, to love their children*, to be discreet, chaste, *keepers at home*, good, *obedient to their own husbands*, that the Word of God be not blasphemed," chap. 2, 4, 5. And as for the general relation of women to their husbands, the holy apostle writes: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church. . . . Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything," Eph. 5, 22—24. Such, in general, is the position of the Christian woman, according to the Word of God, as wife and mother. The Christian home is the ideal sphere of a Christian woman's activity, the place of her greatest usefulness, the circle which God has designated as her special domain.

The next question which naturally suggests itself in this connection is: *What does the Bible say about the participation of women in public life, about their taking a direct part in the government and guidance particularly of church affairs?* The answer is contained, at least in part, in the positive statements of the Lord concerning the sphere and the functions of the Christian woman; for He expects her to discharge, by preference, the office of mistress in the home, of a true home-maker, 1 Tim. 5, 14; Titus 2, 4, 5. In addition, however, we have some very plain statements concerning the position of women in the Christian congregation. The Apostle Paul writes: "But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man. . . . For the man is not of the woman, but the woman is of the man. Neither was the man created



for the woman, but the woman for the man," 1 Cor. 11, 3. 8. 9. These are the divine principles, and they clearly set forth the subsidiary position of the woman in the Church. For that reason the apostle did not want the Christian women of Corinth in any manner to place themselves on a level with the emancipated heathen women of the city. It was not in agreement with the position and the dignity of the Christian women; it placed them on a level which was beneath that granted to them by the intention of the Creator.

Still more emphatic is the passage 1 Cor. 14, 34. 35, where we are told: "Let your women keep silence in the churches [congregations]; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the Law. And if they will [want to] learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." The verb *λαλεῖν* originally denoted any communication by means of sounds, then, in particular, to give expression to one's thoughts, to take part in any discussion, even if this was not done by way of formal speech. All public speaking of this kind therefore was denied to women in meetings of the congregation; they were neither to occupy the position of teachers, nor were they to take part in the discussion. While they evidently could be present, and were present, not only in the regular services of preaching, but also in other meetings of the congregation where affairs of the Kingdom were discussed, their public participation in such deliberations was not permitted in the congregation where men were present, for over against the men the Christian women were to regard themselves in a subsidiary position. They could, indeed, ask their husbands at home, for it was expected that their interest in the affairs of the Church would and should show itself in this manner; but it was considered a shameful act for them to speak and to discuss things of this nature in public.

Another passage which sets forth the principle concerned here is 1 Tim. 2, 11. 12, where we read: "Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not the woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The position assigned to the believing woman, also in the New Testament, is that of subjection (*ὑποταγή*), one in which she freely yields the headship to the man. This requires silence on her part with respect to any public discussion. She is not to take part in these discussions; she is not to act as teacher of the congregation; she is not to assume a directive activity, to exercise authority over the man. Whenever there is a meeting which is intended for the whole congregation, whether it be a service of preaching or a meeting in which the work of the church is to be discussed or the Scriptures are to be studied, then the will of God is plainly indicated: The Christian woman is not to take the part of teacher, of leader in the discussion; she is not to direct



the affairs of the meeting in public, she is not to assume a rôle of leadership or in any way to lord it over the man. God has placed the business of the Church in the hands of men, and therefore any and every attempt of a woman publicly to influence these affairs is a usurpation of rights which cannot be squared with God's plain command and prohibition. If a congregation or a society is composed entirely of women, the passage will, of course, not apply.

The ideal set forth in the several passages quoted above is maintained by the Lord even in the case of widows. The apostle considers their position at some length in 1 Tim. 5, 3 ff. He wants all honor shown to widows, but he directs Timothy not to show the same consideration to younger widows, who rather ought to get married again. His specifications include the denial of wantonness and worldly pleasures on the part of those who are widows as they should be, as well as the continuation in supplications and prayers night and day. Other qualifications are that a widow, to receive consideration on the part of the congregation, should be well reported of for good works, that she should have brought up children, that she should have relieved the afflicted, that she should have diligently followed every good work, even to the point of performing menial labor in the interest of unselfish service. That this same requirement is recorded for all older women, who have apparently brought up their own children and then have sufficient leisure to devote themselves to the service of others, appears from Titus 2, 3 ff. It is significant in this passage that the apostle, after disposing of the evil habits of slandering and drinking to excess, speaks of the influence which the older women should exert in being teachers of good things, a statement which is explained in a more detailed discussion of their relation to young women. Their chief function should evidently be to influence and direct the lives of their younger sisters in the congregation by precept and example. This function can be exercised with good success in a women's organization or ladies' aid society within a congregation, provided the society is conducted in conformity with the Word of God.

As a matter of fact, services of this kind, in the matter of assisting in the work of the congregation and Church, in beautifying the place of worship, in taking part in various charitable endeavors, have ever been the prerogative of believing women. When the Tabernacle was to be built in the wilderness and the call went out for contributions of every kind, also for the various vestments and coverings, it is expressly stated: "And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair," Ex. 35, 25, 26. These services were highly appreciated by the Lord



and by Moses. A little later we are told: "And he made the laver of brass and the foot of it of brass, of the looking-glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation," Ex. 38, 8; cp. 1 Sam. 2, 22. Here we learn that certain women served in the court of the Tabernacle and that these women also contributed their share for one of the appointments of the court of the priests, namely, the laver. Another incident of the wilderness journey of the children of Israel is of interest here, namely, the fact that Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, the prophetess, organized a chorus of women, who praised the Lord in antiphonal song for the deliverance from the Egyptians and the overthrow of the latter in the Red Sea.

Turning now to the New Testament, we are once more given evidence that the women of the early Christian churches, while carefully observing the restrictions placed upon them by the Lord, nevertheless did their share in serving, so that some of them are highly commended for their consecrated service. We are told of some of the women that followed Jesus: "And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance," Luke 8, 2, 3. The love which these women bore to their Master evidently found a ready expression in their ministering to Him, and it was most graciously received and recorded. These believing women occupy an enviable position in the membership of the early Church, and some of them, together with certain other sisters in the faith, were given the honor of an early appearance of the risen Lord, Matt. 28, 1 ff.; Mark 16, 1 ff.; Luke 24, 1—6. 22, 23; John 20, 1, 2, 11—18.

This loving service of the believing women continued during the Apostolic Age. Rom. 16 in particular has been called the "roll of honor" of Christian women. We hear there first of Phoebe, who was a servant, or deaconess, of the congregation at Cenchrea. At that time the feminine form of the noun was evidently not yet in use, for the apostle calls her a *διάκονος*. But less than a decade later he describes the work of such deaconesses, for 1 Tim. 3, 11 gives their qualifications: gravity, sobriety, and faithfulness. Another woman on the honor roll is Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, whom Paul mentions in highest terms of praise. These two good people, with Prisca, or Priscilla, mentioned first in 2 Tim. 4, 19, hold a record in the history of the Apostolic Church; for from two passages and 1 Cor. 16, 19 it appears that they opened their house to the congregation at Corinth, at Rome, and evidently also at Ephesus, while Acts 18, 24—28 shows that they performed also other valuable services for the Church at various times. Other women whose names appear in this list are



Mary, "who bestowed much labor on us," Rom. 16, 6, Tryphena and Tryphosa, "who labor in the Lord," also the beloved Persis, "which labored much in the Lord," v. 12, the mother of Rufus, and others. And if we turn to the letter to the Philippians, chap. 4, 2, 3, we find that Euodias and Syntyche must have been prominent church-workers. In the congregation at Philippi we have also Lydia, the seller of purple, the first convert of the Apostle Paul on European soil, whose hospitality is emphasized by Luke, Acts 16, 15. 40. Another woman who exercised the privilege of hospitality to a whole congregation was Mary, the mother of John Mark, Acts 12, 12. Nor does this exhaust the list of consecrated women of the New Testament; for Paul sends greetings from Claudia of Rome, 2 Tim. 4, 21, and includes Apphia in the salutation of the letter to Philemon, while John writes an entire letter to "the elect lady and her children," and he closes this letter with the words: "The children of thy elect sister greet thee," v. 13.

That these various references and admonitions were known and observed in the early Church is apparent from many lengthy discussions, often amounting to books of some length, which were written by early Christian teachers. The following books or treatises are of special value for one who desires to make a complete study of the field: Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem*, *De Virginibus Velandis*, *Exhortatio ad Castitatem*, *De Modestia*, *De Spectaculis*, *De Cultu Mulierum*; Clement of Alexandria, *Paidagogos*, *Stromata*; Cyprian, *De Habitu Virginum*; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Lectures*; Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate*; Jerome, *Letters to Paula*. The chief points in Christian ethics made in these treatises and books are found, in a condensed form, in the so-called *Apostolic Constitution and Canons*, some sections of which certainly go back to the second century, although subsequent recensions and additions were made as late as the eighth century. Chapter 8 of Book I deals with the "Subordinate Position of Woman," and the principles of Scripture are set forth in a very clear and convincing manner, the chief passages considered being 1 Cor. 11; Prov. 31, 10—31; 12, 4; 14, 1; 18, 3; 21, 9. 19. In Book VIII, Sections 19 and 20 treat of the consecration of deaconesses, with a prayer which is used for that purpose to the present day.

On the basis of all these passages and the historical evidence adduced it is evident that the sphere of the Christian women in the Apostolic Church was not nearly as circumscribed as certain champions of emancipation would have us believe. Within the bounds of womanly modesty, sobriety, and retirement a wide range of activities in the service of the Church was offered to every believing woman. Her natural and chief circle of activity remained, as it had been of old, the home, and her chief function and glory was that of a wife



and mother. The care of the home and the children, the guiding of the house and the keeping at home, as the Lord calls it, 1 Tim. 5, 14; Titus 2, 5, the being in subjection to their husbands in the obedience of the Sixth Commandment, which the Bible teaches, 1 Pet. 3, 1; Eph. 5, 22 ff., those are the works of the Christian woman's "conversation," of her conduct and behavior. That is the very highest position to which she may aspire.

And if the Lord has not given her this highest position, for which he created woman in the beginning, then He has indicated clearly where her ambition may find a legitimate outlet. It is in teaching positions in the Church where any lordship or leadership of men is not involved (and we find that women, from the beginning, were used as teachers of little children); it is in works of love, such as those which have made the name of Tabitha, or Dorcas, Acts 9, 36. 39, a synonym of the finest charitable endeavor in unobtrusive service; it is in the labors of deaconesses within the circle of one or more congregations (as was the case with Phoebe); it is in ministering to the Lord of their substance, according to the example of the consecrated women in the circle of Jesus' disciples. To this list we may well add the ministry which is noted with such approval in the Old Testament, namely, that which provides vestments for the sanctuary of the Lord.

The application of all these facts to present-day conditions can easily be made. A Christian woman will have ample opportunity to make use of her abilities and talents (such as are not used in the home as daughter, wife, and mother) in such works of love as best accord with her womanly traits, characteristics, and qualifications, together with the subsidiary position which the Lord has assigned to her. Ladies' aids which are established and conducted under the auspices of the congregations and are engaged in educational work for their own members and in charitable and missionary endeavors, special charitable organizations whose aim is to render particular assistance to charitable or missionary institutions and associations, altar guilds, which are in charge of the paraments and vestments of the congregation and the beautifying of the chancel according to Lutheran use, sewing-circles for the poor and needy at home and abroad,—all these, if rightfully managed and conducted, may certainly prove a great blessing to the Church.

To go beyond this sphere, as set forth in Scriptures, is precarious, to say the least, especially if individuals step to the front and proceed beyond the boundaries of the individual congregations. The congregation, according to Scripture, is the unit of church-work. If the control of any movement goes beyond the control of the individual congregation, there is a degree of danger connected with it which



may easily assume menacing proportions. A Lutheran synod is, or should be, merely a federation of congregations to facilitate the doing of necessary work in the Church which the individual congregation could not undertake or perform as well. It follows that the individual congregation remains independent and autonomous, and our Synod has never presumed to disturb this relationship beyond the obligations placed upon Christians by the law of love and by the demands of Christian unity. If any organization undertakes to duplicate the work of the congregations as carried on by their own federation, or synod, it may endanger the peace and harmony of the Church, no matter how laudable its motives may be and how pure its aspirations. And as for women's organizations, the whole tenor of Scripture, as set forth above, indicates that they are not to take the public initiative or leadership in the work of the congregation or the Church at large. The limitations of their public activity are too plainly stated to permit of exceptions. Nor may we overlook another factor, namely, that large organizations or federations of women's clubs within the Church are in danger of becoming busybodies in other men's matters, since their enthusiasm for the cause in which they believe is apt to lead them to a propaganda that may interfere with the work of the individual congregation. Experience in other church-bodies has shown that the soliciting of memberships may carry enthusiasts to a point where they enter congregations without the consent of the body itself or of its pastor, not to speak of the fact that pressure has been brought to bear upon the regularly constituted governing bodies in the congregation and in synod which seriously interfered with the peaceful and blessed establishment of the Lord's work. P. E. KRETZMANN.

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## Dispositionen über die Eisenacher Evangelienreihe.

### Misericordias Domini.

Jo h. 14, 1—6.

Misericordias Domini. Wie die Erde ist voll der Güte, misericordias, des Herrn, Ps. 33, 5 (Introitus), so zeigt auch unser Text uns das gütige, mitleidsvolle Herz des guten Hirten. Liebevoll sucht er, der sein Leben lassen will für seine Schafe, seinen Jüngern das rechte Verständnis dessen beizubringen, was in den nächsten Stunden geschehen soll, sie mit rechtem Trost zu erfüllen, damit sie nicht dahinsinken in die Nacht des Zweifels und der Verzweiflung. Als der von den Toten auferstandene Hirt und Bischof unserer Seele hat er auch dafür gesorgt, daß diese herrlichen Worte allen seinen Christen in allen Lebenslagen zum Trost aufgezeichnet würden.