

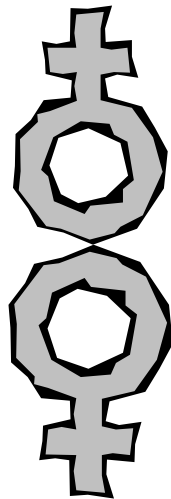
Feminism and the Church

A Seminar for Youth, Parents, and Anyone Else Who's Interested

Pastor Tim Pauls
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©2002 Pastor Tim Pauls. This seminar is not designed to promote a personal agenda, but rather to discuss the teachings of feminist theology in contrast to orthodox Christianity. That said, the author certainly acknowledges fallibility and invites constructive criticism and doctrinal correction in the interest of proclaiming what is true. For the sake of legitimacy and to establish a common foundation for discussion, criticisms and corrections must be based upon Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, not upon personal experience or interpretation.



Introduction

Yes, this is the basis for a youth seminar. Really.

No, I wouldn't conduct the seminar by reading this paper to anyone from end to end, unless the seminar is entitled "Listen to Overcome Insomnia." On the other hand, depending on the maturity of the youth, some material within may be too graphic. This paper is intended to provide instructors with material in a format that they can easily adapt to those they are instructing. There are a lot of footnotes: Not to test your patience, but because I want to let feminists speak for themselves as much as possible. When it comes to what they teach, don't take my word for it: read theirs.

Without a doubt, there is great need to instruct our youth on the issues of feminism today, for several reasons:

1. Looking for nothing more specific, the world often crassly defines confessional Lutheranism as anti-feminist and anti-woman. In a recent article on an unrelated topic, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch attempted to summarize the doctrine and practice of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod by saying, "It is more conservative than other Lutheran denominations. The Missouri Synod does not ordain women, which would violate 'the order of creation' by usurping authority over men."¹ In the eyes of many, confessional Lutherans are summed up as those who refuse to ordain women.² If our youth are to be labeled this way by the world, we must equip them with an understanding of why women are not ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry, and why this is not a matter of shame or chauvinism.
2. Feminism is not shy about asserting its moral superiority or its false teaching. Upon entering college, students will likely be assaulted with a barrage of pro-feminist studies, to the potential detriment of their faith.
3. Within confessional Lutheranism, specifically the LCMS, different voices are declaring that a proper interpretation of Scripture demands the ordination of women.

The role of women within the Church and society will continue to be a matter of discussion within the Church, and the discussion is often driven in the background by non-Christian, feminist theology. In the end, this is not a discussion about equality or fairness, as many would have you

¹ St. Louis Post-Dispatch website, December 10, 2001.

² There is a reason for this: Confessional Lutherans are among the last in Christendom to resist the unscriptural ordination of women, and thus find themselves within feminist crosshairs. Rita Gross writes, "In November 1970, Elizabeth A. Platz was ordained by the Lutheran Church in America, becoming the first woman Lutheran minister. Other Lutheran groups followed, but some conservative Lutheran groups still do not ordain women. Most other mainline Protestant churches now ordain women..." Gross, Rita M. *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction*, 41. (While I heartily disagree with her conclusions, I greatly appreciate Professor Gross' objective, forthright and reasoned presentation.)





believe. Instead, this is a discussion about the Gospel: Whether or not Jesus Christ is the Son of God incarnate, whether or not He died on the cross for the sins of the world, and whether or not Scripture is a true witness of Christ and His salvation.

Defining feminism is no easy task: Feminist theologians are not so much united in what they believe as in what they oppose—any facet of religion which they consider contrary to their cause. This paper is far from exhaustive as to the teachings of the different schools within feminist thought; instead, it attempts to demonstrate some general beliefs among the group.

In writing this with a seminar in mind, this paper is divided into the following segments:

- I. Scriptural Teachings of Several Key Issues:** This will be a brief section that seeks to summarize Scriptural teachings that become key targets of feminism.
- II. Baldism:** This is a spoof and a non-existent issue. It is not an attempt to mock feminism. Rather, the intent is to expose the difficulties of feminist interpretation apart from the emotional baggage that often accompanies the discussion.
- III. A Summary of Feminist Theology:** As much as possible, this information is culled from primary resources of feminist theologians and scholars.
- IV. A Short Look at Feminism at Work in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:** Cloaked in a profession that it upholds Scripture, this is a subtle variation of feminist theology which is really no different.
- V. In Conclusion:** This section offers some summary thoughts on feminist theology, as well as things to keep in mind when responding to those who adhere to it.
- Appendices:** Appendix A briefly discusses whether or not Scripture is discriminatory, while appendix B offers the Scripture passages which confine the Office of the Holy Ministry to men only. Appendix C is a blank chart that can be copied and distributed for use in a seminar setting.

The goals of the seminar are as follows:

1. That participants understand the Scriptural teachings of key issues under attack by feminism.
2. That participants be able to identify the flaws and fallacies of feminist hermeneutics (how they interpret the Bible and establish their doctrine).
3. That participants understand how feminist theology openly and admittedly opposes the Christian faith.

For those seeking to use this as the basis for teaching a seminar, I would offer the following suggestions:

1. After examining the "Scriptural Teachings of Several Key Issues," I would spend a lot of time on "baldism," challenging the participants to discover the flaws in the reasoning of baldist theologians. This allows them to discover the problems with feminist theology without the pressures of political correctness; and it doesn't hurt if you, the presenter, have a good sense of humor and a few less active follicles on the scalp. Make use of this imaginary issue to prove the points, then apply them to feminism later on. (e.g., "With the 'baldists,' we found that they want to rewrite the Bible so that they are the focus, not Jesus; feminism does the same thing, and this is how.")

2. At the same time, be a bit careful of how you handle the "baldism" section. It is not intended to mock either feminists or the follicly-challenged; and while it is a bit absurd, it is not intended to make feminism appear trivial or ridiculous. When discussing doctrinal differences,





the Old Adam delights to turn the discussion into ridicule of those who “aren’t like us.” Such discussion is as shallow as it is unhelpful.

3. Copy off and make use of the chart in appendix C as a handout. It is a summary of the tables on pages 22-26. Once that chart is complete, the stark contrast between feminism and Christianity is evident to all.

May this lead us to rejoice in the Lord’s vocations for men and women, and especially the redemption that He has won for all, both male and female, in Christ.

Pastor Tim Pauls
Ash Wednesday, 2002





Part I: Scriptural Teachings of Several Key Issues

This initial section is designed to say nothing new, but rather to reaffirm a few basic teachings of orthodox Christianity to which confessional Lutheranism subscribes. It may seem off-topic at first; however, these doctrines are quickly attacked in feminist theology.

Sources of Doctrine/Special Revelation

Without a long exposition, we note here that confessional Lutherans believe in natural and special revelation. Man can discern some doctrine from nature, experience, scientific study and conscience. For instance, he can conclude that God exists and that there is trouble and death in the world. However, natural knowledge cannot teach him about God's identity or plan for our salvation. For that, special revelation from God is needed.

Confessional Lutherans confess the Bible to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and thus the source of *special revelation*; it is in the Bible that we learn of who God is (Father, Son and Holy Ghost), as well as God's plan for our salvation in Jesus Christ. It is authoritative, the source and norm for all doctrine. What the Bible says, goes.³ Theories that the Bible is a mere human writing or only contains the Word of God (mixed in with human opinion) are therefore rejected.

Creation, Eden and the Perfect Marriage

Confessional Lutherans confess the Scriptural truth that God created the heavens and the earth in six literal, 24-hour days; then rested on the seventh. Theories of macro-evolution and development of man over billions of years are therefore rejected.

On the sixth day, "the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7). Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden, with the responsibility to keep and tend it (2:15). Prior to the creation of Eve, the Lord commanded Adam, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (2:16-17). With this command, the Lord entrusts His Word to Adam; in caring for all within the Garden of Eden, Adam is to care for Eve by telling her, and their future children, the Word of God. Even before he is made a husband, Adam is made a pastor.⁴ Even in perfect creation, Adam is entrusted with the privilege of nurturing life by proclaiming the life-giving Word of God.

The Lord declares, "*It is* not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (2:18). There is no shame to being a helper, nor does it indicate a "lower" position. God declares Himself a helper in Hebrews 13:6. Note as well that Eve will be "comparable," not identical, to Adam. She will be different, but the differences to Adam and Eve will complement each other.

The Lord opens Adam's side and removes a rib from which He creates Eve (2:21-22). He blesses them in part by saying, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" (1:28). With this blessing, the Lord establishes that the human population will grow by the birth of

³ For further study, one resource is "The Authority of Scripture" by Pastor Tim Pauls, currently available on www.scholia.net. This seminar discusses the history of challenges to the authority of the Bible, and offers some ways to respond to those challenges.

⁴ "In this passage the church is established, as I said, before there was a home government. Here the Lord is preaching to Adam and setting the Word before him." Luther, M. (1999, c1958). *Luther's works, vol. 1 : Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1-5*, Gen. 2:16-17.





children, and Eve is entrusted with the privilege of nurturing life by nurturing children—before and after birth.

Together, Adam and Eve are given the privilege of being the Lord's instruments to give life. One might propose that God creates man with both body and soul—both integral and necessary; and in this creation before sin, both body and soul are created to live forever, complementing each other. As life is created by God, Adam has primary duty in caring for the souls of children by proclaiming the Word. Eve has primary duty in caring for the bodies of the children by carrying them in the womb, giving birth, nursing infants, etc.—privileges of which Adam is not even capable.⁵ Children, alive with both body and soul, are thus brought into being.⁶

The Fall into Sin

Tempted by the serpent, Adam and Eve disobey God and fall into sin. The blame in Scripture is laid upon both: Eve is faulted for being the first to eat fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (I Tim. 2:14). St. Paul declares that sin and death came through Adam (Rom. 5:12-14); Adam, entrusted with the Word of God, fails to preach it to Eve and allows her to eat by his failure.

When the Lord speaks after the Fall, He announces curses and consequences. In verse 15, He declares to Satan that the Seed of the woman will destroy him, a prophecy that salvation is coming. While a great consequence to the devil, this is a matter of great promise to us—it is the first proclamation of the Gospel!

To Eve, the Lord declares (3:16),

"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you."

Upon creation, the woman had been given the privilege of being the instrument whereby physical life was brought into the world, and this would be a source of great joy—without the pain and distress of labor. After the Fall, however, that great joy is attended by great pain and sorrow: Pregnancy is often fraught with health troubles, and labor and delivery are usually agonizing. There is a purpose for the pain when life comes into the world: It is a proclamation that, because of sin, the newborn must face suffering, and eventually death.

To Adam, the Lord declares (3:17-19),

⁵ Note the word "primary." While Adam is the "point man" for the declaration of the Word, he is certainly to assist Eve in the physical nurture of children by feeding them, etc. While Eve is the "point woman" for the physical nurture of children, she can assist Adam by telling Bible stories to them, etc. Note as well that this is within the context of the biological family, not a congregation; one might be tempted to carry the analogy further than intended and assert that women can be some sort of "secondary pastor." But this is not the author's intent, as this is clearly prohibited in Scripture.

⁶ "Man's calling, the apostolic office, and woman's calling, motherhood, both have salvatory significance for human beings. The shepherd, the minister, leads people to heaven; woman, the mother, gives birth to the Savior of the world." Hindbeck, Ulla. "Women and the Ministry." Hindbeck served as a pastor in Sweden until she became convinced that Scripture forbade her that office. She helpfully makes this comparison of genders: In God's gift of motherhood, only women are allowed into that "circle," and only some bear children; for "many are called, but few are chosen." In God's gift of the apostolic ministry, only men are allowed into that "circle," and only some serve as pastors; once again, "many are called, but few are chosen."





"Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return."

There was labor in Eden prior to Fall; now, however, the work will be much harder as creation no longer cooperates. Note, too: Where pain and sorrow are introduced with the curse upon Eve, death ("to dust you shall return") is introduced with the curse upon Adam.

Of special note for this study among the consequences is the Lord's final statement of Gen. 3:16: "Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you." This statement has often been interpreted as the establishment of man's dominion over women; up to now, it is said, they were equals, but now the Lord makes Adam the boss. However, we have already noted that the complementary relationship between man and woman are already established in Genesis 2, before the Fall. Rather than repeating the relationship or establishing a new hierarchy, the Lord is announcing how that relationship will now be twisted by sin.

This word for "desire" (תַּשׁוּקָתָךְ) appears only three times in the Old Testament. It can mean a godly desire or a sinful yearning.⁷ The word appears again in Genesis 4:7, and this verse gives us great help because the word is used there with the same word for "rule" found in Genesis 3:16: The Lord says to Cain,

"If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it."

Look how similar in structure this is to Genesis 3:16!

Your **desire** *shall be* for your husband, And he shall **rule** over you. (3:16)
And its **desire** *is* for you, but you should **rule** over it." (4:7)

We note the similarity because the context of 4:7 will help us understand the meaning of 3:16. Clearly, the desire of sin is to move Cain to disobedience—to reject the plan that God has for Him. Therefore, Cain is to rule over it—overpower it, control it and keep it in its place.

We therefore conclude that, in Genesis 3:16, the Lord is declaring how sin has perverted and twisted the relationship between men and women. Because of sin, women will naturally reject the plan that God has for the sexes, desiring to reject the Lord's will and remodel what men are to be and do. Because of sin, men will likewise reject God's plan and naturally work to "rule over" women—to overpower them, control them and keep them "in their place." Please note that the Lord does not approve of either of these behaviors; rather, He is announcing that this is how sin will pervert the relationship. Man and woman will be at war to redefine each other's God-given positions, rather than attempt to live in complementary harmony as the Lord created them to do.

⁷ "The second part of the penalty is: 'Unto thy husband thou shalt be attracted.' *Teshûqah* [תַּשׁוּקָתָךְ] might be rendered 'desire' or even better 'yearning.' This yearning is morbid. It is not merely sexual yearning. It includes an attraction that woman experiences for man which she cannot root from her nature. Independent feminists may seek to banish it, but it persists in cropping out. It may be normal. It often is not but takes a perverted form, even to the point of nymphomania." Leopold, H.C. *Exposition of Genesis, Vol. 1*, 172.





This battle will take place throughout society; it will especially evidence itself in marriage, the most intimate relationship between a man and a woman. St. Paul addresses this in Ephesians 5:

²²Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let the wives be* to their own husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. ³⁰For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³²This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband.

Wives are called to submit to their husbands, a statement twisted by the world to brand the Church as chauvinistic or worse. However, the world fails to note that wives are to submit to their husbands *as the Church submits to Christ*. The Church does submit to Christ: In the Lord's Prayer, Christians pray, "Thy will be done." In doing so, they announce that they desire to serve the Lord, not use the Lord in service to themselves. Likewise, wives are to submit to their husbands in that they are to enter marriage to serve their husbands, not use their husbands in service to themselves.

Husbands are told to love their wives as *Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her*. The Lord Jesus Christ did not take on human flesh to make other people do His bidding: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). Likewise, husbands are commanded to enter marriage to serve their wives, not enslave their wives in service to themselves.

This is the relationship that God sets up in marriage. Men and women have different God-given gifts and vocations, and they are to use them in service to one another. The husband is the head of the wife; upon him still rests the primary responsibility to feed his family with the Word of God, even as Adam was to do. But those who are given authority by God are always given authority to serve—not to dominate and control.⁸

This command to servanthood is true at the level of marriage, but at other levels as well. *All are to live lives of service, not lives of power and control*; and you will find in the upcoming discussion of feminism lots of talk of power and control. We love because God first loved us (I Jn. 4:19). We serve one another because He first served us. Note that Paul declares in his discussion regarding marriage in Ephesians 5:32, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Indeed, because of sin—including woman's desire to change manhood and man's desire to rule over woman, God sent His Son into the world: To *serve* by His death on the cross.

⁸ Consider other positions of authority established by God. Parents are given authority over their children (Eph. 6:1-3), yet there is no doubt that it is the parents who serve the children in raising them. Kings are anointed—not to be tyrants, but to serve their subjects. A pastor is called to shepherd a congregation, serving them as "a called and ordained *servant* of the Word" (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, 16, italics mine). For further examples, survey the "Table of Duties" in *Luther's Small Catechism*.





The Savior, Jesus Christ

Confessional Lutherans confess the Scriptural truth that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, took on human flesh in order to die for the sins of the world. He did not do so for a specific ethnic group or gender. Rather, He has redeemed the world and won salvation for all; when it comes to God's rich gifts of grace, "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" (Gal. 3:28). All who believe are the people of God, the Church; and the Church is the Bride of Christ, in whose service the Savior has died.⁹

The Holy Christian Church and the Holy Ministry

Christ has died in service to His bride, the Church. This, by the way, takes us back to the third and final time that the word "desire" of Gen. 3:16 is used. It appears in Song of Solomon, an allegory of Christ and His beloved Bride, the Church. Song of Solomon 7:11 reads, "I *am* my beloved's, And his desire *is* toward me." While the world is full of sinful desire to control, the Church rejoices that her Redeemer *desires* her forgiveness and restoration to holiness, so much so that He sacrifices Himself on the cross in service to her.

To care for His Church, "so that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted."¹⁰ The Lord Jesus calls pastors into the Office of the Holy Ministry, and entrusts to them the task of publicly preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments for the good of His people.¹¹ Scripture specifies that pastors are to be men, not women.¹² While the biblical commands are sufficient, we note that this sensibly reflects the order of creation:

1. In the original marriage of Adam and Eve, Adam was to be pastor to his bride.
2. Marriage is a picture of Christ and His bride, the Church. (Eph. 5:32)
3. The pastor stands "in the stead and by the command"¹³ of Christ to care for His bride. Therefore, the pastor as a male symbolizes the *bridegroom*, Christ.¹⁴ When the pastor

⁹ In fact, Pastor Johann Gerhard wrote, "When God the Lord wanted to adjoin a wife to Adam, He let a deep sleep fall upon him, took out of his side a rib, and crafted from it a wife and brought her to Adam, who acknowledged that this was flesh from his flesh and bone from his bones. So also Christ, the second and heavenly Adam, fell asleep into death on the cross; and His side was opened, from which blood and water ran out. Hereby are signified both Sacraments, through which, along with the preaching of the Word, a spiritual Bride is gathered for the Lord Christ..." Gerhard, Johann. *An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ*, 303.

¹⁰ Augsburg Confession, V:1. Kolb, Robert and Timothy J. Wengert. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 41.

¹¹ Cf. Augsburg Confession, XIV.

¹² Among other passages, see I Cor. 14:33-34, 37; I Tim. 2:11-12; I Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:5-6. See appendix B for a quick examination of these texts.

¹³ *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 16.

¹⁴ It is at this point that I offer the shameless plug for *The Bestman, the Bride and the Wedding*, an allegorical novel of the Church by Pastor Mike McCoy, webmaster of www.scholia.net. The story traces the Bride (the Church) from the Fall of man to the Last Day. The Bride is always accompanied by a "Bestman," the pastor whom the Bridegroom calls to escort His Bride to the wedding day. This is a novel which teaches, encourages and comforts, and I highly recommend. It's available on Amazon.com, but readers are free to contact Pastor McCoy at the website above.





speaks the Word of God, it is "just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself."¹⁵

The pastor is a man because he stands in the place of Jesus Christ, who became a man to redeem the world from sin. Many readers may consider this symbolism to be trivial and the argument to be thin. Feminists do not, as we will see.

Worship

Confessional Lutherans believe that worship is "Divine Service," in which the focus is the Lord's service to His people. It is all about the forgiveness of sins. The liturgy continually points to Jesus Christ the Savior, His death and resurrection, and the forgiveness He pours out through His means of grace, His Word and Sacraments. Worship is therefore "Christ-centered," not "man-centered."¹⁶ People and *what they do* are not the focus; they are the sinners who are *being done to*—being forgiven.¹⁷

Submission and Servanthood: The New Obedience

Confessional Lutherans believe that, forgiven, Christians are set free from sin to go about God's Word and will. They are not set free to pursue selfish ambition and seek personal power; St. Paul writes instead, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). This is the instruction of our Lord in the Gospels:

²⁵But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷"And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— ²⁸"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:25-28)

"Submission" and "servanthood" are not dirty words in the Christian vocabulary; rather, the life of the Christian is one of submission and servanthood, in grateful response to the Lord's service to them on the cross. In the family, in school or work, in all of society, the Christian is to be a servant to all, both God and people. This service of faith is done in keeping with the Word of the Lord.

¹⁵ *Luther's Small Catechism*, page 27.

¹⁶ To impress your friends at parties (and because we pastors fall into the trap of speaking in jargon all the time), the technical words for "Christ-centered" and "man-centered" are "christocentric" (KRIS-toh-SEN-trik) and "anthropocentric" (AN-thruh-poh-SEN-trik).

¹⁷ Article IV of The Apology of the Augsburg Confession makes this point repeatedly:

"Faith is that worship which receives the benefits that God offers; the righteousness of the law is that worship which offers God our own merits. God wants to be honored by faith so that we receive from him those things that he promises and offers." (Ap IV:49)

"This is how God wants to become known and worshiped, namely, that we receive blessings from him, and indeed, that we receive them on account of his mercy and not on account of our merits." (Ap IV:60)

"God wants us to believe him and to accept blessings from him; this he declares to be true worship." (Tappert, Ap IV:228)

"Thus the service and worship of the Gospel is to receive good things from God, while the worship of the law is to offer and present our goods to God. We cannot offer anything to God unless we have first been reconciled and reborn. The greatest possible comfort comes from this doctrine that the highest worship in the Gospel is the desire to receive forgiveness of sins, grace, and righteousness." (Tappert, Ap IV:310)





Keeping these Christian doctrines in mind, we now turn to our discussion of the dreaded theology of baldism.





Part II: The Theology of Baldism

Before we enter into the teachings of feminism, let us first establish some good and bad principles for interpreting the Bible and building a theology—a body of beliefs.¹⁸ To do so, we examine the fictional theology of baldism.

Consider a matter which is becoming more and more of interest to me as the years progress: thinning hair. You must pay attention to this, because it is important to *me*.

I cannot help but notice that the Bible does not speak well of baldness and bald men. In Leviticus 13:40-43, it is a potential symptom of leprosy, with the implication that bald guys are sickly, repulsive and horribly contagious. In Leviticus 21:5, the Lord commands that priests not have bald spots on their heads, which I consider to be discrimination. Throughout the prophets, baldness is considered a sign of mourning, judgment and captivity (Is. 3:24; 15:2; 22:12; Jer. 16:6; 47:5; 48:37; Ezek. 7:18; 27:31; 29:18; Amos 8:10; Micah 1:16). Furthermore, the prophet Elisha is mocked by some youth who cry out repeatedly, "Go up, you baldhead!" (2 Kgs. 2:23); he curses them, and 42 of them are mauled by two female bears. I therefore make the following conclusions as a baldist theologian:

- a. The Bible is not written in support of balding men, because it has few bald characters and does nothing to empower them in their baldness. In other words, it does nothing to encourage society to value them, nor does it give them authority to get their way.
- b. Therefore, the Bible was written to oppress bald men.
- c. Some might say that the mauling of the 42 youth is proof that God takes care of bald people. However, I tell you it's a made-up story inserted by some guy with a lot of hair who wanted to make bald men look like violent, evil child-haters. With stories like this reinforcing deep-seated prejudices, society would naturally view balding men with deep suspicion and distrust.
- d. We must therefore go back to how things were before the Bible, when baldness was the norm and everyone shaved their heads to look more like men who were naturally bald. While some may question the existence of this era, it certainly existed because:
 - (i) Many ancient statues of gods (and goddesses) have no hair.
 - (ii) I say it did, and I've had dreams about such a time.
- e. Anyone who criticizes my interpretation of the Bible is doing so not because I am wrong, but because he obviously wants to continue to use the Bible to oppress bald people and maintain the *status quo*.
- f. It is therefore necessary that we revise Christianity and re-write the Bible; for, in the end, the goal of Christianity must be about empowering bald men in the world, not about the forgiveness of sins. We do not need the Word, the Sacraments or the liturgy. Rather, we need worship services that seek to celebrate hairlessness. I will be proud to call myself a Christian when Christianity is all about what I say it should be about: Supporting me in my thinning hair.

In conducting this seminar, one might ask participants to examine these six claims and criticize them. Responses might include:

¹⁸ The technical term for studying how one interprets the Bible is "hermeneutics" (HER-men-NEW-tix). If "christocentric" and "anthropocentric" didn't impress your friends, try using "hermeneutics" in casual conversation.





a. *The Bible isn't written to empower a specific group over others. It is written to proclaim Christ to all nations.* The Bible wasn't written to empower bald men as bald men, or to make them feel better about their thinning hair. The Bible was written to declare that we are forgiven for our sins for the sake of Jesus, who died for us. Balding men are part of the "all nations" (Mt. 28:19-20) to whom Jesus sends the apostles and to whom God shows "no partiality" (Acts 10:34-35). Among many groups today, however, the Bible is used to support a human agenda, whatever it may be; after all, one wants to claim "God is on our side" when setting forth some sort of teaching.

b. *That the Bible was not written to empower a specific group does not mean that it is written against it.* The fact that the Bible doesn't extol men for baldness does not mean that it was written to oppress them. This is the equivalent of criticizing a cookbook because it fails to teach you how to gap spark plugs; it was written for a different purpose. This is also a common strategy to promote an agenda: Anything that does not support the agenda, or speaks against it, must be discredited, whether or not it is true.

c. *To make this claim, one must deny the authority and inerrancy of Scripture.* Who is to be believed: The Lord who declares this story about Elisha to be true by including it in His inerrant Word, or a balding theologian who has already declared that the Bible is wrong because it doesn't say what he wants it to? This is a familiar ploy in our day, for it enables one to delete any portion of Scripture that disagrees with one's agenda. This is as acceptable as a murder suspect asking that the gun with the fingerprints, the eyewitness testimony and his signed confession be thrown out only because they go against his goal of going free.

d. *This belief is based on human imaginings, not the Bible.* As soon as one speaks of going back "before the Bible," he has already betrayed that he believes that the Bible is not the Word of God, but one religious writing among many; and that there were times and civilizations present prior to what is recorded in Scripture. On its own, the existence of an era based upon hairless statues is a wild stretch—when held up against the Scriptures, it is absolutely ludicrous. And once again, whose word is more trustworthy—the Lord's or man's? Yet this is a favorite strategy among many as well: If the Bible is just one human writing among many, it no longer has God's authority. That means that we can ignore it when it disagrees with our desires.

e. *"If you don't agree with me, you're wrong and oppressive" is both arrogant and faulty.* This response is arrogant because it implies that the speaker is infallible and cannot be proven wrong. It is faulty because someone might disagree with these assertions for all sorts of reasons. It is, however, a common tactic in our current day: State your claim and declare that all who disagree with you are oppressive and unloving. This leads the uninformed to believe that anyone who objects is an unloving oppressor, no matter how sound the objection.

f. *This system of thought changes Christianity until it isn't Christianity anymore, no matter what it's called.* This conclusion completely changes the purpose of Christianity: Instead of the forgiveness of sins, the religion is all about "empowering" bald men. If this were to take place (and the means of grace and Divine Service are discarded), it is not longer Christianity. It is a false religion which calls itself Christian but offers no hope of the resurrection of the dead. However, many non-Christian groups seek to promote their false teachings under the guise of Christianity.

Why do we spend time discussing baldism in this seminar? Because this fictitious teaching allows us to explore the issues in question without the emotional baggage attached to the debate





of feminism. However, these are the same arguments put forth to justify a feminist theology. Once the absurdity of these arguments is understood, feminist theology unravels quickly.





Part III: A Summary of Feminist Theology

History of Feminism in America

To understand feminism, it is helpful to look at a brief history of feminism in America.

Rita M. Gross, a feminist and professor of philosophy and religious studies at the University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire, traces the birth of American feminism back to the antislavery efforts of women in the nineteenth century; in America, of course, slavery was characterized by the white man's enslavement of the black man. Two women involved in antislavery activities, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, traveled to London for the World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840. Because they were women, they were denied seats on the convention floor.

In response, Mott and Stanton held the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. The convention adopted "The Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions," written by the Mott and Stanton. The document, modeled after the American Declaration of Independence, began by stating that "all men *and women* are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights.' The document goes on to list a history of 'repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of men towards woman,' including men's usurpation of the prerogative of God 'himself, claiming it as his right to assign her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.'"¹⁹ In other words, rather than create man and woman to complement each other, God created man and woman equal in every way—and men have since revised God's will to match their purpose of keeping women in subjection.

Feminists hold that women are still oppressed by men in American society today. Rita M. Gross writes:

"The most basic definition of *feminism* is the conviction that women really do inhabit the human realm and are not 'other,' not a separate species. Sometimes I wear a T-shirt that proclaims: 'Feminism is the radical proposition that women are human beings.' This proclamation seems so simple and obvious, but its implications are profound and radical because neither conventional scholarship nor lifestyles really take the humanity of women seriously."²⁰

Gross goes on to call society "androcentric,"²¹ or "man-centered." Among the characteristics of such as society are these:

1. "The male norm and human norm are collapsed and seen as identical."²² In other words, society sees the behaviors of men as the norm, while the behaviors of women are considered abnormal. Men are the rule; women are the exception.
2. Because men set the norm for humanity, it is unnecessary to study women as having a separate identity.²³ Women are then expected to accommodate themselves to the norms established by men.
3. Men retain positions of power and authority in society, denying such positions to women: "Just as androcentrism regards men as normal and women as exceptions to the norm, so patriarchy regards men as rightful leaders and holders of all positions that

¹⁹ Gross, 37.

²⁰ Gross, 16-17.

²¹ That's AN-dro-SENN-trik. Jargon, jargon everywhere. ☺

²² Gross, 18.

²³ Gross, 19.





society values, whereas women should be subservient and help men maintain their status."²⁴ Men set the rules; women are to support the men.

Gross notes that an androcentric system is a system of power, control and domination. Men set the rules in which women are allowed to operate. This is the most recognizable problem with an androcentric, or "patriarchal," society. Therefore, feminism identifies its agenda as a struggle for equality, a fight against oppression.

What is the solution? Some feminists argue for a society in which women are dominant over men, though Gross takes a more moderate approach: Rather than an androcentric, man-centered, model of humanity, she advocates an "androgynous"²⁵ model: One in which men and women have equal power and control in all matters. Such a model "would compel recognition that humans come in two sexes and that both sexes are human...An accurate model of humanity would also forbid placing one gender in the center and the other on the periphery."²⁶

Such a model demands equality in all things: *Therefore, any institution which—in the opinion of feminists—favors men over women must be changed.* This is the philosophical basis for feminism, the perception of inequality; as such, it is the only reason needed to justify change in an institution.

Remembering the origins of American feminism, one can see a pattern emerging. Mott and Stanton began by identifying the enslavement of blacks as a model of oppression, and similarly identifies man's control of women as a parallel model. It makes sense that American feminism links with environmentalist groups (against man's oppression of nature), pacifism (against man's oppression of others through war), gay and lesbian rights groups (against man's control of sexual mores),²⁷ and abortion rights groups (against man's control of women's bodies).²⁸ As it seeks to redefine these issues for its own purposes, it comes as no surprise that it seeks to change religion as well.

Are there instances in the world, throughout history, where one sex or the other is unfairly discriminated against? Of course! Throughout history, the world is full of sinful men who seek to "rule over" women, and women who desire to reconstruct manhood. This curse of sin is within each of us. For now, however, we leave it to others to debate gender equality in politics and business; we turn our study toward feminism and its effect on religion, especially Christianity. We have taken the time to provide this brief history to demonstrate the origin of the feminist movement in America for a purpose: *Feminist theology is not the result of searching the Scriptures; it results from a secular movement seeking to impose its goals upon religion.*

²⁴ Gross, 22.

²⁵ an-DRAW-jih-NUSS. The Greek for "man" is "andros" (as in "android," a robot made to look like a man, while the Greek for "woman" is "gyné" (as in gynecology). "Androgynous" literally means "man/woman."

²⁶ Gross, 20.

²⁷ "Feminism exalted lesbianism as a more equitable love relationship for women. As one American lesbian slogan succinctly put it: 'Feminism is theory; lesbianism is the theory in practice.'" Buchrucker, Armin-Ernst. "The Ordination of Women and Feminist Theology," 9.

²⁸ While the "woman's choice" is the usual argument put forth by those who favor legalized abortion on demand, other arguments are even more horrendous. Ginette Paris, psychologist and feminist in the extreme, writes: "Because the bond between mother and child is the most intimate of all, forcing a woman to bear and raise a child against her will is an act of violence. It binds up and degrades the mother-child bond, sowing hatred where there should only be love, receptivity and welcome." (Paris, Ginette. *Pagan Meditations: Aphrodite, Hestia, Artemis*. Quoted in Christ, 143.)





Feminism and Religion

Feminism views religion in general as a stronghold of man-centered thought. If man sets the rules in society, this is especially true in religion where women receive “the same ontological status as trees, unicorns, deities and other objects that must be discussed to make experience intelligible. Therefore, in most accounts of religion, although males are presented as religious subjects and as namers of reality, females are represented only in relation to the males being studied, only as objects being named by the males being studied, only as they appear to the males being studied.”²⁹ In other words, religion is viewed as a discipline in which men are the main characters and women are little better than filler and objects of oppression. Therefore, religion must be changed, either through reconstruction or revolution.³⁰

The three monotheistic religions—Christianity, Judaism and Islam—are especially considered to be built upon man’s desire for power and dominion. Of the former two religions, Carol P. Christ writes:

“The God we have known in the Jewish and Christian traditions is not only a male but also a judgmental ‘dominating other.’ This God has ‘dominion’ over the earth, and his power is proved through his victories over his enemies. In Exodus, God is a ‘man of war’ who casts Pharaoh’s chariots and his army into the sea. When his will is not obeyed, he sends floods, earthquakes, and armies as his agents of destruction. Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire only after the emperor Constantine saw a vision of a cross in the sky with the inscription ‘in this sign conquer.’ God and Christ led the crusaders of the Roman Catholic church into battle to conquer lands held by Orthodox Christians and Muslims. The military might of God is celebrated in the popular Protestant hymns, ‘A Mighty Fortress is Our God’ and ‘Onward Christian Soldiers.’”³¹

Furthermore, this male domination is in reaction to a perception that women are evil:

“The image of the naked Eve brazenly taking the apple from the serpent, then cowering in shame before a wrathful male God, tells us not only that female will is part of the source of all the evil in the universe, but also that the naked female body is part of the problem. This image communicates to the deep mind the message that female will and female nakedness must be controlled and punished by male authority.”³²

Man brands woman as inherently evil, and therefore something to be kept in control.

²⁹ Gross, 19-20.

³⁰ Gross divides feminist theologians into two categories, “reformists” and “revolutionaries.” Reformists attempt to remain within a traditional religion and reconstruct it to allow feminist theology. Revolutionaries, having determined that traditional religions are patriarchal beyond redemption, turn to pagan motifs that promote female deities; this is evident in the rise of Wicca. Of the feminists listed in the bibliography, Rosemary Radford Ruether falls into the category of reformist, while Carol P. Christ is a revolutionary. Both hold Rita Gross in high esteem; Gross herself appears to be in the reformist category.

³¹ Christ, Carol P. *Rebirth of the Goddess: Finding Meaning in Feminist Spirituality*, 23. To avoid confusion, this author will always be referred to as Carol Christ in the body of this paper; “Christ” alone will be in reference to our Lord. If, after proofreading this for the umpteenth time, I’ve still missed a reference, readers can certainly rely on the context to clue them in.

³² Christ, 22. Feminists view the fall into sin as a courageous act on the part of Eve: It is the first time that woman refuses to follow the dictates of God and man, acting independently to empower herself.





To establish a religion which promotes its agenda, feminism approaches theology with these three principles.

1. There is no such thing as divine revelation. All religion comes from human experience.³³ (Religion can therefore be changed by anyone who adds or subtracts different experiences from the mix.)
2. To be viable, a religion must be built from the experiences of both men and women.³⁴ A religion that is not inclusive of human experience—in the *opinion* of feminists—is invalid.
3. Feminist theologians consider it a right to “name reality,” to define the nature of self, world and God.³⁵ This, too, follows from a denial of divine revelation; since God does not speak, people are empowered to take on the task.

The common thread of all three principles is that religion is based upon experience, and feminist theology is based upon feminist experience. We will now take a look at examine how this affects several critical articles of faith in the Christian Church.

Sources of Doctrine & The Doctrine of Scripture

Because feminist theology is based upon personal experience, the Bible is automatically *not* the authoritative source of special revelation, because feminism rejects all such forms of divine revelation. What Scripture says is not important: What matters are the beliefs of the individuals, beliefs which they construct from their life experiences. Therefore, portions of Scripture which support the empowerment of women are considered to have “lasting value and relevance,” while those that do not offer such support are dismissed as “vagaries of history” and bound to a certain time and culture.³⁶ Scripture is also said to be elastic in meaning: Feminist theologians make a distinction between the text (what, according to their experience, it “really means”), and interpretation (what others say it means). Acceptable interpretations can be wildly speculative, but acceptable if they are made in service to the feminist philosophy.³⁷

This has been the strategy since the beginning of feminism in America. Stanton and a committee compiled “*The Woman’s Bible*, not an alternative bible but a collection of commentaries on passages dealing with women, attempted to establish that the Bible was a creation of a certain cultural epoch containing *both* divine truth and culturally limited views.”³⁸ It is left to the individual to discern divine truth based upon her experiences. For instance, Stanton

³³ “...all theological or world-constructive thinking is actually grounded in and derives from human experience, even in traditions that call the source of their authority ‘revelation.’” Gross, 109.

³⁴ “...women’s experience must be taken into account to create a viable religious tradition. Theological traditions that are based on male experience alone cannot speak to full human experience.” Gross, 109.

³⁵ “...all feminist theologians, whether reformist or revolutionary, take as our birthright the ability to ‘name reality.’” Gross, 111. In discussing this paper, a colleague remarked that this “birthright” stands in contrast to the truth that God gave to Adam the duty to name the animals (Gen. 2:19-20).

³⁶ Gross, 112.

³⁷ Gross, 114. “Some feminists describe this method of using the Holy Scripture as *Hexegesis*, combining the German *Hexe* (‘witch’) with ‘exegesis’ to make a new word meaning ‘wild exegesis.’” Buchrucker, 11, italics his.

³⁸ Gross, 37, italics hers. This view of Scripture is hardly confined to feminism. It is a staple of historical criticism and the current stance of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.





wrote in her personal interpretation of the Creation in Genesis 1-2: "If language has any meaning, we have in these texts a plain declaration of the existence of the feminine element in the Godhead, equal in power and glory with the masculine. The Heavenly Mother and Father!"³⁹

Furthermore, feminist theologians believe the Bible to be fundamentally flawed as a patriarchal work of human literature, man's interpretation of religion. Rosemary Radford Ruether states:

*"Feminist theology cannot be done from the existing base of the Christian Bible. The Old and New Testaments have been shaped in their formation, their transmission, and, finally, their canonization to sacralize patriarchy. They may preserve, between the lines, memories of women's experience. But in their present form and intention they are designed to erase women's existence as subjects and to mention women only as subjects of male definition. In these texts the norm for women is absence and silence. Whether praised for their compliance or admonished for their 'disobedience,' women remain in these texts 'the other.' Their own point of view, their own experience, their own being as human subjects is never at the center. They appear, if at all, in the margin. Mostly, they do not appear at all. Even their absence and silence are not noted since, for women in patriarchy, absence and silence are normative."*⁴⁰

Most feminists honestly admit that the Bible unequivocally opposes their agenda,⁴¹ and thus look for different sources for their teachings. Ruether concludes that feminist theology requires a new collection of old texts,⁴² assorted writings from various religions that support her personal experience.⁴³ She also asserts the right to develop her theology further through the use of new texts:

"Neither revelation nor the telling of stories is closed. Every new upsurge of the liberating spirit must challenge the efforts of fossilized religious authority to 'close the canon,' to declare that God has spoken once and for all in a past time and 'his' words are enshrined in a final and definite form in a past collection of texts, and therefore, that all true theology is confined to circumscribed commentaries on these past texts...So feminism, too, recognizing that patriarchal texts deform the liberating spirit for women, rejects a theology confined to commentary on past texts...We are also free to generate

³⁹ Gross, 38.

⁴⁰ Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Womanguides: Readings Toward a Feminist Theology*, ix-x. Italics mine.

⁴¹ For one supposed exception, see Part IV of this paper, "Feminist Voices Within the LCMS."

⁴² Ruether, x.

⁴³ For instance, to support a female element in the Godhead, she adds the Prayer of Lamentation to Ishtar (a Babylonian text from the 7th century B.C.), The Golden Ass by Apuleius (1st century A.D.) and Christian Science Founder Mary Baker Eddy's version of the Lord's Prayer which addresses God as both Father and Mother. One should not expect consistency in a feminist selection of writings, either. An early Gnostic text is the "Gospel of Thomas," a short and fictional work about the life of Jesus. At the end of the text, the disciples urge Jesus to send Mary away from them, "For women are not worthy of life." To these disciples, Jesus responds, "Lo, I will draw her so that I will make her a man so that she too may become a living spirit which is like you men; for every woman who makes herself a man will enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Ruether, 123) One would think that this text would be the object of feminist outrage; however, Ruether promotes it as a text for discussion because it assists the feminist claim that God and Christ are androgynous.





new stories from our own experience that may, through community use, become more than personal or individual."⁴⁴

For Ruether, an understanding of Scripture as the Word of God is a "fossilized" idea which "deforms."

Actually, Ruether could be characterized as conservative among feminists with her appeal to different *written* texts. Feminist Mary Daly, who refers to Scripture as "hopelessly sexist," sees herself as a witch who has a mystical knowledge of an ancient matriarchal culture which was eventually overrun by patriarchy.⁴⁵ Carol Christ constantly speaks of inner voices and power flowing through her.⁴⁶ It is not that objective thinking must be balanced by the subjective; Carol Christ *opposes* objective thought because objectivity "requires the masking of the interests, feelings, and passions that inspire thinking."⁴⁷ Instead of objective thought in the mind, she favors "embodied thinking:" "When we think through the body, we reflect upon the standpoints embedded in our life experiences, histories, values, judgments, and interests."⁴⁸

The Godhead

Feminists hold that women cannot be considered equal with men until a feminist element of the Godhead is recognized. Carol P. Christ cites this as an early influence toward feminism:

"Gradually, it began to dawn on me that the image of God as Father, Son, and Spirit was at the root of the problem. No matter what I did, I would never be 'in his image.' While I had hoped to find in God a father who would love and accept my female self, it seemed that 'he,' like my father and most of my professors, liked boys better. I decided that unless we could call God Mother as well as Father, Daughter as well as Son, women and girls would never be valued."⁴⁹

Carol Christ further argues that God, or in her case, Goddess, must be female because she has given birth to us; in her schematic, evolution is the process of gestation and the earth itself is the womb.⁵⁰ Sally McFague notes that "since humans are both male and female, it makes sense that the deity in whose image we are made would also be male and female."⁵¹ Note that neither she nor Carol Christ credit divine revelation, but personal experience and imagination.

One argument of note is the personification of wisdom in the book of Proverbs, as in Proverbs 1:20: "Wisdom calls aloud outside; She raises her voice in the open squares." (This personification culminates in Proverbs 8.) Early Gnostic religion reasoned that, because the wisdom of God "calls," wisdom is a person of God. Since wisdom is a "she," God has a female person. Modern feminists, while rejecting Scripture, will still quote such Gnostic teaching and reference to "Sophia," the female person of God.

⁴⁴ Ruether, 247.

⁴⁵ Buchrucker, 19, nt. 21.

⁴⁶ Christ, 40-44.

⁴⁷ Christ, 31.

⁴⁸ Christ, 34-5.

⁴⁹ Christ, 2. Buchrucker notes that while some feminists teach an androgynous god of both male and female elements, others instead teach a god who is solely female: "The Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—is replaced with the "Mother, Daughter, and Old Woman...." Buchrucker, 13.

⁵⁰ According to Ruether, Genesis 1-2 is written long after other creation accounts which involve the birth of creation from a goddess. The Scriptural version of creation "carries an intention to make the male the primary human being and then to locate the female as secondary and auxiliary to him." Ruether, 63.

⁵¹ Gross, 126-7.





In reading through feminist texts, the existence of Sophia is accepted as a “given” which is no longer in debate. We therefore mention this argument because of its popularity, not its strength; and offer the following counter-arguments.

First, Gnostic religion is an old foe of Christianity, not a different view of the same religion. Several New Testament books, most notably the writings of St. John, were written in part to counter Gnostic Christianity. Citing Gnostic religion to change the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is another attempt to introduce error, not refine truth.

Second, Scripture clearly defines the Godhead as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While wisdom is of God and is personified in Proverbs so that it speaks, it is not a person of God.

Third, Greek and Hebrew both assign gender to every noun: In those languages, an object will always be either feminine, masculine or neuter. German does the same: A table (*der Tisch*) is masculine, a tablecloth (*das Tischtuch*) is neuter, while a tabletop (*die Tischplatte*) is feminine. Pronouns agree with the gender: In other words, in German one might say, “Where is the table? He is in the living room.” This does not mean that the table has masculine characteristics; this is the same as saying “It is in the living room” in English.⁵² Likewise, the German *Mädchen*, or girl, is actually a neuter noun; but this is no proof that Germans believe that girls aren’t feminine.

Wisdom in Hebrew is *hokmah* (חכמה), and in Greek is *Sophia* (σοφία); these are feminine nouns. The fact that “wisdom” is a feminine noun does not indicate a feminine person in the Godhead. Take, for example, I Corinthians 1:30: “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption...”

Christ is called wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption of God. Wisdom (σοφία), righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) and redemption (ἀπολύτρωση) are all feminine verbs, while sanctification (ἁγιασμός) is a masculine verb. However feminist theologians do not appear to use this as a basis to argue that Jesus was therefore a woman.⁵³ To declare “Wisdom” to be a female person of God on the basis of a noun’s gender is no better an argument.⁵⁴

The Person and Work of Christ

While feminists will not argue that “the man Jesus” was a woman, they will certainly still debate the person and work of Christ. The prospect of a male’s death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins is unacceptable to feminists. For one thing, the sacrifice of God’s Son on the cross is considered sadistic and patriarchal: The concept of God the Father sacrificing His Son is abhorrent sexism, not the gentle way of feminism and goddess theology.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Rosemary Radford Ruether asserts that the Christian doctrine of the person and work of Jesus Christ is the primary defense for the oppression of women:

⁵² “Put the tablecloth on the table’s tabletop” with pronouns would read, “Put it on his her.”

⁵³ This is not to say that feminists do not argue that Jesus was female or androgynous; however, this argument is not on the basis of feminine nouns. See “The Person and Work of Christ,” below.

⁵⁴ Similarly, the Hebrew for “spirit” (*ruach* / רוח) is a feminine noun, so some feminists insist on speaking of the “Holy Spiritess.” Buchrucker, 14.

⁵⁵ Buchrucker quotes Schottroff in *Evangelische Kommentare* 4 (1992): “The concept of God in the Christian theology of the cross projects a despotic, patriarchal Father in heaven who sacrifices his son. This concept of God can only be a horror picture for women. It has sadistic and cannibalistic aspects precisely because of the theology of the cross.” Buchrucker, 19, nt. 46.





"All efforts to marginalize women in the Church and Christian society, to deprive them of a voice, leadership, and authority, take the form of proclaiming that Christ was male and so only the male can 'image' Christ. Woman, while the passive object of his redeeming work, can never actively represent him as mediator of God's word and deed. If feminist theology and spirituality decide that Christianity is irredeemable for women, its primary reason is likely to be this insurmountable block of a male Christ who fails to represent women."⁵⁶

It is not enough that the Lord Jesus Christ took on flesh and became human; the fact that He did not become a "she" leads feminists to conclude that He cannot be their Redeemer. This may seem an odd conclusion until one remembers that feminist theologians reject the authority of Scripture; in doing so, they also reject the Scriptural doctrines that Jesus, son of Mary, is also Jesus, Son of God. Instead, feminists picture Jesus as a virtuous human prophet whom others wrongly perceived to be the foretold Messiah; and who announced God's favor to the underprivileged of society—women included.⁵⁷

However, according to Ruether, early Christianity (very early—the writers of the New Testament!) placed a different—and wrong—interpretation on Jesus: They claimed that He was raised by God from the dead (Mt. 28:6; Act. 10:40; 13:23, 30, 33; Ro. 4:24; 6:4; 10:9; I Cor. 15:15; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal 1:1; Eph. 1:20) and was true Lord of the universe (Acts 7:55-56; Heb. 1:10). Therefore, the Church further asserted that Jesus was both Creator (John 1:3) and Redeemer (John 3:16). As Creator, He was the foundation of the powers of the world, and that rulers derived their authority from Him (Rom. 13:1). This enabled rulers to oppress others in the name of Jesus, and thus mainstream Christianity "capitulated to this masculinist imperial Christology."⁵⁸

There are other feminist theories as to the person and work of Jesus. Hanna Wolff considers Jesus androgynous, "a woman in a man." Feminism will speak of Jesa Christa and her death on the cross,⁵⁹ sometimes depicting a crucified woman in art.⁶⁰ There is no historical or objective reason such conclusions. They are solely the imaginings and preferences of the individual.

The Resurrection of the Dead

If Jesus is not the Son of God, raised from the dead, the Christian faith is useless (I Cor. 15:14,17) because there is no resurrection of the dead in Christ. What, then, does feminist theology teach about the resurrection of the dead?

According to Ruether, the Scriptural doctrine of "the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting" is actually an offense to womanhood! How? The doctrine of the resurrection to eternal life is built on the doctrine that physical life on earth is temporal because of sin. Temporal life is brought forth from the woman's womb, and Ruether interprets the doctrine of original sin to be an oppression of women because it implies that the womb isn't adequate to

⁵⁶ Ruether, 105-6.

⁵⁷ "Although these visions of the Davidic Messiah, as well as the Apocalyptic Messiah, came to be attached to the figure of Jesus, the first-century prophet from Nazareth, it would seem that his own vision was far from these ways of thinking.... Contrary to the parties of Torah righteousness and zealous nationalism, he announced that God's favor had come upon those who had no chance in the present system of social status and religious observance—the poor, the unclean, and the unlearned, the despised underclasses of Palestinian society, including women among these underclasses." Ruether, 108.

⁵⁸ Ruether, 110.

⁵⁹ Buchrucker, 14.

⁶⁰ See Ruether, 104, for one example.





produce more than temporal life. Eternal life, through the forgiveness of sins and for the sake of Jesus Christ, is interpreted as a way for man to distance his life from his origin in the woman's womb:⁶¹

"We have seen how eschatological hope has been related to an alienation from and disappointment with bodily life and its processes of seasonal and generational renewal. In seeking an immortal duplication of seasonal and sexual generation, eschatology has also tended to despise these merely finite processes of life renewal and has seen them not as symbols of life but as symbols of death. Sexuality, maternity, the female body become despised as the images of a sinful life whence comes death, that is, merely mortal life."⁶²

Since the Christian doctrine of the resurrection is another display of man's contempt for women, is there life after death in feminist theology? The answer among feminists is inconclusive; some feminists believe in reincarnation (a logical consequence of feminist links to Hinduism because of its female deities), but Carol Christ views this with skepticism. She adopts the popular and fatalistic view that death is simply a natural part of life, and we look forward to a future in which we are merely memories and fertilizer:

"Goddess religion counsels us to accept death as part of the cycle of life. Death is understood as a return to earth, to the womb that gave us birth. This means that death does not separate us from the web of life or from the power of the Goddess. Our bodies will be transformed, providing nourishment for the earth and for other creatures. Our spirits will live on in the lives of those who remember us. Our spirits and our bodies (like those of all beings) will live on in the memory of the Gaia body. This is as much as I know."⁶³

Admitting her ignorance, she leaves the door open for some other form of life after death. Carol Christ notes, "As long as we delight in the life that has been given to us, approach the taking of life with great restraint, and accept death as the inevitable ending of life in our bodies, I do not believe we need to know the exact form our renewal and regeneration after death will take."⁶⁴ Ruether echoes this sentiment, speculating, "Perhaps immortal life, *if it is possible*, can be safely left in the hands of God/ess from which all reality came forth in the beginning?"⁶⁵

⁶¹ This is a curious conclusion on the part of Ruether. Scripture teaches that while the body is born with death to follow, the soul is already dead in sin. Such a teaching would seem to suggest that the live body brought the female womb is qualitatively better than the dead soul that comes with it. The woman's womb is not the cause of temporal death; sin is.

⁶² Ruether, 224.

⁶³ Christ, 132. Gaia theory holds that the earth works as a unified, self-regulating organism in which human life as simply part of the matrix. Climate changes, extinction of species, etc., are simply part of the earth's efforts at regulating itself. We note Carol Christ's quote with caution, as she has rejected Christianity as patriarchal beyond redemption; her views may not be the same as feminists within Christendom.

⁶⁴ Christ, 134.

⁶⁵ Ruether, 224. Italics mine.





A Quick Comparison

The subjects above are hardly a comprehensive summary of feminist theology; however, they are enough to show profound differences between feminist religion and orthodox Christianity, confessional Lutheranism. Consider the table below:

	Confessional Lutheranism	Feminist Religion
Source of Special Revelation	Scripture, which is the very Word of God. It is true, unchanging, and authoritative.	Experience. Religious texts are cited when supportive of feminist beliefs, rejected when not supportive.
The Godhead	The Trinity: One God with three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—as revealed in God’s Word.	A god/dess who is either male and female or female—as revealed by personal experience.
The Scriptural account of Creation	God creates Adam and Eve to be complementary helpers to each other, each with specific responsibilities.	A myth created by man to control women. Evolution is the method by which Mother Earth gives birth to us.
The Fall into Sin	Adam and Eve both reject God’s Word and gift of life in favor of sin.	A myth invented by man to identify woman as the cause of evil; but also woman’s first defiance of man’s domination over her.
Person and Work of Jesus	The Son of God who is born of the Virgin Mary and dies on the cross to redeem the world.	A human, non-divine, prophet to whom the Church ascribed divine power which is then used to oppress women.
The Resurrection of the Dead	Certain for the sake of Jesus.	Uncertain, because Jesus was not the Redeemer. Eternal life for the sake of Jesus is an offense to feminism.

If the teachings of feminism are startling, far more shocking are the doctrines which feminism considers offensive and denies in order to “empower” women. For the sake of their agenda, feminists are willing to jettison the authority of the Word, the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. That’s a steep, Faustian price to pay for personal empowerment.

Review: Back to Baldism

In our discussion of the fictitious “baldism,” we made several criticisms of baldist theology. We now apply those same criticisms (see p. 12) to a feminist interpretation of Scripture.

1. *“The Bible isn’t written to empower a specific group over others. It is written to proclaim Christ to all nations.”* Feminism denounces the Bible because it fails to empower women. However, the Bible was not written to “empower” women: “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (Jn. 20:31). This denunciation of Scripture by feminism is as sensible and legitimate as condemning the Constitution of the United States because it fails to empower household pets.

2. *“That the Bible was not written to empower a specific group does not mean that it is written against it.”* Feminism holds that, because the Bible does not empower women, it actually oppresses them. However, the Bible proclaims the Gospel of “no partiality,” that





Christ has died for the sins of all (Acts 10:34; Gal. 3:28). This forgiveness is not oppressive, but liberating.

3. *"To make this claim, one must deny the authority and inerrancy of Scripture."* Feminism calls into question the authority of Scripture. This is simply because Scripture condemns the doctrine of feminism; advocates are left with two options. One is to discredit the Bible. The other is to repent.

4. *"This belief is based on human imaginings, not the Bible."* Feminism speaks of going back to a time before the Bible, before men used religion to subject women to their domination, pointing to ancient artwork, obscure texts and personal "mystical knowledge" (e.g., their imagination) as proof. These are set up as evidence against Scripture. This is nothing else than an attempt to discredit the Word of God, as St. Paul warned: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

5. *"If you don't agree with me, you're wrong and oppressive' is both arrogant and faulty."* Feminism maintains that all who disagree with feminist religion oppress women, and that is doctrine is true and not subject to dispute or correction. This is not an attempt at honest dialogue. This is a strategy to control the argument.

6. *"This system of thought changes Christianity until it isn't Christianity anymore, no matter what it's called."* Feminism seeks to change the doctrine, practice and purpose of Christianity, from the forgiveness of sins in Christ to the empowerment and celebration of womanhood.⁶⁶ Feminist religion does not seek to co-exist with the Gospel; it seeks to destroy it.

While hardly comprehensive, this examination demonstrates that feminist theology is indeed anti-Christian. However, it is not enough to have such a theology; feminists seek to impose their teachings upon the Church with a specific—and highly effective—strategy. It is to this that we now turn.

⁶⁶This is an extreme of the current philosophy that Christianity is all about "felt needs," what worshipers want it to be; an extreme version, but still fruit of the same tree.





Part IV: The Battlegrounds within the Church

Feminists understand that a Christian church body is not likely suddenly and radically to change its theology; this is something that must be done slowly and subtly, akin to the proverbial boiling of the frog. The feminist strategy for changing the doctrine of the Church is straightforward: To bring Christian churches to adopt these doctrines, symbols must be changed. "Feminist theology recognizes the profound influence of symbols and makes it their first order of business that the right symbols are in place to convey the right message,"⁶⁷ writes David Scaer, and Gross concurs. Therefore, feminism admittedly and intentionally seeks to make changes in two very public symbols of the Church: The neutering of traditional liturgies and the ordination of women.⁶⁸

Liturgies

Traditional liturgies hinder the progress of feminism on two counts: Their masculine language in reference to God and their masculine language in reference to both men and women.

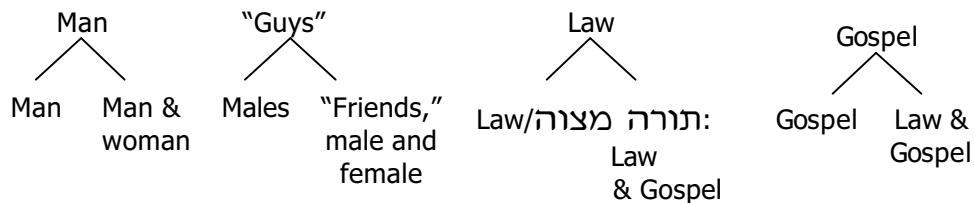
Feminism seeks to re-define God as either androgynous (male and female) or solely female. Traditional liturgies, beginning with the Invocation "In the name of the *Father* and of the *Son* and of the Holy Ghost," condemn this attempt. Therefore, traditional—Scriptural!—references to a masculine God must be changed, for they perpetuate non-feminist doctrine.

Masculine language in generic reference to people is to be altered for two reasons. According to feminist interpretation, the use of "man" to refer to "people" is a patriarchal strategy to diminish women;⁶⁹ therefore, feminists seek to alter the liturgy with inclusive language. The public reason is for the sake of equality and clarity; however, the purpose is to blur gender distinctions in order to promote feminist theology. Even then, this is only a first step for many feminists. *Since feminism seeks to elevate women in all aspects of life, liturgy is to be used to celebrate the experience of women:*

⁶⁷ Scaer, David P., "Christology and Feminism." *Logia*, IX:1, Epiphany 2000. p. 4.

⁶⁸ Gross, 41ff.

⁶⁹ It is, in fact, nothing of the sort. Linguistically, the generic use of "man" to refer to both men and women is a taxonomic hierarchy, in which a word can have both a broad and a specific meaning. "Man" can mean "male" or "mankind, both man and woman." A similar use today is the greeting, "Hey, guys!", where "guys" can be a specific reference to a group of men or a broad reference to a group of friends, both male and female. Taxonomic hierarchies are often found in theology, sometimes a result of translation into English. "Law" can refer specifically to the commandments of God (מצוה) or to the whole counsel of God (תורה), both the Law and Gospel. (Scholars speak of the "narrow" and "broad" sense, respectively.) Or "Gospel" can mean either the Good News of "Christ crucified," or all that Christ has commanded, both Law and Gospel (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). Similarly, "he" can mean both he and she, as in, "If one has the intelligence to read and promote feminist theology, he also has the acumen necessary to determine whether or not 'man' is in reference to 'males' or 'people'."





"...Many situations of utmost concern to women are not addressed by traditional liturgy (or even gender-inclusive versions) at all. The female life cycle, including menarche, menstruation, menopause, and even childbirth, is completely uncelebrated and unmarked in most traditional liturgies. Divorce, abortion, lesbian sexual orientation, the trauma of sexual violence—these common experiences of women do not even exist in the vocabulary of most conventional liturgy. Therefore, it is not surprising that the feminists who wanted to address these issues would form their own Christian or Jewish organizations in which to do so."⁷⁰

Rather than celebrate the work of God, liturgy is remodeled as a vehicle to celebrate womanhood. The preaching of Christ crucified is sacrificed in favor of female experience.

Ordination of Women

If reconstructing liturgy is important to feminism, the ordination of women is even more so. In part, this is because an all-male clergy does not show equality to women; this argument, equality, is usually the one put forth. *However, the end-goal of feminism with women's ordination is not equality in the clergy ranks, but a reconstruction of God into a deity which contains a feminine element.*

Conservative theologians who oppose the ordination of women have been subject to skepticism and scorn by making that contention. However, feminists themselves are quite open in asserting that the person of the pastor is symbolic of the identity of God. An all-male clergy symbolizes that God is masculine; the ordination of women begins to teach that God is female as well. The ordination of women is the first step in reconstructing the identity of God. Gross writes:

"My favorite example of this process took place many years ago in Eau Claire, where I live and work. At that time, in the mid-1970s, one of the local Lutheran churches was hosting its first woman pastor, and at the same time, a woman in that congregation was taking my course 'Emancipating Eve and Adam.' When the class discussed female God-language, my student narrated the following story. Her three-year-old daughter had come home from Sunday School to report that they had learned about the goodness of God, that he makes all the good things in the world, and that he even makes chocolate for chocolate chip cookies. The mother asked her daughter if she thought God could be a she. The daughter thoughtfully replied, 'Well, if Kathy can be a minister, I guess God could be a woman.'⁷¹

Prosper of Aquitaine noted centuries ago that what one believes is determined by how one worships; and how one worships is determined by what one believes.⁷² Ritual and doctrine are inseparable, and feminism understands this well. Therefore, feminist theology begins by making little, seemingly insignificant, changes in worship practices, patiently waiting for the doctrine to follow the alteration. "And so it goes," writes Rita Gross. "Wherever it starts, feminism

⁷⁰ Gross, 205-6. In some cases, the attention paid to menstruation is more than a celebration of female experience. "Jutta Voss asserts that the blood of Jesus is 'death-effecting blood' and can only be symbolically understood. Menstrual blood, on the other hand, is real, and the most important thing in the life of humanity." (Buchrucker, 14.) Menstrual blood is held in high regard because it is associated with procreation and because a woman thus sheds blood "quite naturally and without destructive consequences." Men, on the other hand, shed the blood of others through violence and war. Buchrucker, 16.

⁷¹ Gross, 201.

⁷² His famous axiom: *Lex orandi, lex credendi.*





eventually changes every part of the interwoven fabric of religion....Or, as I sometimes say to my class in feminist theology, 'It's like the hemstitch on a skirt. If you pull it, before you know what has happened, the whole thing has come undone.'"⁷³

Along with the profound symbolism, the ordination of women accomplishes another goal within a church body: The denial of the authority of Scripture. One cannot legitimately claim to honor Scripture as the inerrant and authoritative Word of God and ordain women into the pastoral ministry. Once the authority of Scripture is a doctrine wrested from the Church, there is nothing left to stop a flood of false doctrine. Where women are ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry, approval of homosexuality, fornication, abortion, adultery and all sorts of other false doctrines are sure to follow. So is the rejection of true doctrine—including the person and work of Jesus Christ for our salvation.

For the sake of summary, we chart some differences once again:

	Confessional Lutheranism	Feminist Religion
Liturgy	Purpose is to proclaim Scriptural truth of the person, work and presence of Christ for the forgiveness of sins.	Purpose is to celebrate different aspects of being a woman.
Ordination	Men only are to be ordained, according to Scripture, to carry out the apostolic ministry (unchanged) as Jesus Himself has defined it.	Women are to be ordained, contrary to Scripture, for the purpose of equality and to change the identity of God.

Liturgy and the ordination of women, then, are the two key targets of feminism within the Church, and the attacks are launched with extreme subtlety. The addition of "inclusive language," or the neutering of the liturgy is often justified for the sake of evangelism, because people might be offended if the liturgy proclaims that Jesus died for "us *men* and for our salvation." Likewise, the ordination of women is portrayed in service to the Gospel, lest people not listen to the Church's message because they "can't get their minds around this blatant gender discrimination."⁷⁴ For the Church to reach the world today with the Gospel, we are told that it must first preach and practice equality. However, feminism clearly uses this argument to remove the Gospel of Jesus Christ and destroy the Church where it can; we also note that the Fall into sin was achieved by an argument of equality: "You will be like God" (Gen. 3:5).

When asked to make little changes to accommodate equality, Christians should be extremely cautious. As David Scaer warns, "The things we may call *Adiaphora* have christological consequences."⁷⁵ In other words, the Church may well be accosted with arguments that the alteration of the liturgy to feature inclusive language can be done in good conscience, because such an alteration is neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture. However, if the goal of that alteration is to remove from the Church a true confession of Jesus Christ, then it is certainly forbidden.

⁷³ Gross, 200-201.

⁷⁴ <http://www.voicesvision.org/learn.html> For more information on those who make this accusation, see part IV, "Feminist Voices Within the LCMS."

⁷⁵ Scaer, 4.





Part IV: Feminist Voices Within the LCMS

Although this seminar seeks to identify general trends within feminism, one group requires special mention: Voices/Vision, a group within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod that advocates the ordination of women. Originally called “Different Voices/Shared Vision,” the principal contribution of this group to the debate has been a book entitled *Different Voices/Shared Vision: Male and Female in the Trinitarian Community*, published by the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau in 1992. Voices/Vision deserves mention for two reasons:

1. Membership in the LCMS⁷⁶ implies that one agrees with the doctrine and practice of the LCMS, and that one unconditionally subscribes to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. By maintaining membership in the LCMS or its congregations, the members of Voices/Vision imply that they hold to such a subscription and that their theology is correct and acceptable throughout the synod. This is not the case, though the appearance may mislead the uninformed.⁷⁷
2. Unlike the majority of feminist theologians, Voices/Vision does not openly deny Scripture as authoritative and inerrant. Instead this group maintains that a correct interpretation of Scripture supports the ordination of women. This, too, can mislead the unwary.

Do the claims of Voices/Vision regarding the Scriptures stand up? For the purposes of this seminar, a comprehensive critique is beyond the scope. Fortunately for us, a readily-accessible study has already been done: “Male and Female, He Created Them: An Exegetical Paper in Response to a Book Entitled: *Different Voices/Shared Vision*.”⁷⁸ In this 44-page paper, Rev. Michael McCoy responds to each of the Voices/Vision proof-texts in turn, and is well worth reading. For our purposes here, we will simply note the hermeneutics of Voices/Vision, or how they treat and interpret the Scriptures to prove their position.

1. Voices/Vision works on the principle that “the ends justify the means,” maintaining that any obstruction to the Gospel must be done away with.⁷⁹ While this sounds godly on the surface, Voices/Vision holds that “such necessary doctrines of the Law, the order of creation, and the qualifications of those occupying the office of the public ministry”⁸⁰ are obstructions to the Gospel. With this principle of interpretation, Voices/Vision is able to dispose of any doctrine it opposes by calling it a barrier.⁸¹ *This principle allows members of Voices/Vision,*

⁷⁶ Membership in the LCMS is held by rostered professional church workers and congregations. Non-church workers who are members of LCMS congregations are technically *not* members of the LCMS; however, membership in an LCMS congregation implies the same unconditional subscription.

⁷⁷ On its website, Voices/Vision does not see a departure from one’s freely-made ordination vows and unconditional subscription as a matter of dishonesty. Rather, it is “dar[ing] to differ with the ‘official line’” (<http://voicesvision.org/learn.html>), as if the “official line” is necessarily wrong. One might observe that Eve dared to differ with the “official line” in Genesis 3:6, as did Adam, before seeking to hide from God.

⁷⁸ This unpublished paper, written by Rev. Michael L. McCoy and reviewed by Rev. Jerome V. Wohlfeil, was presented for discussion to the pastors of Circuit 10 of the Northwest District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It is available for download at www.scholia.net.

⁷⁹ McCoy, 2.

⁸⁰ McCoy, 2.

⁸¹ Apart from Voices/Vision, this is an all-too-common refrain in our present day: “Because so many people are perishing in sin without the Gospel, we must set aside those doctrines which impede the work of evangelism.” Such doctrines usually include the Office of the Holy Ministry,





while claiming to uphold the authority of Scripture, to ignore any portion of Scripture which contradicts their agenda.

2. Voices/Vision works on the principle that parts of God's Word were written only for a certain time and place.⁸² In particular, Voices/Vision holds that women were forbidden from serving as pastors because such service would offend unbelievers and serve as an obstacle to the Gospel. Such service is no longer an offense to American society, so the prohibition against female pastors no longer applies.⁸³ In fact, Voices/Vision holds, the refusal to ordain women serves as an offense that prevents unbelievers from hearing the Gospel; therefore, according to principle #1, women must be ordained so as not to offend the world! The absurdity of this argument is obvious. On the one hand, pagan religions of the day featured many a priestess, so the presence of a female pastor would hardly be remarkable or scandalous to non-Christians. Furthermore, the Church was not concerned about causing offense by following the Word of God; indeed, they suffered many persecutions for doctrines which offended the world, and to which their persecutors turned deaf ears. The Gospel itself is a stumbling-block (I Cor. 1:23). Carried out entirely, the logical outcome of principle #2 would be to redefine the Gospel until it was no longer offensive to anyone. In that case, it would no longer be the Gospel. This logical outcome happens far too often today. In any event: *By claiming that some of God's Word only applied to the time in which it was written, Voices/Vision enables itself to ignore any portion of Scripture with which it disagrees by claiming it is culturally-bound to one time period.*

3. Voices/Vision interprets the Bible based upon its presuppositions: In other words, it first establishes its doctrine and then interprets the Bible to agree with its pre-determined goals. McCoy cites one example: In interpreting the Bible, it is commonly understood that the author "used a word in its most common meaning, unless it can be proven otherwise."⁸⁴ Voices/Vision rejects this principle of interpretation, allowing it to redefine words to match its desired, pre-conceived meaning. *By interpreting the Bible based on its presuppositions, Voices/Vision seeks to redefine words, texts and doctrines to agree with its goals.*

With principles like these, Voices/Vision builds its case for the ordination of women, with an unsurprising starting point: *"The major thesis of the collection of essays would seem to be that the Sacrament of Baptism gives an inherent right to every Christian to occupy the Office of the Public Ministry."*⁸⁵ Anyone who is baptized, holds Voices/Vision, should be able to serve as a pastor because Baptism grants (you guessed it) *equality*; apparently, Holy Baptism is thought to set aside the order of creation. However, Baptism grants no equality in creation; it gives the forgiveness of sins. It is not given to make men and women interchangeable in this world, but to make them holy before God.⁸⁶

the practice of Closed Communion, and Church Fellowship. It is a spurious claim: People have been perishing in sin without the Gospel since the Fall into sin, yet the Lord gives no permission in Scripture to set aside even a letter of what He commands.

⁸² This can be true—but *only where God Himself says it is true*. Such a case is the ceremonial law of the Old Testament, including animal sacrifice, unclean foods, etc. Christians are no longer bound to these commands because the Lord declares they are no longer in effect in His Word. However, Voices/Vision attempts to nullify portions of Scripture apart from the Lord's command.

⁸³ McCoy, 2.

⁸⁴ McCoy, 2.

⁸⁵ McCoy, 3.

⁸⁶ The purpose of the Gospel is not equality, but salvation; and the Lord makes no attempt to establish equality in this world. Thus Martin Luther writes, "...Here on earth there will always be inequality, even as people and stations in life are different. A prince is a different person and has





Such principles open the door for all sorts of mischief. With the same principles, one can argue that, since homosexuality no longer offends the general populace, St. Paul's condemnation of it as sin in Romans 1 was culturally-bound, and the Church should ordain homosexuals into the ministry today.⁸⁷

An excellent examination of the Scripture texts which Voices/Vision seeks to redefine can be found in the rest of McCoy's paper, so we need not take further time here. What is obvious is this: While claiming to uphold the authority of Scripture, Voices/Vision sets forth principles that do anything but uphold the Word of God.

Voices/Vision has been rather quiet in recent times. The Voices/Vision website is a mere four pages, including the introduction page, a mission statement, helpful links, a bibliography, and a statement which includes unsubstantiated criticism of confessional Lutheranism and an explanation why supporters of Voices/Vision decline to admit their identities.⁸⁸ There is actually very little of substance to be found, though the agenda still shows through. At one point the anonymous author "Junia"⁸⁹ laments that people have left the LCMS because "the visible barrier to women's service in the church does not square with *their understanding* of gender equality."⁹⁰ Despite claims that their doctrine is based upon Scripture, Voices/Vision points to personal understanding and experience as the arbiter of doctrine.

a different office than a preacher; a maid, a different person with a different position than her mistress; and a schoolmaster is a different man with a different role than the mayor. Obviously then, they neither should nor can function with the same kind of lifestyle. Here in this world, then, of necessity, such differences remain. But Christ operates under a different principle in his kingdom: I will give as much to one as to the other. The reason? No one has ever succeeded in earning the kingdom of heaven—salvation from death and sin—and because of that I am not under obligation to anyone; always the kingdom comes by grace to whomsoever I will." (*House Postil*, Sermon for Septuagesima, ¶15)

⁸⁷ This is not a tenet of Voices/Vision; it has been a logical consequence in other churches that have ordained women, however.

⁸⁸ Voices/Vision explains, "Daystar [a group within the LCMS with whom Voices/Vision works] is an organization that fosters open talk and debate. The nature of its cyberspace conversations make it necessary to protect its members by making every effort to keep its conversation safe from investigation and harassment. The leaders of Voices/Vision [sic] remain anonymous for this very reason. Some call these people cowards while others call them prudent in light of the current chilly climate in the church. Wherever you fall on this spectrum, you should know that all three organizations [Daystar, Voices/Vision and Jesus First] are working for change in the synod" (<http://voicesvision.org/learn.html>). The lament of a "chilly climate" is silly on the part of people who refuse to admit who they are, but brazenly acknowledge they are seeking to subvert the confession of a church body away from Scripture. Imagine a financial planner who told prospective clients, "I won't tell you who I am, but please entrust your fortunes to me!" One imagines that he might receive a chilly reception as well; and the matter that lies before us is far more important.

⁸⁹ The introduction to this "Letters from Junia" page mention Paul's statement in Romans 16:7 that one "Junia" is of note among the apostles. Advocates of women's ordination often hold that Junia is a woman, and that many attempts have been made to masculinize the name rather than admit that Junia was not a man. If one wishes to believe that "Junia" and its derivatives cannot be a man's name, one might first run this by the current head football coach of the University of Hawaii, Mr. June Jones. (One might wish to step back while doing so.) cf. McCoy, 12, for a more scholarly treatment.

⁹⁰ <http://voicesvision.org/learn.html>, emphasis mine.





The most revealing page at the website is the bibliography:⁹¹ Among many of the books recommended without reservation are works by Ruether, Schüssler-Fiorenza, and other feminists who vociferously reject the inspiration of Scripture.

No matter the claim, it remains true: One cannot believe in the authority and inerrancy of God's Word and promote the ordination of women into the pastoral ministry. The two doctrines are not compatible.

⁹¹ <http://voicesvision.org/readmore.html>





In Conclusion...

One will not get far through life without encountering supporters of feminist theology. This may take place on the college campus or in the workplace, or even within the congregation: Because society is always barraging Christians with worldly values, many members of confessional Lutheran churches today may harbor a sympathy for feminist theology—not a full-blown support of a female deity, but the uneasy feeling that the prohibition against women pastors is “unfair.”

In responding to those who support the ordination of women and other tenets of feminism, one should first keep in mind what is actually at stake. This is not a matter of equality and “rights,” of changing the doctrine of the Church just enough to avoid offense. This is about the Gospel itself, and whether or not we will reject the Word for a manmade religion that rejects Jesus. The best preparation, therefore, is a steady diet of the means of grace: Read, hear, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Lord’s Word. This will prepare you in knowledge, so that you can refute the accusations brought against the Bible. It will also prepare you in faith, for the Holy Spirit is at work in the means of grace to strengthen and preserve you in the one true faith unto life everlasting.

When dialoguing with those who defend feminist theology, expect the defender to fall into one of two camps.

1. The first are those who defend feminism on the basis of conviction. They know and embrace the doctrines of feminism and openly oppose the authority of God’s Word and the Christian faith. Because they have accomplished such ardent and militant conviction, you will likely make little headway in discussing what the Bible says; they have already rejected the Bible, and will therefore reject any argument you make on the basis of Scripture.

However, whether or not they acknowledge Scripture to be the authoritative Word of God, it is. God’s Law continues to accuse them in their sin, and God’s Gospel still offers forgiveness to those who repent. Therefore, in responding to ardent feminists, there are two aspects to your approach. First, point out the flaws in their system of teaching; but as you do so, understand that what you call a flaw (their rejection of Scripture) is to them a virtue. Second, and more importantly, tell them what the Bible says about feminism, sin and forgiveness. Third, be prepared to suffer a less than gracious response. Feminism is confrontational by nature, and reactions to opponents will often less than charitably paint the opponent as the “oppressor” and the feminist as the “victim.” This attack is based not on objectivity, but on experience and agenda. It doesn’t matter if the opponent is actually being oppressive; what matters is that the feminist “feels” that he is.

2. The second are those who defend feminism on the basis of ignorance or misinformation. Deception is a tactic of feminism, for it often presents itself as a fight for equality within the Church, not a separate religion. Supporters in this category advocate feminist principles because they don’t know the full story, and this gives you opportunity for dialogue. Give them the full story, showing the doctrine that lies behind the demand for “equality;” then discuss the fallacies and outcomes of feminist theology. Also, be ready to provide an account of how Scripture *really* treats men and women: It is written to proclaim the Good News that Christ Jesus has died to win redemption for all, both men and women. (We’ve discussed this throughout this paper; for another approach, see Appendix A.)

Feminism is one more variation of the serpent’s question in Genesis 3:1: “Did God really say...?” It seeks to overthrow Scripture for a sinful agenda, and is willing to sacrifice the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation to do so. It is inherently divisive, pitting its





supporters against all opponents, demanding supremacy—not equality. This, however, is far from the truth of God’s Word: He has created men and women to serve Him and one another, and to do so within the callings He gives. This is not divisive, but uniting.

Far more than that, He has given His Son to die for all, “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.” (Gal. 3:28)





Appendix A: Does the Bible Discriminate against Women?

Along with the demand for “equality,” another frequent recruitment tactic is to declare the Bible to be discriminatory against women. In this seminar, we have laid much of the groundwork for responding to this already. However, let us take a moment to buttress these arguments a bit more.

Rosemary Radford Ruether gives four reasons as to why the Bible is discriminatory:

1. The Scriptures do not intentionally preserve women’s experience.
2. The Scriptures mention women only in relation to men.
3. The Scriptures either praise women for compliance or chastise them for disobedience, but never exalt them for their independence.
4. The Scriptures treat women as marginal characters.

We can respond to these points as follows:

Regarding the first accusation, it makes perfect sense *if* one believes that the purpose of the Bible is to preserve and promote the experience of women, but that is not the purpose of Scripture: “...These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (Jn. 20:31). Therefore, to criticize the Bible because it fails to promote the experience of women is as illegitimate as criticizing the movie “101 Dalmations” because it fails to promote support for military veterans. One might as well spend time faulting a cookbook because it doesn’t explain auto mechanics, or criticizing an apple because it isn’t a potato. A feminist approach to the Bible says, “The Bible isn’t what I want it to be. On that basis, it is wrong.”

Regarding the third accusation, it is absolutely true that women are praised for their compliance or chastised for disobedience in the Bible. It is just as true that men are also praised for their compliance and chastised for their disobedience. This is the work of the Law: Men and women both are to keep God’s Law, and “Blessed *is* the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful” (Ps. 1:1). Those who sin and fail to keep the Law face judgment: The ungodly *are* not so, but *are* like the chaff which the wind drives away” (Ps. 1:4).

Independence and power are not virtues for men and women in Scripture: God calls upon us to submit, serve and love one another—men and women both, in the callings which God gives to them. He sets the example in loving the world so much that He sends His Son to serve by submitting to death on the cross (John 3:16-17).

Regarding the second and fourth accusations, is it true that more men receive mention in Scripture than women? Sure. This is because *the purpose of the Bible is to point to Jesus*. The patriarchs, judges and kings of the Old Testament are often prophetic symbols of Jesus, and the Lord chooses that His Son be symbolized by male characters. Likewise, the Lord Jesus chooses and sends men into the apostolic ministry as His ambassadors, and their gender is part of the symbolism that they stand “in the stead and by the command of Christ.” Feminists are well aware of the power of this symbolism; it is why they are so adamantly for the ordination of women today and against the authority of Scripture, as we have seen.





The fact that more men receive mention in Scripture than women does not mean that the intent of the Bible is to marginalize women.⁹² The purpose of Scripture is to proclaim the Savior who has died and risen again in order to redeem women and men from sin. To reject Scripture because it fails to include an adequate number of heroines is once again to reject it on the basis of, "It doesn't say what I want it to."

One of the complaints regarding the "marginalization of women" is the common reference to Christians, both men and women, as "sons of God" (Mt. 5:9; Lk. 20:36; Ro. 8:14; 9:26; Gal. 3:26; 4:6). This also finds its way into the liturgy: "To them that believe on His name He giveth power to become the sons of God and hath promised them His Holy Spirit."⁹³ At the same time, there is no mention of "daughters of God" in Scripture. Is this discrimination?

No, it's metaphor. Within Old Testament Israel the son received the inheritance; it went to the daughter only if there was no son (Num. 27:8-9); the daughter was normally supported by being married to a man and heir of a different family. This was not just for order within the society: It was to point to Christ, the only-begotten Son and heir of all things (Heb. 11:2). We receive the inheritance of heaven for the sake of Jesus, the Son of God; in Him, we have the hope of forgiveness and eternal life.

As metaphor, "son" means "one who inherits the family treasure." Christians, both men and women, are "sons of God" because they both inherit the kingdom of heaven for the sake of Jesus Christ. (Presumably, one who was metaphorically a "daughter of God" would be given away to a different kingdom.) This is not a discriminatory statement, but an inclusive one, for it announces that both men and women are heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Similar metaphors exist within Scripture. The Church is called the "bride" of Christ (Rev. 21:9). The meaning here is not that male Christians are actually feminine or are being marginalized in favor of women, but that they too have been redeemed by Christ.⁹⁴ Christians are called the "sheep" of His pasture (Ps. 79:13), but this is no indication that people are being marginalized in favor of woolly creatures; rather it means that they are shepherded by the Lord (Ps. 23).

⁹² We might add as well that many of the men in Scripture are hardly shown at their best: Noah, Abraham, Judah, David are all shown to be sinful in graphic, uncomplimentary ways.

⁹³ TLH, 6.

⁹⁴ The author has heard no demands that the Church to be renamed "the Bridegroom of Christ," for that would distort the metaphor of Christ and His bride. It would furthermore imply a homosexual, and thus abominable, relationship between the Savior and His people. One must wonder: Do those who advocate the ordination of women to stand "in the stead of Christ", so that the *woman* represents Christ to His *bride*, wish to imply a similar abominable relationship?





Appendix B: Scriptural Texts Regarding Gender and the Office of the Holy Ministry

Seminar participants may want a list of Scriptural texts that limit the Office of the Holy Ministry to men alone. In the pamphlet "What About...The Ordination of Women to the Pastoral Office," Dr. A. L. Barry gave the following sample passages. We offer them here with brief comment.

1 Corinthians 14:33-34, 37

³³For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. ³⁴Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says.... ³⁷If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

Advocates of the ordination of women offer three primary criticisms of this text: They hold that it is limited only to the congregation in Corinth, that it is St. Paul's opinion, and that the demand for absolute silence on the part of women is ridiculous.

This is not limited to the congregation at Corinth, for St. Paul is speaking of "all the churches of the saints" (33) and the women in the[se] churches (34).

This is not the opinion of St. Paul, but of "the commandments of the Lord" (37).

The command that women not speak is in reference to public speaking—leading the worship service. From the verses which immediately precede 14:33-37, it is obvious that the speaking is the public speaking of the worship service--the reading of Scripture texts, preaching, presiding over the liturgy, etc. Paul is describing worship in "all the churches of the saints" (35). Also "in the churches," women are not to speak; and in the context, this means that they are not publicly to preach, read the Scripture texts, preside over the liturgy, etc.⁹⁵ This does not, however, diminish their participation in the service: Remember, worship is not about who gets to lead, but about *receiving the forgiveness of sins*.

1 Timothy 2:11-12

¹¹Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. ¹²And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

Once again, St. Paul speaks of worship, declaring that women are not to lead the worship service. The verb "to teach" (διδάσκειν) is commonly used in the New Testament to refer to the "official teaching of the Word of God. In the Gospels it is commonly associated with the public and authoritative teaching of the Word in the temple or the synagogue."⁹⁶

1 Timothy 3:1-2

¹This *is* a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ²A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach...

Titus 1:5-6

⁵For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—⁶if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

⁹⁵ McCoy, 22-27 *passim*.

⁹⁶ McCoy, 33.





As Paul lists criteria for the office (ἐπισκοπῆς) of bishop, he clearly regards the office to be limited to men; there is no provision for women to serve in that calling.

For an extensive discussion of Scriptural texts regarding the ordination of women, please see Pastor McCoy's paper, "Male and Female He Created Them" (see Bibliography).



Appendix C: Blank Chart for Use in Seminar

This is a blank reproduction of the charts found on pages 22-26. The chart itself appears on the following pages, hopefully saving you the tedium of "whiting-out" the appendix title and this text.

Feminism vs. The Church

	Confessional Lutheranism	Feminist Religion
Source of Special Revelation		
The Godhead		
The Scriptural account of Creation		
The Fall into Sin		

Person & Work of Jesus		
The Resur- rection of the Dead		
Liturgy		
Ordination		



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