

This paper is an extension of a paper I presented at the fall pastors conference for Iowa District East last October. The theme for the conference was on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, so my brother, John, assigned me the topic: feminism and Ephesians. I decided to tweak the topic a bit, so I changed it to Patriarchy in Ephesians, because I believe patriarchy more accurately describes the goal of our theological battle against feminism and any other attacks on God's order. I believe that speaking of patriarchy is more constructive than talking about feminism. Patriarchy positively describes what God instituted. It also describes God. He is, after all, our Father.

Patriarchy is positive. Feminism is negative. Patriarchy affirms the created order, which God calls good. Feminism protests this order. Patriarchy exalts the woman as the flesh and bone of her husband. Feminism complains about her husband. So how are we to respond to feminism? It is not enough to fight feminism on its own terms. When we do this, we might still hold to some pretty conservative principles. But we easily end up bending on issues we deem not as crucial. We find that this happens not only in Lutheran circles, but also among all so called conservative church bodies, and indeed among all so called conservative movements in the societal and political arenas. When we pay attention to the mainstream conservative trends in not only the church, but also in the state and the home, it is clear that most of those who stand up to feminism also bend to feminism.

Since about 2008, I have referred to this among my friends and family as the "Sarah Palin Method." This is where conservatives try to pander to the sensibilities of feminists by finding a conservative woman to fight their political battles. This is only a symptom of a deep depravity of manly virtue, which pollutes the air we all breathe. Allow me to give two anecdotes to illustrate this problem. One of my brothers told of his experience at a social gathering of homeschoolers. He knew one of the fathers, and he had had some good conversations with him in the past. But when he found himself hanging out with the men while the women were inside visiting, he found that he was not in the setting for substantial conversations. Recounting the story, he lamented to me, saying that he would rather have been in the kitchen talking to the women than sitting outside awkwardly throwing a ball around while none of the men showed any interest in talking of anything of substance. At least the women were probably talking about things like motherhood, teaching their kids, and other things that actually matter.

Here's the other anecdote. When I was a junior in college, my brother, James, and I were roommates on a co-ed floor. This has become the norm in college dorms. What I noticed was that when we would argue with the liberal men, then the women would get upset. The men would then want to please the women, so they would ridicule us for being too mean. They wanted James and me to submit to their rules of engagement, which was basically, "Don't talk about things on which we disagree, because that's not nice." As the year progressed I noticed the fruit of all this. The young men, in trying to get the girls to respect them, began to act like the young women. The young women, in turn, began to act like the young men. But both were mimicking a very confused version of the opposite sex, which only produced an emasculated immaturity, which resents any controversial assertions.

So, back to the Sarah Palin Method. Men have been trained that no one will listen to them if they assert that women are not the head of men, and that the husband is the head of the home. They might believe it, and even confess it to their conservative friends. But they have been trained not to let anyone else know it. This is the air we breathe in our culture. So just as the Republicans use the tactic, likewise the conservatives in the LCMS do as well. Take a look at the United List, the list of candidates endorsed by a conservative think-tank in the LCMS. It is saturated by conservative women. They know

that they can get women elected to various boards, because mushy men and women will vote for women.

But aren't they conservative? Yeah, sure they are. They oppose women's ordination, after all. But here we see the result of trying to fight feminism head on. We fall into feminism's trap. While we might retain certain patriarchal positions, we will inevitably fall into the net of feminism. Like a young man who tries to act like the girls to get them to like him, conservatives act like feminists in order to win them over. But both end up in shame.

So our prime approach must not be to attack feminism. We must first define and confess patriarchy. Reducing all restrictions on women to the pastoral office only shifts the basis from the order of creation to one application.¹ But we would do well not to treat the Scriptures as a bunch of arbitrary "do's" and "don'ts." There is a reason why only men are allowed to be pastors, after all (1 Tim 2:13). And that reason is found in the doctrine of patriarchy.

Too often the roles of women are seen to be oppressed by patriarchy. And even among those who confess to be Bible-believers, the whole patriarchy thing becomes sort of an embarrassing detail. We might explain it away as simply a part of the *Sitz im Leben* of the biblical authors.² Or we might grant its existence, but then go on conveniently ignoring it as we list all the things women are technically allowed to do. Among conservatives the order of creation is somewhat affirmed in the home and the church, yet not necessarily in the civil society.³ But we run into problems when we treat patriarchy in such an arbitrary way, as if it applies to spiritual things but not to earthly things. It resembles a sort of quietistic and even gnostic assumption that God isn't really all that concerned about societal life. Is the order of creation simply our privately held religious belief that cannot actually be applied to our daily lives? How we live in society should reflect what we believe. If we confess a doctrine then we should be able to apply it to our lives.

¹ "The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, in *The Reporter* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, December 1994).

"In keeping with what the Scriptures teach about the service of women with respect to the pastoral office, women may not assume responsibility for or carry out in behalf of the congregation (that is "publicly"), and in the stead of Christ, those functions in the local congregation that would involve them in the exercise of authority inherent in

this authoritative public teaching office in the church. This remains the only stricture."

For a critique on this line of reasoning, see: Nathan Jastram, "Man as Male and Female," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 68:1 (January 2004): 89ff.

² See "Women in the Church," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, September 1985), 5.

³ Ibid, 38

Therefore the goal of this paper is to present both the doctrine as well as the application of patriarchy. We must keep in mind that when we speak of the doctrine of patriarchy, we are including it as an article within the entire body of Christian doctrine (*corpus doctrinae*), which centers around the chief article of Christ's redemptive work whereby the sinner is justified before God through faith. We may call the doctrine of patriarchy the doctrine of headship. There are two kinds of headship: the spiritual and the created headship. The application of this doctrine consists of the good works in the Christian life, which, as St. Paul says to Titus, are in accordance with sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). When we see how headship is carried out by God then we may gain a better grasp of the Christian's life within the church, home, and the civil estate. That is, we may gain a better grasp of what is in accord with this doctrine. This paper will therefore deal first with the *doctrine* of patriarchy, both created and spiritual. It will then deal with the *application* of this doctrine.

The Doctrine of Patriarchy or Headship

Patriarchy is the teaching of headship. There are two kinds of headship: spiritual and created. The spiritual headship refers to the headship God himself has, which he has given to Christ to be revealed in the church. St. Paul says (Eph 1:22) that the Father put all things under the feet of the Son, giving him "as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." This spiritual headship of the Father is revealed in the church, who is the bride of Christ or the body of Christ (Eph 1:22; 4:12; 5:23, 25). This headship is realized in the Fatherhood of God through blessing (Eph 1:3) and electing (Eph 1:4) his church, as well as through the Husbandhood of Christ through saving her (Eph 5:23).

Paul opens his Epistle to the Ephesians with a blessing to God the Father (1:3). In the Old Testament, God was known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, since Christ is the fulfillment of the Seed of the Patriarchs, God reveals himself to us as the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴ In his commentary, Tom Winger discusses how St. Paul's blessing reflects the traditional Hebrew *Berakah* prayer, in which God's saving actions are recounted.⁵ Thus Zechariah blesses the "God of Israel" for redeeming his people (Luke 1:68ff). This headship as God or Father of Israel is carried out by raising up for them a horn of salvation (Luke 1:69); κέρασ σωτηρίας), or as we sing in the Benedictus, "a mighty Savior." The Fatherhood of God in the order of salvation is affirmed therefore by the headship of Christ over his church (Eph 5:23).

The body of Christ is the household of God the Father (2:19). You cannot affirm one without affirming the other. Jesus, as the Bridegroom, reveals to us the Father. God is the Father of his household. He is the God, or Father, of the household of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. He is the God of Israel. And as the God of us, his household, he blesses us, as St. Paul says, "with every blessing in the Spirit in the heavenly places in Christ."⁶ The Spirit is therefore the one who delivers such Fatherhood and Husbandhood to us and keeps us in it.

⁴ George Stoeckhart, *Ephesians*, trans Martin Sommer, (St. Louis: CPH, 1952), 36.

⁵ Thomas Winger, *Ephesians, Concordia Commentary*, (St. Louis: CPH, 2015), 182-83.

⁶ Winger's translation: He demonstrates that this entire blessing from verse 3 through 14 is an extensive Trinitarian blessing. Ibid, 182

When we consider the spiritual headship of God it is crucial to discuss both the outward works of God (*opera ad extra*) as well as the internal relationship of the Godhead (*opera ad intra*). The Lutheran dogmatician, John Andrew Quenstedt, explained the external works of the Godhead (*opera ad extra*) in his intimate dealings with the church. The Father brings the bride to his Son, preparing a wedding banquet (Matt 22:2). The Son is the Bridegroom (2 Cor 11:2), who bought her with his own blood (Acts 20:28), calling her his church (Matt 16:18). Through the holy ministry which God has instituted, the Holy Spirit cleanses her and adorns her for Christ the Bridegroom (Eph 5:27; Rev. 21:2). The Holy Spirit is also the gift or pledge, which the Son gives to his bride (Eph 1:14; John 3:5; 1 Peter 1:12). The Holy Spirit stays with the church forever (John 14:16,17).⁷

This external work of God is reflected by the outward work in the created headship of fathers and husbands. Nathan Jastram observes that the created headship is also analogous to the headship in the internal relationship (*ad intra*) of the Godhead. He writes:

In the case of the three persons of the Trinity, a helpful concept through which to understand their unity and distinction is that their *unity* is apparent in the “works to the outside,” *opera ad extra*, while their *distinction* is apparent in the “works to the inside,” *opera ad intra*. The same concept is helpful in the case of the two sexes of man. In their relation to what is outside themselves (*opera ad extra*, so to speak), i.e., in their relation to God and nature, they are united as man, while in their relation to each other (*opera ad intra*, so to speak), they are distinct as male and female.⁸

Jastram makes this observation on the basis of 1 Corinthians 11:3: “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” St. Paul elaborates on the headship of the Father over the Son later in chapter 15:28: “When all things are subjected (ὑποταγῆ) to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected (ὑποταγήσεται) to him who put all things in subjection (ὑποτάξαντι) under him, that God may be all in all.” This internal relationship of the Godhead is revealed in his outward work, as the Father gives Christ as head over all things to his body, the church, who is the very “fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph 1:22,23).”

Thus the glory of God is ascribed to him “in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Eph 3:21).” This is why our understanding of the ministry, and specifically the Sacrament of the Altar, is tied to the doctrine of headship. Christ’s headship is manifested in his exaltation, his ascension. But he doesn’t go up to some man-cave in the sky. No, he fills all things with his very body to which his divinity fully communicates its attributes. Therefore, God reveals his headship through his ministry of the Word and Sacraments.

So the fullness of Christ who fills all things is realized in his ascension when he gives the gift of the ministry to his church (Eph 4:10,11). The ministry of the Word and Sacraments (One Baptism, 4:5), to

⁷ Johann Andreas Quenstedt, *The Church*, trans. Luther Poellot, (Malone, TX: Repristination Press 1999), 10-11.

⁸ Jastram, “Man as Male and Female,” 63-64.

which certain men are called, is the means by which God brings in all those he has elected in Christ.⁹ This is what is meant by the “perfection of the saints” (4:12; καταρτισμὸν). This ministry is the means by which the body of Christ is built up. This ministry of the Word is the fullness of Christ who fills all in all. It is God revealing his spiritual headship and wisdom to all the angels, both good and evil (3:10). This headship is not covering away somewhere. It is public. And he gives this ministry, this fullness, to his church, just as St. Paul says to the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:21-23), all things are yours, you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. Having Christ as her head, the church therefore possesses all things. This is nothing more than the authority or right (ἐξουσία) to be called children of God (John 1:12). So we see that the outward works of God affirm both his Fatherhood as well as his Husbandhood. And the beneficiary is the bride of Christ, the church.

So far we have treated the spiritual headship of God. Let us now examine the created headship, or patriarchy.

Created headship refers to the headship God has over his creation, which he has given to fathers over their households and husbands over their wives. This created arrangement of headship is often referred to as the order of creation, or, as the old Lutherans called it, the natural order.¹⁰ The created headship reflects the spiritual headship. The patriarchy in families is a mirror of the patriarchy of God. St. Paul says that every family (πατριὰ) in heaven and on earth has been named by or from the Father (Eph 3:15). This shows both the headship of the Father over the children through faith, namely the children who imitate him (Eph 5:1), as well as his headship over all creation. All the families of the earth are the creation of God. The natural order of father as head of his home is not a culturally conditioned social concept. It is God’s created order.

In the Old Testament, a family or clan (הַקְּהָלִים) is also known as a “father’s house” (בֵּית־אָבִי). God calls Abraham out of his father’s house (Gen 12:1). In the census of the tribes of Israel, they registered themselves each by clan or family (הַקְּהָלִים), a term used interchangeably with the house of their father (Num 1:18). The fact that the genealogies of the families in the Old Testament are described through the lineage of fathers demonstrates the created headship, which God established. The father is the head of his household, and the husband is the head of his wife.

⁹ Stoeckhart, *Ephesians*, 201:

πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, v. 12. These three parts are not co-ordinated. Although all these persons are teachers of the Church, yet Paul indicated the specific work and duty in the Church of each of them. They have been given and appointed to the “working of ministering”, or “the business of the service,” and this ministering is the “building up of the body of Christ, “ of the Church; it consists therefore in teaching and preaching. The proclamation of the divine Word is the only means through which the Church of Christ is built. The purpose, however, of this service is the “perfecting of the saints,” the *consummatio* (Vulgate), the completion of the saints.”

¹⁰ Abraham Calov, *Biblia Illustrata Vol 2 Exhibens Epistolas Apostolicas Universas Et Apocalypsin Johanneam Par 1, Wittenberg 1719: 722.*

The family or father's house is created by God. And we find in the outward work of God's headship that it is redeemed by him as well. We therefore return to Paul's Trinitarian prayer in chapter 3 of Ephesians, and find the unity of God's creation and redemption of families. Winger comments, "... Paul is not restricting God's Fatherhood to internal Trinitarian relations, but relating it to all creation, and particularly to the families in heaven and on earth who derive their name from him (3:15)."¹¹

In Christ God has joined himself to his creation. Thus we find the lineage in Luke traced backwards all the way to Adam and finally to God (Luke 3:23-38). As a boy, Jesus affirmed both the spiritual headship of the Father, saying "I must be in my Father's house," as well as the created headship when he submitted himself (ὑποτασσόμενος) to his parents (Luke 2:49,51). So just as God created the families (father's houses) of the earth, he also promised to redeem them in Christ. This goes back to his promise to Abraham that through him all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:3). It is reiterated in chapters 18:17 and 22:18 when he says that all the *nations* (ἔθνη) shall be blessed. So Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations through baptism and teaching (Matt 28:19,20) is followed by St. Peter who, after presenting baptism to the people on Pentecost, declared (Acts 2:39), "This promise is for you and your children..."

It is therefore easy to point out the allusion St. Paul makes to the "one baptism" that Jesus mandated to be done in the Triune Name (Matt 28:19), when he says that every family is named from the Father, just as they are blessed "with every blessing in the Spirit in the heavenly places in Christ."

So the spiritual headship of God being revealed in the church through Christ and the Holy Spirit paves the way for the created headship in the Table of duties. God first reveals his headship in his salvation or redemption of his church through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, which he gives to his church in all wisdom (Eph 1:7,8) – the wisdom, which he reveals through his church who possesses all his glory in Christ (3:10,21). He then affirms his created order as it is redeemed in Christ. Therefore, St. Paul is able, with much ease, to move right into the Table of Duties in chapters 5 and 6 of Ephesians. Paul affirms what has been established by God for husbands and wives (5:31; cf. Gen 2:24), for children (6:2; cf. Ex 20:12), and for parents, specifically fathers (6:4; cf. Deut 6:7). Here the headship of the husband and the father is affirmed, and yet the cross and affliction that accompany such duties are not denied. This is an important point when we deal with the doctrine of patriarchy. Just because there is sin, and men are certainly flawed, we don't thereby deny what God has established. Wives submitting to their husbands is not a consequence of the fall. Rather, the struggle, which accompanies it, is a consequence and punishment for sin.

Commenting on Ephesians 5:21ff, Abraham Calov makes a distinction between the order of nature and the order of punishment. The natural order is asserted in Ephesians 5 for wives submitting to their husbands. This is expressed in 1 Cor 11:1ff and 1 Tim 2:13. It is distinguished from the punishment, which adds a curse to the order because of sin (Gen 3:16). And in turn the natural order is restored in the Gospel on account of the image of Christ and the Church. Calov continues: "The obedience of nature is never the obedience of the punishment, neither is God or Christ named the Bridegroom or

¹¹ Winger, *Ephesians*, 413

husband of the church more so in the Gospel than in the Old Testament (Hos 2; Is 54; 62; Ps 45)... Nevertheless it arises from sin that the wife is bound to bear the crookedness of her husband."¹²

The punishment given to the woman in Genesis 3:16 serves as a cross even as she enjoys redemption in Christ. Though it is part of the curse on woman for transgressing God's commandment, this verse expresses much more than an impulsive precept. It shows an established order that affirms how God first set things up in paradise. In fact, this punishment leaves a glimpse of hope for Eve. Luther explains that it is a happy and joyful punishment because it follows the *protoevangelium* from Genesis 3:15. With the verdict on the devil – a promise to mankind – Eve can rejoice in bearing the hardship of conceiving, giving birth, and obeying her husband.¹³ Luther also points to the fact that despite the punishment, the established order still remains. He writes:

In the third place, even among those physical misfortunes there still remains that outstanding glory of motherhood and the blessing of the womb which the wiser among the heathen have also wondered at and gloriously extolled. There still remain the other gifts: that we are all nourished, kept warm, and carried in the womb of our mothers; that we nurse at their breasts and are protected by their effort and care. This is the meaning of “turning to the outside what is beautiful.” It means not merely looking at what is evil but delighting in God's gifts and blessings and also bearing the punishments, annoyances, pains, griefs, and other things.¹⁴

Therefore Adam gives the woman the name Eve, because she is the mother of all the living (Gen 3:18), affirming what God established in paradise when he said “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). By this order or institution, God established an enduring relationship between husbands and wives as well as between parents and children, as the man shares all he has with his wife, as his own body (Eph 5:28). Just as the full glory of God is given by Christ to the church (Eph 3:21), so the woman is identified as the glory of the man (1 Cor 11:7). She has the right to his body, just as every Christian has the right to be called God’s children (1 Cor 7:4; John 1:12). Therefore, everything he has is hers, and this is most clearly expressed when she bears and cares for his children. The created headship that God redeemed is thereby affirmed and carried out in raising children.¹⁵

¹² Calov, *Biblia Illustrata Vol 2, Par 1, 722*.

¹³ AE 1:198-99

¹⁴ Ibid, 1:201

¹⁵ August Pfeiffer, another 17th century Lutheran theologian, pointed to this truth as a reason for women not to think, on the basis of 1st Timothy 2:12, that they are not as good as men in God's eyes. A woman has as much share in Christ as a man does, since in Christ there is neither man nor woman (Gal. 3:28). “Women as well as men,” Pfeiffer says, “have a *vocatiem Charitatis*, the calling to love, or are authorized to teach privately their children and servants and others who need it, just as Paul wants old women to be good teachers (Tit. 2:3).”

August Pfeiffer, “August Pfeiffer's First Sermon on the Office of the Gospel,” trans John R. Stephenson, *Lutheran Theological Review* 22 (Academic Year 2009-2010): 101.

As I already mentioned, God reveals his headship through his ministry of the Word. It is expressed through teaching. Therefore St. Paul admonishes fathers to bring their children up “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4).”¹⁶

Teaching is the central exercise of headship. Submission of children to parents and wives to husbands, though unique for each, is in the context of teaching and learning. This is why St. Paul says that if a woman has something she wishes to learn that she should ask her husband at home (1 Cor. 14:35). He is to be the teacher of his household.

As God teaches us through fatherly discipline (Heb 12:5,7), through the gifts given by the ascended Christ (Eph 4:8-10) in the guiding of the Spirit by the apostolic teaching (Eph 4:11ff; John 16:13), he acts as our head as we submit to him in reverence (Eph 5:21). And such submission locates us in his created order, redeemed in Christ. When we break up the verb ὑποτάσσω, we have the preposition under (ὑπό) and the verb appoint, or order (τάσσω). Each individual who submits to God’s order “out of reverence to Christ” (5:21) assumes a place within this newly redeemed created order. He or she is given “rank or place in the divinely established order of things.”¹⁷

Such submitting to God’s order flows freely out of St. Paul’s admonition to be filled by the Spirit (Eph 5:18).¹⁸ This is in contrast to the disorder or chaos of the world, which fosters sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, filthy jokes, and filthy talk, things that should not even be named among the saints (5:3-4). Instead Paul exhorts us to Thanksgiving when he directs us to be filled with the Spirit, so that in the churchly estate we sing together hymns and Psalms and songs of the Spirit (5:19). As he says to the Colossians, we instruct and admonish one another when we are so moved by the Spirit in such doxology (Col 3:16). It is out of this worship whereby we receive the blessing of God (Eph 1:3) that our lives in the created order are carried out. This brings us to our conclusion, as we apply this doctrine of patriarchy to good works.

Conclusion: What is in Accord with Sound Doctrine (of Patriarchy)

Jesus praises the centurion’s faith because he confesses that he is a man under authority having soldiers under him (Matt 8:5ff). The authority confessed by the centurion derives from this authority of father,

¹⁶ “Discipline” (παιδεία) is used in the sense of training or discipline in the context of instruction from Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16), as well as something God does with us in his fatherly chiding (Heb 12:5,7; Prov 3:11). “Instruction” (νουθεσία) is used in the sense of admonishing or warning someone who is unruly (Tit. 3:10), yet this warning is one that is given also in the context of instruction from the Scriptures (1 Cor 10:11). While the father uses discipline with his children, he does so in the context of instructing them. Luther picks up on this characteristic of the head of the home or *Hausvater*, beginning each chief part of the Small Catechism with “As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household.”

¹⁷ Winger, *Ephesians*, 601

¹⁸ Ibid, 600

“The participle thereby describes an activity that is moved by the Holy Spirit (5:18), rather than simply being a command.”

just as Luther says in his Large Catechism (LC I:141). This is the order given by God in creation. Jesus thus identifies with those who take up their orders from God, since he himself, as the Son of God, submits to the will of the Father even in his exaltation. This order is first found in creation – in the family, or patriarchy. The patriarchy in the Godhead is therefore confessed in the patriarchy of his creation. When a woman is given to submit to her husband, to order her children to honor him, and to encourage other women to do the same with their husbands, she is given a place in God’s order, which is redeemed by the obedience of the Son of God. And as members of the church who are to build one another up, the single women – both unmarried and widowed – serve this patriarchy of the Father when they encourage and assist wives and mothers in their God-given vocations.

When we uphold patriarchy, then we marvel with Christ at the faith not only of the centurion, but of all Christian wives who submit to their own husbands as to the Lord. This obedience complements and serves as a public confession of the obedience of Christ, who submitted to the Father’s will to save us all from eternal chaos wrought by sin. As our Confessions assert, the obedience of Christ to the Father is our very righteousness, the very center of the Christian faith (SD III, 14-15).¹⁹ When we confess the order that God has established, we are not merely affirming a list of rules. But with this order we are also affirming the very obedience of Christ, the basis for the justification of the sinner before God.

The Christian wife submitting to her husband, the Christian husband loving his wife, Christian fathers and mothers training and caring for their children, and all other servitudes that would follow are consequences of being filled with the Holy Spirit. In the same way, the whole church building one another up in love – that is, toward these ordered duties – is a fruit of the Spirit. Here Paul makes things very concrete, just as he does in his other epistles.

So the fruits of the Spirit with whom we are filled flow into our daily lives of godly duties. We are given self-control in the midst of a fanatical world, which hates the order that God has created. The frantic desire to shoot for the stars and not let anybody hold you back comes from an enthusiasm that reflects Kant’s Enlightenment motto *sapere aude!* – dare to be wise! Thus those who are perishing find the cross of subordination to God’s will foolishness. The obedience and silence of the Lamb before his shearers is a laughingstock before the autocratic wisdom of the world. Merit badges and self-esteem are worth more than humility and self-denial. But the imitators of God find wisdom in the obedience of Christ who suffered for their sins. This is because they do not imitate God as those who are trying to become his children. They are rather imitating him as his beloved children (Eph 5:1). So they confess this saving obedience when they, filled with the Spirit, submit to God’s order.

¹⁹ Therefore the righteousness which is imputed to faith or to the believer out of pure grace is the obedience, suffering, and resurrection of Christ, since He has made satisfaction for us to the Law, and paid for [expiated] our sins. 15] For since Christ is not man alone, but God and man in one undivided person, He was as little subject to the Law, because He is the Lord of the Law, as He had to suffer and die as far as His person is concerned. For this reason, then, His obedience, not only in suffering and dying, but also in this, that He in our stead was voluntarily made under the Law, and fulfilled it by this obedience, is imputed to us for righteousness, so that, on account of this complete obedience, which He rendered His heavenly Father for us, by doing and suffering, in living and dying, God forgives our sins, regards us as godly and righteous, and eternally saves us.

As we confess in article 15 of the Augsburg Confession, every tradition of the church should serve to promote what we teach, and this should also include what we teach about men and women. This is what St. Paul means when he tells Titus to teach what is in accord with sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). He then goes on to give direction for older men and women. After Paul explains the order of creation in 1st Corinthians 11, he says, “Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered (11:13)?” The practice of women wearing head-coverings is not an arbitrary rule for the Apostle, but a tradition that exemplifies and extols the nature of womanhood and her benefit under the headship of her husband. Therefore, following the example of the Apostle, any practice pertaining to the roles of men and women in the church should do just that. Our practice should be intentional, not simply pragmatic. We need to break from the notion that it doesn’t matter who serves on this or that board or attends this or that meeting, as long as it gets done. Those who are busy fighting feminism while losing the battle for patriarchy should ask themselves if they are promoting what God has set in order when their meetings are filled with wives and mothers but void of husbands and fathers. Even in the seemingly inconsequential duties, like voting, ushering, and serving on the altar guild, we should ask ourselves how such offices confess the headship, which God has revealed to us. Whatever offices or organizations women may partake in, they should serve in supporting the duties of wives and mothers, teaching the younger women to extol such vocations even while the increasingly godless culture despises them (Titus 2:3,4).

This should also apply to our dealings in the civil society. Sure, you’re free to go to college, grad-school, and even beyond. But we must challenge our sons and daughters to make these decisions with the mindset given in the 5th and 6th chapters of Ephesians. It is also beneficial and in accord with the sound doctrine of patriarchy that parents and even the government, if possible, should encourage and give every incentive for young men and women to marry a godly spouse, just as Luther advises (LC I:218).

While there is freedom in our application of patriarchy, we severely err when we ignore the sound doctrine. So, for example, while many good works abound within the offices of deaconess, school teacher, and such, they should by no means cause the women serving within them to deny for themselves the gift of motherhood. After all, these offices are not divinely instituted, but exist by human right. The vocations of wife and mother, on the other hand, are instituted by God. For the former to undermine the latter only puts into practice an updated monasticism, which replaces the works of God with the works of men. This is evil and contrary to sound doctrine.

There is freedom in what jobs we take, who we marry, and even whether we marry. But when our minds are set on things above (Col 3:2), our decisions are informed by sound doctrine, and we all, men and women alike, benefit from the godly examples of one another. Even while she is taught by her fathers and pastors, the church learns from the examples of pious wives and mothers what it means to be the church, enduring in patience and humility under every cross she bears. Those men and women who are single, widowed, barren, etc are nevertheless encouraged to hold these vocations in high regard, remembering that those who are in Christ, the true vine, bear abundant fruit (John 15:7; Is 54:1ff). In such order, to which we all submit with fear and trust in Christ, we fasten on the belt of truth in the whole armor of God, enjoying the headship of our Lord Jesus, whose submission to the Father has set us free from sinful chaos.

One final observation about the application of this sound doctrine has to do with the distinction between doctrine and life. You might remember Luther’s words from his Galatians lectures that

doctrine is heaven and life is earth. Doctrine must be kept pure from all sin and error, but life will necessarily include our struggle with the flesh. Here love covers a multitude of sins and forgiveness reigns. But while we are lenient in life because of the weakness of our sin, we must not be lenient on doctrine.²⁰ This should be the same with our doctrine of patriarchy. Husbands and wives will fall short. Christians, both individuals and couples, will make decisions based solely on self-serving motives. For this we admonish one another and bear with one another in love. But we may by no means give up nor treat as trivial the doctrine of headship that God has revealed. Just as we would not make light of some Christological error, which undermines the headship of the Godhead, we should not make light of a husband abdicating his duties as the head of the home. Men joking that their wives are the bosses of them is false doctrine, contrary to Paul's words in Ephesians 5. So while we may struggle to apply such doctrine to our lives, though our sin may get the best of us, we nevertheless confess the doctrine as true. Because in confessing this doctrine we confess the headship Christ has over us, who by his death has made us his own to live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

²⁰

AE 27:46