MARTIN LUTHER'S VIEW OF WOMAN

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Martha Skeeters Behrens, B. A.
Denton, Texas
December, 1973
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. MARTIN LUTHER'S VIEW OF NATURAL WOMAN</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. MARTIN LUTHER'S VIEW OF WOMAN IN SOCIETY</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE REFORMATION MEASURED BY LUTHER'S VIEW OF WOMAN</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPILOGUE</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The importance of Martin Luther as a pivotal figure in Western Civilization has been established by the immense amount of attention given to him and to the Reformation by historians. This sixteenth-century reformer of course is remembered primarily as the spiritual rebel who left the medieval unity of Christendom in disarray. However, while the focus of his life was God and the Church, the peripheral influence which Luther had in other areas of society has also been deemed highly significant. Work has been done on Luther's view of and influence on the state, education, industrial arts, home and family, and music. Theological studies, biographies, a play, and even a psychological study of Luther as a young man give evidence of the continuing interest which Luther has for modern man. The emotive power of Luther's spirituality guaranteed that his whole picture of society would have an effect upon succeeding generations.

While his sundering of Christendom appears as a gaping wound upon the face of Western Civilization, many effects of Luther's life and thought have come to view only after examination, and perhaps others continue as internal injuries. One area of Luther's thought which has not been examined is
his view of the female sex. While work has been done on Luther's ideas about the home, the family, marriage, and sex, his ideas about woman herself have been accorded only a sentence here and there. Historians have failed to consider this problem in Luther's thought not because of a paucity of material for study but because of a general neglect of the woman problem. Luther dealt broadly with the nature and role of woman, but historians have not considered this area of his thought important. It is understandable that the status of women as an important indicator of the character of a society could be underestimated. However, in this case this typical mistake has contributed to a less than complete understanding of Luther himself as well as an incomplete picture of Western culture. It may seem fanciful to regard Luther as important to modern woman's development and even more so to assume that the relationship has had bearing on the direction and character of the modern world as a whole. To consider it quixotic, however, is to underestimate the influence of Luther and to misunderstand the importance of understanding woman's role. This understanding is important both for self-knowledge (male and female) and for explaining the whole character of Western society.
A study of Luther's view of woman is the examination of a fragment in the history of ideas. It is a partial study of the idea that woman is evil and inferior and its corollary that woman should be kept in subjection. It is an especially important fragment because of its source. While Luther did not originate the idea of woman's evil and inferiority, he did transmit it from the medieval period to modern times, giving it the intensity and emotive power of a religious concept. Furthermore, Luther chose the negative aspect of the medieval view of woman rather than the positive, preaching Eve rather than Mary as the symbolic woman. Though the reasons behind this choice cannot be ascertained beyond all doubt, the many possibilities create new questions about Luther and his reform. The questions and their tentative answers bring up the problem of Luther's responsibility for the continuance of a subject role for woman in Western Civilization. While it is true that he was conservative and often favored the status quo especially if change involved disorder, he nevertheless was reflective and quite critical in some matters. He was certainly capable of advocating changes of great significance. His general conservatism cannot be credited as the simple reason for his rigid view of the nature and role of woman. Nor can his eschatology
excuse his advocation of the subjection of woman to man. While Luther believed the second coming of Christ to be relatively near, he did not call a halt to all change.\textsuperscript{1} He was concerned with reforms in education and government as well as in religious practices.\textsuperscript{2} Luther was capable of reflecting upon the position of woman, and the changing society certainly invited it; however, Luther chose to remain within traditional lines rather than to criticize. He preached that woman was an evil and inferior creature whose place was in the home. He taught that a Christian woman, an honorable woman, would obey her husband as her duty to God. While this thinking was not unusual for the time, it is worthy of note in this most unusual man who was capable of making a difference. In fact, it is impossible to say that he did not make a difference in woman's historical role. His advocation of a negative tradition concerning her being and her role may very well have insured its continuance for so long a period in the modern world, for this teaching was part of a great moral, spiritual and ethical movement.

\textsuperscript{1}Bornkamm, Heinrich, \textit{Luther's World of Thought}, translated by Martin H. Bertram (St. Louis, 1958), p. 271.

which Luther conceived and which engulfed the whole Western world. Being a part of this movement involved subscribing to his teaching concerning woman. Although the religious patina has worn away from many aspects of Luther's teachings including the tenets regarding woman, these precepts remain as moral imperatives. The emotional content in questions concerning the nature and role of woman for even the twentieth century secularist must be attributed at least in part to the rejuvenation which Luther gave them with the inception of Protestantism.

The Reformation itself presents different facets when viewed in the light of Luther's ideas about woman's nature and role in society. Generally acknowledged as a movement which freed men from the monastic constraints of the Church, it can hardly be called a like movement of freedom for women. The regulations of the nunnery were simply replaced by those of the home and the husband. The ideal of exclusion from the world was broadened to include all women. And if the Reformation, through Luther's influence, gave new chains to at least one-half of humanity, can it indeed be called a liberating force at all? How do the signal precepts of the Reformation stand up against Luther's view that woman was evil and inferior and should be limited to work in the home?
Could she be saved by faith through grace? Was her fate considered in Luther's reflective return to Scripture alone as a source of God's teaching? Was she too a priest who without a mediator could approach God? Might a woman also listen expectantly for God's call? Because many of Luther's religious precepts have different meanings for man and woman, the accepted interpretations must be revised. This revision must extend as well to Luther himself and to the meaning of the Reformation.

Because twentieth-century westerners live in the shadow of the Reformation, any study of that period's effect on the modern world must be tentative. However, as women become more conscious of their own role in history it is probable that this period will be a fertile one for explaining the subjection of woman to man long after brute strength has been replaced by intelligence as a means to power. It appears that Luther is responsible for rejuvenating medieval views that woman is evil and inferior, leaving behind the balance of the medieval ideal of the pure and good woman. The balance which Luther gave to his negative view was simply the pragmatic reasoning that woman was a necessity for the ongoing order of the world. He therefore gave her a place in the home and idealized her subjection to her husband as service to God.
Because of his position as a spiritual leader during a time when uncertainty convulsed the populus of Europe, Luther's words had more influence than the scholar or even the religious man under ordinary circumstances. The emotive power which Luther gave to medieval ideas about woman not only transmitted them to the modern world, but gave them new life.
CHAPTER I

MARTIN LUTHER'S VIEW OF NATURAL WOMAN

The concept which Martin Luther had of the nature of woman did a great deal to intensify the idea of woman's inferiority in the modern world. Framed by an investigation of the traditional and unique aspects of that concept and speculation about its effect on succeeding generations, a delineation of Luther's view will reveal his contribution to the concept of female inferiority and evil. This concept was certainly not unique with Luther; his views followed tradition and were evidently acceptable to his contemporaries. While the directness of his unequivocal view of woman's inferiority might leave moderns aghast, it was generally unquestioned in Luther's own time. However, Luther was not just an echo. The emotion with which he regarded the accepted view and the idea of woman's wickedness added emphasis and momentum to the idea of female inferiority. As a formulator of religious and ethical concepts for modern man, Luther insured the continuance of this idea in the modern world. While it has adapted to changes in society's forms, the whole fabric of Luther's view of the female remains. Though
some of his ideas remain as remnants reduced to truisms, the impact which they still have on human relationships and societal structure cannot be taken lightly.

To understand Luther's view of woman in proper perspective, the accepted world view of his age must be considered. Luther was certainly not alone in seeing woman as inferior in comparison to the male. Aristotelian tradition to which the Church was heir considered the female as an unfinished male. The woman was a lesser creature incapable of independent character or position. Aristotle taught that domestic life was best for woman because of her natural weakness. He believed the courage of man was shown in commanding, that of woman in obeying.¹ Luther himself had been a student and a teacher of Aristotle. Even though he later criticized the Church for its reliance on the philosopher, he remained an Aristotelian for life.² In addition to Aristotelian views which had been fostered by the scholastics was a picture of the cosmos which had Platonic and neo-Platonic origins. This picture, correlated with the gradations of lay society, clerical ranks and offices, and the physical world, was


called the Great Chain of Being. According to this commonly accepted view the whole universe was a ladder from hell to heaven in which each individual object had a place. As a part of the Great Chain of Being, each object also was an inferior microcosm of the whole universe. The hierarchy began with God, who was perfect, followed by the angels, and then man. Man's place in the chain was critical since he had both spiritual and animal attributes. His soul linked him with the heavenly order while his body made him a creature of earth. In this arbitrary order woman was below man on the ladder of the natural universe and in the order of society. Luther gave evidence of this world view with his use of what might seem to moderns strange analogies to define relations within the family; the superiority of sun to moon, man to woman.

... for the woman appears to be a somewhat different being from the man, having different members and a much weaker nature. Although Eve was a most extraordinary creature--similar to Adam so far as the image of God is concerned, that is, in justice, wisdom, and happiness--she was nevertheless a woman. For as the sun is more excellent than the moon (although the moon, too, is a very excellent body), so the woman, although she was a most beautiful work of God, nevertheless was not the equal of the male in glory and prestige ... . The male is like the sun in heaven, the female like the moon,

---

the animal like the stars, over which sun and moon have dominion.

In addition to these philosophic trains of thought, the influence of Church tradition and the Scripture were strong in regard to Luther's teachings about woman. Both the Church and the Aristocracy of the Middle Ages "taught the most contradictory doctrines, so that women found themselves perpetually oscillating between a pit and a pedestal." In the Church this contradiction was manifested in the dichotomy of Eve and Mary. Woman seen as Eve was an instrument of the devil; she was both inferior and evil. This view, created by the Church, grew with monasticism and asceticism, which developed an idea of woman as temptress, the most dangerous of all obstacles in the way of salvation. In addition grew the belief in woman's subjection to man. While the layman did not take the evil nature of woman very seriously, he did accept her subjection.

At the same time the Cult of the Virgin assumed vast dimensions in the life of the Church as well as the Aristocracy. Cathedrals were built and decorated in the Virgin's honor.

4Luther's Works, I, 68.


6Ibid., pp. 401-404.
pilgrimages made to her shrines, and almost every church not dedicated to her had a chapel in her honor. "Her miracles were on every lip, her name was sown in wild flowers over the fields, and the very fall of humanity became a matter for congratulation, since without it mankind would not have seen her enthroned in heaven."\(^7\) Both the adoration of the Virgin and the corresponding chivalric cult of the lady placed woman upon a pedestal. These two grew together as a doctrine of the superiority of woman, countering the doctrine of female evil and the other religious theory, the subjection of woman. At the end of the medieval period there existed a bifurcation of woman in the belief of the literate elements of society, the Church and the Aristocracy.\(^8\)

Apparently Martin Luther took the Church's negative view of woman quite seriously in all respects. Woman, like Eve, was both inferior, and evil and she was to be subject to man.\(^9\) The significance of Luther's view of woman is heightened by the realization that he gathers the most negative strands of the medieval concept of woman, weaves

---

\(^7\) Ibid., pp. 404-405.

\(^8\) Ibid., p. 404.

\(^9\) How she could be both inferior and evil is dealt with below. Luther's concept of the subjection of woman is the basis of Chapter II, Luther's View of Woman in Society.
them with a sick and patronizing chivalry, and presents the fabric as woman's being-in-the-world. Perhaps, Luther was in a manner of speaking forced into his unbalanced position on woman because his theology demanded the abandonment of Mary as mediator between men and Christ. Drawing on Church tradition for his image of woman, Luther's omission of Mary left little other than the diabolical image of Eve. Certainly, Luther had little contact with women in his early years as monk. However, his later experiences as leader of reform brought him into contact with a variety of women. He still refused to draw upon these experiences or upon the accounts of saintly women in the Bible. Although he became the loving husband of a competent and devoted woman, his basic view of woman remained the same throughout his life.

While Luther's views were implicitly Scriptural and influenced by Paul, he referred to the Scripture more in regard to social matters than in regard to woman's natural inferiority. Actually Luther used the certainty of woman's inferiority to explain and interpolate biblical stories especially from the Old Testament. Perhaps the greatest influence which Paul and Church tradition had on Luther in regard to natural woman was to suggest the belief that woman was responsible for the fall of man. This corresponded with
the view that natural woman was a weak version of man to begin with. However, Luther sometimes used Biblical injunctions to counteract the devastating effect of the belief that woman historically was responsible for undermining man.

If you reflect on the history of nations, you will find that even the greatest kingdoms have been destroyed because of women. Familiar is the shameful conduct of Helen. Moreover, the Holy Scriptures reveal that through the fault of a woman the entire human race fell.

Nevertheless, these facts must be mentioned without any reflection on the sex; for we have the command: "Honor your father and your mother," and likewise, "You men love your wives." It is true that Eve picked the fruit first; but before she did this, she sinned through her idolatry and fell from the faith. As long as faith is in the heart, the body is the servant of sin. Therefore the fault does not lie in the sex but in the weakness common to both woman and man.

It is significant that Luther chose Scripture which encouraged consideration for woman as a mother or a wife rather than as a person. And for the immediate discussion, it is important that Luther's view of the disgraceful and sinful conduct of woman throughout history was much clearer than of any such behavior of man resulting from the weakness common to both.

While Luther did not consider the weakness of woman in a systematic manner, he did cover four main areas in the course of his various discussions. In comparison with man he found woman physically weaker, less moral, more emotional,

---

10 Luther's Works, II, 29.
and mentally inferior. Taken together, these comparisons encompassed woman's character and spirit. Her character was weaker, her spirit less noble than man's. But the foundation for feminine weakness was in the area of physical strength. Luther points out that "Adam had some advantage over Eve. Just as in all the rest of nature the strength of the male somewhat excelled the female."\textsuperscript{11} That woman needed protection seemed self evident. He laments that it is the "mischief of war that the weaker sex is the spoil."\textsuperscript{12} And he encourages wisdom and moderation in dealing with pregnant women since they are the weakest of the weaker sex, which man was born to defend.\textsuperscript{13} If Luther saw any irony in the fact that woman needed the protection of man in defense against man, he did not mention it. He was more interested in the masculinity of the defender's role than in the primary responsibility of the male in matters of war and pregnancy. He commented upon the physical strength of the male in order to emphasize the resulting dominance and dependence.

Luther was as convinced of woman's moral deficiency as of her physical weakness. He indicated this belief in two

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., I, 151.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., II, 377.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., V, 382.
areas. First he strongly implied that woman was the devil's tool, and second, that she would use any trick to get her way. The first of these two implications is apparent in the following commentary on the fall of man. Luther used Adam and Eve as an example of male and female differences in the area of moral stamina.

Satan's cleverness is perceived also in this, that he attacks the weak part of human nature, Eve the woman, not Adam the man . . . . Because Satan sees that Adam is more excellent, he does not dare assail him; for he fears that his attempt may turn out to be useless. And I, too, believe that if he had tempted Adam first the victory would have been Adam's. He would have crushed the serpent with his foot and would have said: "Shut up! The Lord's command was different." Satan therefore, directs his attack on Eve as the weaker part and puts her valor to the test, for he sees that she is so dependent on her husband that she thinks she cannot sin.  

Luther believed that Eve's disobedience to God was just an example of woman's natural weakness in the face of temptation. He therefore assumed that Adam's natural moral strength would have resisted Satan. He pictured man and woman not as simply different, but as opposites. Adam was not morally stronger than Eve; he was strong and good and she was weak and evil. In this passage Luther goes beyond the quantitative comparisons of Neoplatonism and Aristotelian philosophy. Woman is not just a lesser male; she is completely unlike the male.

---

14 Ibid., I, 151.
Heinrich Boehmer points out that "for Luther, good and evil were not merely quantitative distinctions but were absolute opposites."\textsuperscript{15} The truth of this statement is apparent in Luther's estimation of the roles of Adam and Eve in original sin. He does not say that Adam would have resisted longer or would have fought a better fight than Eve did against Satan. He says that the results would have been completely different had Adam been tempted first. The idea that woman is evil is implicit in Luther's interpretation. That she was subject to the wiles of Satan by virtue of her natural moral weakness is more obvious.

There is further evidence of this thinking in Luther's statement based on the Old Testament story of the raping of Jacob's young daughter Dinah. He warned little girls not to go out alone, "for the devil is laying snares against the modesty of this sex, which by nature is weak, irresponsible, and foolish and hence exposed to the snares of Satan."\textsuperscript{16} By giving a friendly warning and blaming Satan himself for woman's wickedness Luther completely undermined any argument woman might have in regard to her character--that anyone was subject to Satan's whims regardless of sex. In another


\textsuperscript{16}Luther's Works, VI, 193.
instance Luther chose ridicule to point out woman's immorality rather than explicitly accusing her of toying with the devil.

For the weakness of inborn levity of this sex is well known. Women are commonly in the habit of gadding and inquiring about everything with disgraceful curiosity. Or they stand idle at the door and look either for something to see or for fresh rumors. For this reason Proverbs states about wicked women that they have "feet that do not tarry." This is due to their curiosity to see and hear things which nevertheless do not concern them at all. Therefore levity in morals as well as garrulousness and curiosity are censured in this sex.

Using a biblical reference to wicked women, Luther stereotyped woman as a giddy, gossipy creature who could not mind her own business. He easily moved from this relatively harmless picture of woman as ridiculous and light-headed to one in which woman was censured for levity in morals. In a sermon about false witness Luther again casually portrayed women as immoral gossips. "You shall bear true witness and speak the truth, and furthermore you shall not judge your neighbor, not speak evil of him as is the nature of women who cannot keep quiet about the weakness of a neighbor."\(^\text{18}\)

The acceptance of female weakness in any area without reasoned argument or even accusation left woman in a peculiar position. Luther ridiculed woman and felt that all her

\(^{17}\)Ibid., III, 200-201.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., LI, 158.
actions were tainted by her inferior morality, but he did not hold her accountable—it was her nature. Relieved of responsibility for her weakness, woman stood accused but morally defenseless. No confrontation was necessary or possible because woman was really not expected to do any better. She stood guilty but blameless, psychologically castrated by male condescension. The implication of woman's passive association with the devil resulted in a character assassination which may have contributed both to woman's poor self-image and to man's general suspicion of anything female. And Luther's patronizing air served further to insure the dominance-dependence roles of man and woman beyond the result of the accepted natural inferior-superior role divisions.

It is interesting that a rare instance in which Luther encouraged Christian women to rise above their nature involved superstition and witchcraft.

It is commonly the nature of women to be timid and to be afraid of everything. This is why they busy themselves so much with witchcraft and superstition. One teaches the other, so that it is impossible to tell what kind of hocus-pocus they practice. But a Christian woman should not do this. She must go along freely and with confidence and not be so timid. She should not practice witchcraft and superstition and run hither and thither, uttering a magic formula here and a magic formula there.

19 Ibid., XXX, 91.
Luther had learned of magic and witchcraft at his mother's knee, and his beliefs had been encouraged by his father. Evil beings were a fact of life in his childhood, and his bouts with Satan throughout his life were well known.\(^{20}\)

There can be little doubt that Luther's exhortation to Christian women stemmed from his own fear of "hocus-pocus" rather than from a feeling that women should not be so timid. Seldom did he otherwise encourage woman to rise above her nature. Even in this encouragement he deprecated her, refusing to acknowledge the power which he feared she possessed through her relationship with Satan.

Beyond woman's being a somewhat helpless instrument of Satan's evil, Luther saw her as a positive manipulator, determined to have her way at all costs. In this role woman was quite powerful and fearsome, using man's sexual appetites to bend him to her will. Although he admitted woman may have some sexual desire, he saw her more as a manipulator of man, whose desires were ravenous. He notes that "... no virgin is so chaste and pure that she does not feel a desire for a man,"\(^{21}\) and that passion and sexual desire seize "pious young men and even women" contrary to their own

\(^{20}\)Erickson, *Young Man Luther*, pp. 58-59.

\(^{21}\)Luther's *Works*, IV, 233.
However, it was woman who took advantage of man, who deceived and enticed him.

For girls, too, are aware of this evil [sexual desire], and if they spend time in the company of young men, they turn the hearts of these young men in various directions to entice them to love, especially if the youths are outstanding because of their good looks and strength of body. Therefore it is often more difficult for the latter to withstand such incitements than to resist their own lusts . . . .

Here Luther placed woman in the position of evil in direct contrast to his views on the evil of lust itself. In this view the immorality lay with the temptress rather than with the one more desirous by nature. Rather than emphasizing the evil of passion, which he did at length in other passages, Luther here cautioned that woman was worthy of suspicion. She was to be watched, for she was generally up to no good. Parenthetically, he also gives impetus to the idea that woman is impressed by the good-looking, strong masculine image.

Luther further stressed the idea that care should be taken when dealing with woman in the following passage:

Thus it is written in Ecclesiastes 42:14: "Better is the wickedness of man than a woman who does good; and it is a woman who brings shame and disgrace." It is as though the writer were saying: "It is safer to

22 Ibid., XIII, 109.
23 Ibid., VII, 76.
converse with morose and evil men than with a woman who feigns friendliness and affability, especially if attractiveness is an additional feature." For such a woman attracts and inflames the heart.²⁴

The intensity of woman's manipulative selfishness also entered Luther's warnings as to the dire possibilities inherent in relating to women. "When women accomplish nothing with their blandishments and charms, they are driven to madness, so that they want those whose love they are not permitted to enjoy to be destroyed."²⁵ The trend of Luther's remarks indicate deeply negative feelings about woman. And the following scene from the "Table Talk" sums up Luther's almost paranoid fear of woman's ability to control man through trickery:

When he [Luther] was arguing with his wife he said, "You convince me of whatever you please. You have complete control. I concede to you the control of the household, provided my rights are preserved. Female government has never done any good. God made Adam master over all creatures, to rule over all living things, but when Eve persuaded him that he was lord even over god she spoiled everything. We have you women to thank for that! With tricks and cunning women deceive men, as I, too, have experienced."²⁶

In this statement Luther joined his feelings that woman, symbolized in Eve, was both the passive tool of the devil and also a positive evil force acting to deceive man.

²⁴ Ibid., VII, 86.
²⁵ Ibid., VII, 87-88.
²⁶ Ibid., LIV, 174-175.
It was in the area of emotionality that Luther really deepened the break between models of masculinity and femininity. Luther pictured woman as very moody and uncontrollably emotional and counseled man to be patient with this characteristic. His elimination of any discussion of masculine emotionality implicitly encouraged the repression of male demonstrativeness and promoted male condescension, which has marked male-female relationships. In his lectures on Titus Luther dealt with this phenomenon.

Weak though she may be physically, she is even weaker emotionally. Manly women are rare; women are usually weak, easily frightened, easily offended, easily angered, easily made suspicious. Then a man should be patient. One can always find more good than bad in a woman. We would want everything to be perfect in women.

In dealing with the Old Testament story of Jacob and Rachel, Luther used Rachel's sister as an example of womanly emotionality. Having cooperated in a scheme devised by her father, Leah found herself the wife of Jacob, who really loved her younger sister Rachel. Luther commented,

... we must not think that Leah endured this contempt [of Jacob and his household] without tears and wailing. For the female sex is a weak vessel which has an ardent desire to be loved, or at least does not want to be despised, especially not by her husband or by the household.

27 Ibid., XXIX, 57.
28 Ibid., V, 314.
What seemingly could be called a normal emotional reaction in either sex was to Luther a demonstration of womanly weakness. Whether he really believed the desire to be loved was a uniquely feminine trait or simply wished to emphasize what he deemed a serious flaw in woman's character, the effect was polarization of the sexes in a manner harmful to both.

Luther further indicated his belief in the uncontrolled emotionalism of woman in his interpretation of polygamy as commanded in the Law of the Old Testament.

Nor did polygamy lack disadvantages. We see the boundless weakness of women. They indulge their moods and are controlled by them. One is irritable and quarrelsome; another is proud. This one is unsuited to manage a household; that one is negligent in bringing up children, etc. . . . Hence this Law did not give license for lust, but it did increase trouble, toil and worries.

Luther was very much taken with the Old Testament patriarchs as examples of holy men and tried in most cases to justify their practices under the Law. To show that polygamy was not the result of ravenous sexual desire, he tried to demonstrate that one woman was a lot of trouble, and thus, that several women merely multiplied the problem. Because woman was a moody and hard-to-handle creature, the patriarchs were probably more rather than less holy as a result of polygamy.

---

29 Ibid., III, 47.
In a more positive vein Luther commented on the mercy and compassion of women "since by nature it [the female sex] was made or created to love, nourish, pity, etc." to a greater extent than men. Although Luther included men in this area of emotions, he put great emphasis on the weakness revealed by emotionality in women. In all of Luther's statements on woman's emotional weakness was the implicit understanding that man did not share these weaknesses. He is not easily frightened, offended, angered, or made suspicious. He does not indulge in uncontrollable moodiness. And evidently, man is not controlled by a need to be loved.

Or perhaps Luther felt that the area of emotionality was one in which the male might not be subjected to woman's manipulative charm of power. If man were completely unemotional, then he would be able to control woman who was subject to rather than master of her emotions. Therefore, it was important that the male understand woman's moods and her emotional needs without indulging his own. With a show of strength and patience man could be the dominant figure, whereas any display of feeling on his part could create needs which would result in his dependence at some

30 Ibid., III, 360.
point. In this manner Luther reached the very psyche of western man and woman, leaving his imprint not just on role playing, but on personalities. Whether or not Luther absolutely believed in this unemotional man which he presents implicitly, he nevertheless created a model for all men. Acknowledging the danger of femininity in all seriousness, Luther told men how to counter it. A really strong man would be patient with a woman's moods. He would counterbalance the woman; if not unemotional he would at least have to be stoic.

Luther encouraged a polarization of the sexes with his ideas in regard to mental facility as well as emotionality. Although Luther commended a certain intuitive power held by woman, his conviction that the female sex was simply less noble than the male led him to consider this talent as secondary to male cognitive powers. In a sermon from the Old Testament Luther commented on woman's mental capability. When Rachel quickly devised a ploy to evade the wrath of her father over some stolen idols, Luther commended her quick thinking. But he attributed it to an animal-like intuitive power rather than to worthy cognitive ability.

... experience bears witness that women have great ability to devise strategy on the spur of the moment ... Although it [this sex, woman] has not been destined by God for government of the state or
church, where the greatest strength of character and wisdom is required, they have nevertheless been ordained for the care of the home. For the longer they deliberate about important and difficult matters, the more they complicate and obstruct the business. But the first impulse of their nature in sudden dangers is usually excellent and very successful.\(^{31}\)

With these words Luther pictured woman as one who can deal with the emergencies of everyday life, who can intuit the best course to take on the spur of the moment, but who had absolutely no intelligence for ruminating on the weightier matters of church and state.

Apart from its effect on woman, this type of thinking which has elevated the value of rational consideration over that of intuitive insight has contributed to the restriction of man's developing capacity for knowledge. Because intuition was considered feminine, and thus inferior, development of it in man has not been encouraged. At the same time, the belief in woman's natural inferiority has discouraged cultivation of rational cognition in woman. The sexes have been polarized into models of femininity and masculinity which have fed upon themselves and have curtailed individual as well as societal development. It is ironic that Luther, who disowned the systematic theology of the schoolmen for an almost mystical religious insight, should have figured

\(^{31}\)Ibid., VI, 60.
prominently in restricting the development in intuitive insight in the modern world.

Simple denigration of female intelligence apart from any commendation of animal-like cunning was evident in Luther's thought also. He said, "The female sex is weak, they lack courage and judgment, they are timid and slow of mind." He moved from lofty praise of man's nobility to humorous disparagement of woman. First,

What person is there who can count up even only those blessings he has within himself? How great, first of all, are gifts of the body! Beauty, strength, health, and alertness of the senses! In the case of the male, there is also the greater nobility of his sex, which enables him to do many things both in public and private life, as well as many splendid achievements to which woman is a stranger.

And in his informal speech, recorded in the infamous "Table Talk" he said,

Men have broad shoulders and narrow hips, and accordingly they possess intelligence. Women have narrow shoulders and broad hips. Women ought to stay at home; the way they were created indicates this, for they have broad hips and a wide fundament to sit upon.

In his beliefs regarding female mentality Luther omitted any speculation about the merit of intuition or the possibility

32 Ibid., XVI, 163-164.
33 Ibid., XLII, 144.
34 Ibid., LIV, 8.
of improvement in woman's powers of reason. While these words were probably lightly spoken, they reflect both the quite serious view of female intelligence and the use of ridicule to preserve woman's status.

The attitudes which permeate Luther's teachings in regard to female inferiority have been effective in controlling woman long after the absolute theoretical belief in that inferiority has disappeared. It is difficult to discern whether these attitudes are the natural outgrowth of the basic view or whether they are supplementary to it. In any event they have been effective. Luther emphasized the dominant-dependent aspect of male-female relationships, encouraging a condescending tolerance by the male. He did not limit himself to exposition of female weakness but chose to disparage and ridicule the female sex. Nor did he simply draw degrees of difference between the sexes. Rather he created a polarity between man and woman beyond any metaphysical consideration. Man was strong and good; woman, weak and evil. Man was calm and intelligent; woman, moody and stupid.

One effect of this polarization of natural man and woman was the creation of models of masculinity and femininity which were detrimental to the individual growth of male and
female alike. Helplessness, for example became the mark of a very feminine woman while brute strength signaled a real man. A man should never cry, but tears and wailing came to be expected of woman. Demonstrativeness was unmanly. In addition, it was inappropriate for a woman to be more intelligent than her mate. A truly feminine woman relied upon her man in every way. While this may seem a caricature of the ideal male and female, these ideas are nevertheless still recognizable in the modern world. And Luther provided the dynamics for these models in modern life and through spiritualizing the male-female roles.

Another devastating effect of these attitudes regards woman's self image. Consistently pictured as an absurdly giddy creature worthy of ridicule and incapable of serious endeavor, woman no doubt often has become convinced of her own inferiority. Lacking self-confidence, she has then contributed to established notions of woman's inability by further hampering achievements which might have contradicted the accepted view. Bolstered by an apparently self-evident truth, the patronizing stance of the male has been justified and female inferiority accepted by both sexes. Woman herself has not only accepted man's condescending toleration but has been grateful for it. Toleration certainly must have
seemed a preferable alternative to outright hostility (which in Luther's case was often just below the surface). And for the male the relationship of patronizing male and inferior woman which Luther theologically justified was no doubt much more effective for controlling woman than a relationship of adversaries would have been.

Most important for the effectiveness of Luther's teachings about woman is Luther's position as a spiritual leader. Assumptions given a religious or spiritual basis tend to have a stronger grip than those made on any other grounds. Even when the spiritual basis has been forgotten consciously, it appears in actions. For example, although few people consider the state literally to be the arm of God, many people treat it as a hallowed institution. And, although the idea of female inferiority may have been lost to many, the models based upon it have remained sacred. Benign paternalism, a certain reliance of wife upon husband is still appropriate. The common disparagement of a situation in which the wife dominates the home in fact shows that paternalism is not only appropriate but highly desirable. Nor is the sacredness of a mother's being in the home belied by the growing numbers of working mothers. Until recently welfare mothers were not encouraged to work outside the home
even though they were being supported by taxpayers' money. While the concepts of paternalism and a mother's being in the home were originally based upon female inferiority, the concept that things ought to be this way gradually took on a life of its own. Concepts of this nature became moral imperatives regardless of the truth of or belief in the initial assumption. In the case of Luther and his belief in female inferiority, the "oughts" or "models" became very intensified moral imperatives because of his position as a spiritual leader. Furthermore, at the time of his assumption he was able to use the Scripture as a justifying basis for his belief and it was unimaginable to question the Scripture. While this is, of course, no longer true, the "oughts," the "models," and the moral imperatives which arose from this unquestioned assumption still live a life of their own, seldom having been seriously questioned until the present.

The emphasis which Luther placed on woman's dependence was partially a carry-over from the chivalric ideal which portrayed woman in need of her knight's protection. However, the knightly ideal of womanly frailty was something of a game. The lady whom he adored was often the wife of another noble and usually was admired and "protected" from a distance. Although adultery was idealized, seldom was the relationship
between the knight and his lady consummated. In reality the wives of nobles were very capable women who were in charge of the castle and who often took over the husband's duties, since he was frequently away. The chivalric court of love was based more upon imagination than anything else. Furthermore, if the knight did prefer to see woman as helpless, he nevertheless considered her admirable, desirable, and worthy of his adoring attention. The correlation between the Cult of the Virgin and court of love was largely responsible for the positive ideal of woman. Weaker by nature, woman was nevertheless pure, good, and gentle like the Madonna. She was a noble creature. With Luther the ideal of womanly frailty remained, but the game changed. While the knight put his lady on a pedestal and worshipped her, Luther put woman at man's feet and blamed her for his sinful condition. Woman was still a weak creature and man her protector, but the relationship between them changed. Man was no longer adoring but rather was patronizing. He did not admire woman; he tolerated her.

That Luther taught female inferiority is not surprising in view of his background and contemporary ideas. However, 

he apparently took quite seriously the precept that woman was evil as well as inferior even though this was commonly rejected. These assumptions are probably responsible for the fact that he gave the woman question a great deal of attention and little thought, drew illogical conclusions, refused to consider contrary evidence objectively, and used ridicule and derision to supplement his views. Luther may have been so strongly influenced by the precept of feminine evil, which was in the best tradition of ascetic monasticism, that he purposed to keep woman in her place at a time when changes in society's structure may have threatened that concept. Luther felt that woman was dangerous and deceptive, and his remarks indicate a basic, almost pagan or mythological, fear of woman and her power.

Luther had a great intuitive insight into the power and mystery of nature. He had made his vow to enter the monastery during a crashing thunder storm. His ancestors had been peasants; his father a miner. His family had been dependent on the earth for survival. He was tied to his body not only by common human appetites but also by racking pain. And at the base of his knowledge of nature's power and mystery was his awe of the creation of life and of sexuality. His remarks

concerning Eve exemplify his feeling that the female was at the center of life, able to exact a mysterious toll from the male, able to bring forth new life to the earth. Eve symbolized woman's fertility and sexuality. He pointed out that the name Eve means life and that Adam named her thus because she was the mother of all living things. He saw Eve as a symbol of Adam's faith in life "even when all nature had already been made subject to death."\textsuperscript{37} Eve, as the symbol of woman, was a paradox because according to Luther she was both the cause of the fall of man and also the hope by which a savior would be born.\textsuperscript{38} Certainly she was a much more immediate and threatening figure than the Virgin Mary, who heretofore had been a much more prominent female archetype. To Luther Eve much more than Mary symbolized the closeness of woman to nature: mysterious, powerful, and threatening.

The evil of woman was even more disconcerting perhaps in view of Luther's ideal of the dedicated Christian life. Unlike the medieval view that the Christian's time on earth was best spent in a monastery preparing for the next life, Luther's view held the Christian responsible for answering

\textsuperscript{37}Luther's Works, I, 219.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., I, 193.
a call to work in the world. Merely to avoid sin was no longer enough; one needed to demonstrate his righteousness with works, the fruits of his salvation. This ideal partially explains Luther's concentration on Eve rather than Mary throughout his thought. The Virgin was a passive figure, completely loving, and thus completely pliant to the needs of sinners. Always pictured in calm repose, she was forever compassionately interceding for the guilty. Furthermore, she was close to God. She was truly pure, a virgin, not a temptress. She was a mother, but her motherhood was untainted by natural conception. Luther even held that Jesus's brothers and sisters were either Joseph's by another wife or were really cousins. Mary was not a figure who was involved in temporal life. In addition, Mary had to be set aside as a mediator according to Luther's theology. Thus, Luther looked to Eve as the symbol of woman active on earth. Rather than being close to God, Eve was close to Satan. In the beginning Eve, made in the image of God, betrayed her Maker and her husband Adam by succumbing to Satan's temptation. Then she talked her husband into joining her. Although categorically inferior, she was quite powerful. Eve was the prime example of what could happen in a world where

39 Ibid., XXII, 214.
woman was freely involved. And Luther was responsible for a philosophy which might justify this very involvement. If woman's place in the world were not stringently restricted and properly supervised, the forces of Satan might become overwhelming. As Eve had shown, woman was a weak vessel and an evil instrument. Satan could manipulate her, and she in turn was capable of manipulating man.

The fear brought about by Luther's own ideology was compounded by the generally rapid pace of societal change. This change brought challenges requiring experimentation of both man and woman. If the peasant went to town, he took his wife. If the noble lost his power, he might also lose his wife. If further exploration and colonization were to be successful, strong and capable women would be needed. While monks were leaving monasteries, nuns were also abandoning nunneries. If Luther gave woman an ideology justifying an active life, the changing world gave her opportunity for pursuing it.

Although these facts and circumstances were indeed present in Luther's knowledge, they never found coherent voice. Luther himself may not have been fully aware of the currents of anti-feminism in his own being, so well did they fit tradition of the time. He may in fact have considered
himself quite progressive as he moved from an ideal of ascetic monasticism to one of ascetic marriage. Perhaps he did not consciously recognize the dark undertones which he would bring into the regeneration of the institution of marriage by virtue of his view of woman. Because the subjection of woman in marriage was bound so closely to these assumptions concerning her nature, perhaps Luther never had to fully acknowledge or deal with his fear of her as evil. Or perhaps he was not forced to verbalize fear of female evil which he acknowledged because the danger was answered in his newly spiritualized concept of marriage. In his idea of marriage Luther created a new nunnery restricting the activity of woman in the world just as the old ideal of monasticism had done.
CHAPTER II

MARTIN LUTHER'S VIEW OF WOMAN IN SOCIETY

It was in the context of a very unstable society that Luther often spoke of woman's role in preserving and nurturing that which God had ordained. The changes occurring during the Reformation were certainly not limited to the specifically religious; and Luther, in the center of the whirlwind, felt compelled to offer that guidance which he felt necessary to maintenance of an orderly society. The question of woman's place in society arose fresh with Luther's anti-monasticism. Moving from questioning the propriety of vows to ranting at unclean papists, Luther himself was responsible for the flow of monks and nuns from monasteries throughout Germany. A famous example, of course, is Luther's assistance in the escape of twelve nuns, one of whom later became his wife. Luther's personal responsibility was no doubt multiplied upon consideration of the many others re-entering the world as a result of his interpretation of Scripture. The rise of Protestant churches and the need for their orderly development also presented questions. In fact, in every area of life questions which heretofore had been answered by the
authority of the Church were reopened by the advent of the reform movement. And into many of the gaps thus created Luther was to be found moving as circumstance or obligation dictated. Assailed by Luther's attack on the monastic tradition, the Church's ideal of virginal woman declined. However, a void was hardly created, for Luther quickly began to redefine the model which women should follow. Luther's delineation of woman's role in society was quite conservative, following the patriarchal Old Testament, the philosophy of Aristotle, and the theology of Paul, and was based upon the idea of woman's natural inferiority as well as her part in original sin. The chief roles of woman were mother and wife, and her place was in the home. Luther might be praised as the creator of a more practical ideal or model for woman; he has been lauded as the founder of the Christian home.\(^1\) However, the new position which Luther idealized for the female sex was new in form only. To borrow a phrase from Heinrich Boehmer and the Scripture, Luther put old wine into new bottles.\(^2\) Into the roles of wife and mother were poured all the old beliefs in female inferiority and evil.


\(^2\)Heinrich Boehmer, Road to Reformation (Philadelphia, 1946), passim.
Society as Luther saw it was divided into the realms of the church, the state, and the home. Woman belonged in the latter. Because of both her role in original sin and her natural inferiority, woman had no role in the organization of the government or the church. In the following passages Luther, contrary to the body of his work shown in Chapter One, denied woman's natural inferiority and ascribed her restricted position to God's curse upon Eve:

... if the woman had not been deceived by the serpent and had not sinned she would have been the equal of Adam in all respects. For the punishment, that she is now subjected to the man, was imposed on her after sin and because of sin, just as the other hardships and dangers were ... Therefore Eve was not like the woman of today; her state was far better and more excellent, and she was in no respect inferior to Adam, whether you count the qualities of the body or those of the mind.

He also said,

... Eve has been placed under the power of her husband, she who previously was very free and, as the sharer of all the gifts of God, was in no respect inferior to her husband. This punishment, too springs from original sin; and the woman hears it just as unwillingly as she bears those pains and inconveniences that have been placed upon her flesh. The rule remains with the husband, and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command. He rules the home and the state, wages wars, defends his possessions, tills the soil, builds, plants, etc. The woman, on the other hand, is like a nail driven into the wall. She sits at home ... The pagans have depicted Venus as standing

---

3Luther's Works, I, 115.
on a seashell; for just as the snail carries its house with it, so the wife should stay at home and look after the affairs of the household, as one who has been deprived of the ability of administering those affairs that are outside and that concern the state. She does not go beyond her most personal duties.

If Eve had persisted in the truth, she would not only have been subjected to the rule of her husband, but she herself would also have been a partner in the rule which is now entirely the concern of males. Women are generally disinclined to put up with this burden, and they naturally seek to gain what they have lost through sin. If they are unable to do more, they at least indicate their impatience by grumbling. However, they cannot perform the functions of men, teach, rule, etc. In procreation and in feeding and nurturing their offspring they are masters. In this way Eve is punished; but as I said in the beginning, it is a gladsome punishment if you consider the hope of eternal life and the honor of motherhood which have been left her.

The essence of this discussion was that woman had had her freedom taken from her as punishment for original sin. She had been made a servant to her husband and the household. Without exception she was to attend to limited personal affairs while her husband divided his time among his many duties. It is not clear why Luther contradicted himself by saying that woman's position was her punishment in some instances, and in many others that it was the result of her natural inferiority. Evidently, it may be assumed, contrary to Luther's explicit statement that Eve was Adam's equal, that the woman's role in original sin indicated a natural flaw and demonstrated her inferiority to the male.

Ibid., I, 202-203.
There was an element of force and control in Luther's prescription of woman's place in his recognition of reluctance on the part of woman to accept her role without protest. However, Luther answered this protest only with the rationalization of the way things were, not with any promise of possible change. First, he noted that woman got herself into this in the first place through the person of Eve. It was her own fault that she no longer shared the rule of the earth with man. Second, he indicated that the punishment was "gladsome;" she still had the promise of eternal life and the honor of motherhood. The failure of Luther to give any credence to the justice of woman's "impatience by grumbling" was due largely to a feeling that woman had no rights. Apart from his belief in her inferior nature, in her being a thorn in man's side, and in her being created by God for procreation, he believed that woman had no rights because God took them from her in the instance of Eve's punishment. Thus Luther did not reflect upon the justification of her plea for a new trial, which he saw merely as grumbling. He was satisfied to reiterate her limited role in the household, under the control of her husband.

Furthermore, Luther ensnared woman in a devastating difficulty concealed in the last paragraph. It is natural, he said, for women to attempt to retrieve what they have
lost through sin. With this one thought Luther decimated the possibility of superior achievement by women, and more important, the credibility of evidence to the contrary.

If a woman should aspire to the functions of men, she is merely proving Luther's theory that she lost them through sin. On the other hand, if she accepts her assigned role, she obviously remains inferior to men in society. In a society based upon Luther's assumptions women would have very little chance of overcoming the prescribed limitations.

Luther's belief in the natural inferiority of woman, coupled with his belief in woman's punishment dictated that woman should not participate in affairs of church or state. Undoubtedly her emotional weakness made her too easily frightened, offended, and suspicious to be competent in church or state business. Furthermore, her intelligence did not lend itself to lengthy consideration of weighty matters, but only to those kind of day-to-day occurrences which must be met on the spur of the moment--the kind of situations which might arise in the sphere of domestic life. Such was Luther's thinking on woman in society.

Part of Luther's general interpretation of what a church service should be like indicated his low opinion of woman's participation in that area. He quoted Paul as saying
about the service, "If a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first be silent [I Corinthians 14:30]." And he noted that some maintained that his statement gave anyone liberty to preach, "even to bark against the established preacher." Luther's word portrait of the spectacle which would ensue verified his contempt for women in the congregation.

What a fine model I imagine that would be, for anyone to have the right to interrupt the preacher and begin to argue with him! Soon another would join in and tell the other two to hush up. Perchance a drunk from the tavern would come in and join the trio calling on the third to be silent. At last the women too would claim the right of "sitting by," telling the men to be silent. Then one woman silencing another--Oh, what a beautiful holiday, auction, and carnival that would be!

Although in this comment Luther was criticizing an aberrant practice upheld by some Protestant radicals, his belief in the absurdity of women speaking in the church was also apparent. A drunk's speaking was bad enough, but the idea of a woman's joining in was really ridiculous.

In a more serious vein Luther quoted Paul again to show that women were not meant to be officers in the church.

It is, however, true that the Holy Spirit has excepted women, children and incompetent people from this function [pastor or preacher], but chooses (except in emergencies) only competent males to fill this

^Ibid., XXXIX, 388.
office, as one reads here and there in the epistles of St. Paul that a bishop must be pious, able to teach, and the husband of one wife--and in I Corinthians 14 he says, "The women should keep silence in the churches." In summary, it must be a competent and chosen man. Children, women, and other persons are not qualified for this office, even though they are able to hear God's word, to receive baptism, the sacrament, absolution, and are also true, holy Christians, as St. Peter says. Even nature and God's creation makes this distinction, implying that women (much less children or fools) cannot and shall not occupy positions of sovereignty, as experience also suggests and as Moses says in Genesis 3, "You shall be subject to man." The gospel, however, does not abrogate this natural law, but confirms it as the ordinance and creation of God.

Thus the theory of the Protestant church was to substantiate Luther's view of woman's inferior nature and limited position. She was to have even less influence than in the Catholic Church, where the nun had an important place, the Virgin Mary was revered, and many of the saints were women.

There were, however, exceptions to Luther's ideal of womanly passivity even in his own camp. Within the reform movement itself were women who were aggressive and unbending in their zeal for spreading their new faith. It is apparent that either they were not aware of or refused to consider Luther's delineation of woman's role. One, Argula von Grumbach, engaged in public protest when she wrote a sharp letter to the faculty of the University of Ingolstadt, who

---

6Ibid., XLI, 154-155.
had forced a young member of the teaching staff to recant the teachings of Melanchthon. When Argula learned of the humiliation of the young teacher, Arsacius Seehofer, she first visited an evangelical minister. When he did nothing, she felt compelled to protest the action herself. Another letter accompanied the main protest addressed to Duke William of Bavaria and to magistrates in general. In it she went further to denounce the financial exploitation and immorality of the clergy in general. Public abuse aimed at the noblewoman following the publication of the letters included a deprecatory poem and insults from the pulpit. It was reported that her punishment was left to her husband, who had been deposed from the office of prefect because of his wife's behavior. He treated her badly as a result of his bitterness. Luther's own reaction is surprising in view of his consistent advocation of limitations on female activities. To a friend Luther wrote,

The Duke of Bavaria rages above measure, killing crushing and persecuting the gospel with all his might. That most noble woman, Argula von Stauffer, is there making a valiant fight with great spirit, boldness of speech and knowledge of Christ. She deserves that all pray for Christ's victory in her. She has attacked

8 Ibid., p. 106.
the University of Ingolstadt for forcing the recantation of a certain youth, Arsacius Seehofer. Her husband, who treats her tyrannically, has been deposed from his prefecture. What he will do you can imagine. She alone, among these monsters, carries on with firm faith, though, she admits, not without inner trembling. She is a singular instrument of Christ. I commend her to you, that Christ through this infirm vessel may confound the mighty and those who glory in their strength.

Perhaps the last sentences give a clue as to the contradictory aspects of Luther's letter. He spoke of her as a "singular instrument" indicating perhaps that she was unique. He also called her an "infirm vessel" a term which is in keeping with most of his remarks concerning woman. Finally, he gave her actions the authority of Christ, making her an exception to the general conception that women should stay in the home and submit themselves to their husbands.

Another example of marital problems brought about by the woman's headstrong defense of evangelical teachings was the case of Elisabeth of Brandenburg. After twenty-five years of marriage she embraced Lutheranism and was subsequently separated from her Catholic husband. She endured years of deprivation as a result of her dedication to a puritanical protestantism, and for a while even made her home with the

9 Ibid., pp. 97-106.
10 Ibid., pp. 111-120.
Luthers. However, her suffering produced a mental unbalance, causing Luther to see her as a disturbing and pitiable object.  

The woman who best personified the self-assured, strong woman, unlike Luther’s model, was Katherine Zell, wife of Strausbourg minister Matthew Zell. Not only was Katherine Zell known for her help to those in need, but also for her outspokenness and her determination. She once published a refutation of a rumor concerning her husband's infidelity, went on to vigorously defend clerical marriage, and finally defended her own right to speak.

You remind me that the Apostle Paul told women to be silent in church. I would remind you of the word of this same female and of the prophecy of Joel: "I will pour forth my spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters will prophesy." I do not pretend to be John the Baptist rebuking the Pharisees. I do not claim to be Nathan upbraiding David. I aspire only to be Balaam's ass, castigating his master.

Zell also wrote a letter that "smoked" and published a tract which was termed "abusive" when she, her husband, and three other couples were excommunicated. All the

---

11 Ibid., pp. 111-120.  
12 Ibid., pp. 55-76.  
13 Ibid., p. 55.  
14 Ibid., p. 57.
men had been priests. In addition, she was versatile enough to cook and clean for theologians journeying to Marburg, as well as entreat Luther to compromise his differences with other evangelicals at the meeting there. \( ^{15} \) Katherine Zell's individuality notwithstanding, the Zells did beautifully demonstrate a marriage wherein the wife was a helper to the husband. It just happened that, childless, the life of service was fulfilling to them both. When Matthew Zell died in January of 1548, the eulogy given by Butzer was followed with an address by Katherine herself. To critics she responded, "I am not usurping the office of preacher or apostle. I am like the dear Mary Magdalene, who with no thought of being an apostle, came to tell the disciples that she had encountered the risen Lord." \( ^{16} \)

Faced with such notable exceptions to his description of woman it is surprising that Luther did not question his traditional view of her being and her place in the world. But he did not; he continued an outline corresponding to that in Genesis, Aristotle, and Paul. And even when he met female figures in the Scripture who did not fit his mold, he termed them exceptional. Woman's place was in the home.

---

\( ^{15} \) Ibid., p. 64.

\( ^{16} \) Ibid., p. 66.
It may well be that the danger of evil woman loose in the world contributed to Luther's insistence on woman's restricted role. However, the necessity of the institution of marriage in his thought somewhat explains Luther's pertinaciousness in this regard. Marriage provided for the bearing and rearing of children, for a dike against sin, and for an institution to replace monasticism as the ideal ordering of personal life.

It may be noted as Luther's reasoning concerning marriage is examined, that he viewed the institution almost wholly from a masculine viewpoint. Very seldom did he entertain the female's point of view even when considering personal aspects. The initial reason for marriage, according to Luther, was procreation. He cited Genesis, "It is not good that man should live alone," and he asked what God meant by good, "since Adam was righteous and had no need of a woman as we have, whose flesh is leprous through sin?" Luther answered that God was speaking of the common good or that of the species, not of personal good. The personal good was that Adam had innocence. But he did not yet possess the common good of procreation which God spoke of. Thus,

17 Luther's Works, I, 115.

18 Ibid., pp. 115-116.
man personified as Adam had no need of woman; God created her according to his will to increase the species. There was throughout Luther's works the implicit question of why God chose the method of procreation he did. There was a hint of wonder about the capriciousness of a God who would create woman, evil and inferior to Luther, for this task. Actually, "He could give children without using men and women. But he does not want to do this. Instead, He joins man and woman so that it appears to be the work of man and woman, and yet He does it under cover of such masks." Of course, Luther saw God hidden in most of the natural world, but the following passage suggests that Luther felt the need to find reason in God's method of procreation.

In the estimation of the flesh it is a great glory to be a male and not a female. But we observe the God has carefully avoided that a man should be born of a man; even Christ himself wanted to be called the Seed of a woman, not the seed of a man. Yet how great would be the pride of the men have been if God had willed that Christ should be brought forth by a man! But this glory has been completely taken from the men and assigned to the women (who nevertheless are subject to the rule of the men) so that the men should not become vainglorious but be humble.

Even at the core of female existence, her ability to conceive and bear children, Luther did not fully grant God's blessing.

---

19 Ibid., XIV, 114.
20 Ibid., I, 256-257.
For him the honor of child-bearing was circumscribed by the meaning which it also had between God and man.

That God made woman for the work of procreation was important, for it was Luther's justification for her very existence. Woman was made to be a mother. No matter how shameful and wicked, how inconvenient she was to man and to Luther, he knew that God had made her the mother of life.

... that one good thing, the womb and childbearing, covers and buries them all [women's faults]. This dialectic argument and proof is very strong; it penetrates and prevails. Nothing could argue and convince as powerfully as it does--not beauty, not morals, not wealth, or whatever other endowments women have.

With this boon Adam, too, covered all faults and disadvantages when he gave his wife the name Eve, which means life. Life overcomes all other things, whether bad or good, and has its origin from woman. For nothing lives without the womb, birth, milk, and breasts. All kingdoms, empires, prophets, and fathers have had their origin from this source.

Consequently, God has placed in woman His creation of all human beings. Likewise the use of creation, that is, conceiving; giving birth to, nourishing, and bringing up children; and serving her husband and managing the home. . . .

To Luther, woman was an instrument, a tool of God (and of man as shown below.) He saw woman as the bearer of life rather than as a person. The effect of this outlook is apparent in his discussion of childbirth.

This is also how to comfort and encourage a woman in the pangs of childbirth, . . . "Dear Grete, remember

21 Ibid., IV, 291.
that you are a woman, and that this work of God in you is pleasing to him. Trust joyfully in his will, and let him have his way with you. Work with all your might to bring forth the child. Should it mean your death, then depart happily, for you will die in a noble deed and in subservience to God.\textsuperscript{22}

In this same line of thought he continued.

\ldots we see how weak and sickly barren women are. Those who are fruitful, however, are healthier, cleanlier, and happier! And even if they bear themselves weary--or ultimately bear themselves out--that does not hurt. Let them bear themselves out. This is the purpose for which they exist.\textsuperscript{23}

These remarks show Luther's tendency to regard woman as a mechanism with a function to perform rather than as a human being with a life to be lived.

This functionalism is also apparent in his emphasis on the utility of woman's body in procreation. Luther said, "To me it is often a source of great pleasure and wonderment to see that the entire female body was created for the purpose of nurturing children \ldots ."\textsuperscript{24} And in another instance he said, "She carries human beings in her womb, brings them forth into this world, nourishes them with milk, and takes care of them by bathing them and performing other services."\textsuperscript{25} Recorded as conversation was the following:

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Ibid.}, XLV, 40.
\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}, XLV, 46.
\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Ibid.}, I, 202.
\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Ibid.}, IV, 291.
Afterward there was talk about the excellence of mothers' milk, which is especially good and nourishing... Then there was discussion about breasts, which are an ornament to women if they are well proportioned. Large and flabby breasts cause unhappiness, it was said, because they promise much but produce little. Firm breasts, and even the small ones of tiny women, are fruitful and can provide milk for many children.

While Luther's observations were correct biologically, it appears that woman might well have been any like organism as to have been human. He was more interested in procreation than woman.

Thus, Luther also considered the evil of shunning this blessing, saying, "Those who have no love for children are swine, stocks, and logs unworthy of being called men or women; for they despise the blessing of God, the Creator and Author of marriage." He said that those who do not want children are "callous" and "inhuman," and that saintly mothers consider barrenness a reproach. Needless to say, the question of abortion was hardly open for discussion at all. Luther merely mentioned the wickedness of girls "who prevent conception and kill and expel tender fetuses" as he

---

26 Ibid., LIV, 320-321.
27 Ibid., V, 363.
28 Ibid., I, 118.
29 Ibid., III, 133.
wondered at God's allowing children to be born even to adulterers and fornicators contrary to their wish.  

It would seem that Luther would have dealt with woman's role as mother in great detail since he placed such great importance upon procreation. In fact, he had very little to say about the mother's relationship to her children after they were born. He was generally vague concerning this aspect of woman's life. This lack of specificity is understandable in a monk, but it did not change measurably even after he became a family man. The following is one example of Luther's description of a godly mother:

What better and more useful thing can be taught in the church than the example of a godly mother of a household who prays, sighs, cries out, gives thanks, rules the house, performs the function of sex and desires offspring with the greatest chastity, gratitude, and godliness? What more should she do?

In the following exhortation to the mother of the family Luther was rather vague as to proper training of a daughter. He said that it would bring harm to the fatherland,

... if you train your daughter or your maid badly. It is a commandment which is laid upon you, not something which is merely given to you. For if you are able to rear your daughter well and do not do so, you are the one who has ruined her. Conditions are such in Christendom that unfortunately no estate knows what

---

30 Ibid., IV, 304.
31 Ibid., V, 331.
it is any more. It is no small thing when a young woman is well reared and becomes a good mother, \(^3\) who is then able to bring up her children in piety.

Here Luther insisted upon the importance of motherhood but was not specific as to how one became a good mother. He also emphasized the mother's guidance of the daughter but omitted the mother-son relationship.

Obedience to God naturally came before love of a child for Luther. Although he was quite aware of the latter, he had very little to say about mother love. He mentioned the cheerful and sweet face with which a mother indicates her love for a child. But he also commended Eve's obedience to God in completely withdrawing her affection from her disobedient son Cain.\(^3\) Luther's consideration of woman's role as mother was quite understated. Considering that motherhood was actually woman's only reason for existence, Luther gave scant attention to methodology beyond the natural process of childbirth. Erik Erikson points out that while Luther created new roles for Western man, only the role of parson's wife was newly created for the female and this because it was developed so well by his wife Katherine.\(^3\)\(^4\)

---

\(^3\) Ibid., LI, 151-152.

\(^3\) Ibid., I, 251-252, 325.

\(^3\) Erikson, Young Man Luther, p. 71.
Luther's lack of attention to woman's role as mother, considered by him as the basic function of woman, well illustrates Erikson's point.

And while Luther did not develop the father role extensively either, he did give it as much scope as that of mother. Both parents were engaged in a holy work in bringing up their children to serve God, and both were to administer punishment when necessary. 35 Nor did he omit fatherly tenderness toward children.

God has also depicted this will and good pleasure of His in the feelings of parents toward their children. For in the domestic sphere we see that father and mother are moved and delighted more if a little son or a little daughter brings a little flower or some other little thing than if a servant or maid brings a sack or a great beam . . . .

Luther's tenderness toward his own children is well known. 37

Although Luther did not bring the son under the guidance of the mother, he did mention the relationship of father to daughter. He commented that the Old Testament character Laban's bad treatment of his daughters Leah and Rachel was contrary to human nature, "For otherwise fathers love their

---

35 Luther's Works, XXXVII, 364.
36 Ibid., V, 284-285.
daughters more because they are the weaker sex." He thought it "natural" for a father to provide food and clothing, dowry, inheritance and other necessities for them. But even in the context of his discussion of Laban's failing Luther's masculine point of view was present.

Although . . . . we shall acknowledge that this mentioning of the faults of their father [by Leah and Rachel] is a weakness of the flesh and a mark of the weaker sex, nevertheless, truly speaking, Laban is a dog.

Even though the father was a "dog," Luther was struck by the weakness of the daughters in mentioning his faults.

Luther's propensity for recognizing daughterly weakness was also apparent in one of his many discussions on the proper choosing of a marriage partner. He held that the child should honor the parents' wishes in this matter but that the parents should not be capricious in their wishes either. This question involved opposing the view of the Catholic Church as well as reaching a rather delicate balance in determining the Christian view according to the Scripture. Suffice it to say that Luther generally treated

\[38\] Luther's Works, V, 365.
\[39\] Ibid., VI, 17.
\[40\] Ibid., VI, 19.
\[41\] Ibid., IV, 223-225.
the subject in a rather abstract way, using the indefinite terms "parents" and "children." However, in one instance Luther inexplicably reverted to the feminine pronoun "she" and the adjective "her" with the antecedent "child" and used the term "father" rather than "parents." This particular passage was also a pungent polemic against romantic love in itself. A child should not resist "her" father and capriciously use the gospel to bolster "her" own will, perhaps because she is attached to someone by a foolish love and therefore reflects a marriage which would be praiseworthy and honorable for her in the opinion of good friends, and even in the opinion of the pastor and the authorities."42 Luther felt that if this were the case, the father had the right to punish the "child," and "... the child if she has no other reason than her foolish young love which she bestows on another, should fittingly abandon this love and render filial obedience to this loyal, paternal advice."43 If the child-daughter did not follow this course she would be in danger of violating the fourth commandment.44 Evidently, a daughter more than a son was

---

42 Ibid., XLVI, 309.
43 Ibid., XLVI, 310.
44 Ibid.
to be guided because of her "foolish love," and the father rather than the mother was to be the loyal advisor. We can reasonably conclude that this picture in Luther's mind was the result of his feeling that women were weak both emotionally and morally. It might also be surmised from Luther's words regarding both father and mother than in insignificant domestic matters the training of the daughter could be left to the mother. However, in matters of importance like marriage (which incidentally involved property and prestige of the families involved) the father's counsel should be followed.

The sketchy development of the mother's role as well as the importance given to the father's role, such as it was, emphasizes the limited scope of the role and space allowed woman in the world by Luther. Not only was man free to work in the realms of church and state, his too was the dominion of the home. He shared with woman both the task of rearing children and the space which was the home. Thus, in Luther's world there was no space, nor any real role, which woman could indeed call her own.

It is paradoxical that Luther highly valued woman's function in procreation while largely overlooking her role as a mother. Another interesting paradox is Luther's
insistence that motherhood was both woman's reason for being and also her punishment for sin; it was a sign of God's blessing and of his curse. First, he mentioned punishment.

... Eve's sorrows, which she would not have had if she had not fallen into sin, are to be great, numerous, and also of various kinds. The threat is directed particularly at birth and conception. But conception designates the entire time during which the fetus, after being conceived, is carried in the womb, a time beset with severe and sundry ailments. From the beginning of that time a woman suffers very painful headaches, dizziness, nausea, an amazing loathing of food and drink, frequent and difficult vomiting, toothache, and a stomach disorder, which produces a craving, called pica, for such foods form which nature normally shrinks. Moreover, when the fetus has matured and birth is imminent, there follows the most awful distress, because only with utmost peril and almost at the cost of her life does she give birth to her offspring.  

But the marvelous utility of woman's body demonstrated God's good will.

... take all these facts [about the female body] as sure signs of the Lord's blessing, signs by which God assures the female sex that although it has been punished severely because of sin, it is still an object of concern to Him and is dear to Him.  

Thus woman's most important and self-justifying role, that of mother, was not a matter of simple beauty. It was a biological function first of all, and second, it was a

46 Ibid., I, 202.
painful punishment for original sin. In this manner woman pleased God through child-bearing. Luther centered the importance of motherhood around these aspects, neglecting delineation of the mother's being-in-the-world.

While the bearing and rearing of children was the initial reason for the creation of woman and marriage respectively, after the fall of Adam and Eve from grace another reason developed centering in sexuality. Luther said of the first marriage, "... it was a chaste and delightful love, and the very coming-together would also have been most honorable and most sacred."47 He emphasized that if innocence had been preserved, "There would not have been in him the detestable lust which is now in men, but there would have been the pure love of sex toward sex. Procreation would have taken place without any depravity, as an act of obedience."48 However, since Adam and Eve did fall into sin, Luther drew sharp lines between the beauty of the sex act before their fall and the shameful depravity of sex afterwards.

If Adam had persisted in the state of innocence, this intimate relationship of husband and wife would have been most delightful. The very work of procreation also would have been most sacred and would have been

47 Ibid., I, 134.

48 Ibid., I, 216-217.
held in esteem. There would not have been that shame stemming from sin which there is now, when parents are compelled to hide in darkness to do this. No less respectability would have attached to cohabitation than there is to sleeping, eating or drinking with one's wife.

Because of this state of sin Luther believed that marriage was necessary for the curtailment of lust and that God excused it within marriage.

Marriage, it [theology] says, is the inseparable union of one man and one woman, not only according to the law of nature, but also according to God's will and pleasure, if I may use this expression. For the will and approval and that favor of God cover the wretched depravity of lust and turn away God's wrath, which is in store for such lust and sins. In this way matrimony is treated with reverence.

While this philosophy may have reverenced matrimony, it did not do the same for woman. Just as woman was God's tool for production in procreation, she became man's tool for protection against sin in sex.

... matrimony was established in Paradise as a duty, but after sin also as an antidote. Therefore we are compelled to make use of this sex in order to avoid sin. It is almost shameful to say this, but nevertheless it is true. For there are very few who marry solely as a matter of duty.

But the rest of the animals do not have this need. Consequently for the most part they copulate only once a year and then are satisfied with this as if by their very action they wanted to indicate that they were copulating because of duty. But the conduct of human

---

49 Ibid., I, 117.
50 Ibid., IV, 222.
beings is different. They are compelled to make use of intercourse with their wives in order to avoid sin. As a result we are begotten and also born in sin, since our parents did not copulate because of duty but also as an antidote or to avoid sin. \(^{51}\)

Luther left little doubt as to which sex was to be made use of. Again woman was to serve as a functionary for the benefit of something or someone else, in this case to protect the male from sinning. Her lack of personhood for Luther is obvious in his use of "human beings" to mean the male sex. One can well understand why Erik Erikson calls Luther's religion masculine.\(^{52}\)

Another aspect of Luther's feelings towards woman brought out in his discussion of sex within marriage connected woman with man's shame. Even though Luther believed that God excused or ignored the passion and lust of sex within marriage, he could not rid himself of a sense of shame in connection with sexual activities.

\[\ldots\] because this union was ordained by God, God does not charge them with anything shameful and unclean that takes place there. But that evil in marriage and copulation should not be defended as something good \[\ldots\] we should not say: "I have done a good deed by sleeping with my wife."\(^{53}\)

\(^{51}\)Ibid., I, 116.

\(^{52}\)Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, p. 71.

\(^{53}\)Luther's *Works*, V, 37-38.
In accord with this feeling Luther admired animals who copulated only once a year and encouraged the preservation of "the natural order of creating offspring." Only then did God overlook or forgive. He also said that people were swine to think that anything was all right in the bedroom with one's wife. ". . . Those who practice shameful and execrable things with their wives in their bedrooms must be rebuked; for God has granted them some freedom from care, but only in accordance with His forbearance." He did not believe God could condone sexual activity even in marriage if it were for pleasure rather than for relief of the unfortunate sex drive. He called desiring to live with and love only one's wife "an honorable and divine unchastity" while deserting one's wife for another woman was "demonic unchastity." The masculine perspective which Luther maintained indicated his belief in woman's sexual passivity although he was aware of the power of this passive being over man.

The connection between woman and shame which was often implicit in Luther's words was quite clear in the following:

54 Ibid., I, 116; V, 34.
55 Ibid., V, 37.
56 Ibid., XXII, 233.
it is a great favor that God has preserved woman for us--against our will and wish, as it were--both for procreation and also as a medicine against the sin of fornication . . . we can hardly speak of her without a feeling of shame, and surely we cannot make use of her without shame. The reason is sin. In Paradise that union would have taken place without any bashfulness, as an activity created and blessed by God. It would have been accompanied by a noble delight, such as there was at that time in eating and drinking . . . .

Poor Martin! Poor woman! No doubt Luther would have preferred another means of procreation (God could have used stones), and then there would have been no need for a remedy. He sounded like someone whistling in the dark when he called God's preservation of woman "a great favor." His gratitude is not very convincing. He offered no explanation for the fact that eating and drinking were not also corrupted by sin. Luther sounded, in fact, as if he were working very hard to rationalize the self-evident truth that sex is shameful. It appears that his shame, the resulting ambivalence toward sex, even in marriage, and his refusal to question God's creation resulted in a deep and pervasive negativity toward woman. He had to accept the presence of woman in the world, but he did not do it joyfully or positively.

57 Ibid., I, 118.
58 Ibid., IV, 291; III, 214.
It is possible that Luther connected sex or lust and woman so closely that he used "lust" as a code word for woman. While this idea can never be shown conclusively, the following example strongly suggests it. In his Lectures on Genesis (6:1) Luther considered the following passage:

And when men had begun to multiply on the face of the ground and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair and they took to wife such of them as they chose.

In his discussion Luther said,

After this followed the flagrant sins: the injustice, tyranny, and lusts, of which Moses makes particular mention here and from which he starts out as from the source of evil. Consult all the historical accounts, look at the Greek tragedies, the barbarian and Latin history of all times; you will discover that every sort of trouble has its origin in lust. Where the Work is not present or is disregarded, men cannot avoid falling into lusts.

Lust brings with it countless other evils: haughtiness, injustice, perjury, etc.

If woman and lust were two terms describing the same phenomenon, then woman was the "source of evil" and the origin of "every sort of trouble." This of course was a devastating condemnation, and it corresponded with other statements of Luther's directing blame for original sin toward Eve rather than Adam. Luther's feeling of shame

59 Ibid., II, 7-8.
60 Ibid., II, 29.
in connection with woman was of course very personal, since shame is such a painful and personal emotion. However, his feeling of blame toward woman was much more generalized and socially oriented. It would be difficult to over-emphasize the totality of Luther's negativity toward woman.

Assuming that "lust" was Luther's code word for woman, there can be conjecture as to the connection between Luther's negative attitude toward woman and his limitation of her role to that of wife and mother and her space to that of the home. If indeed every historical account told of the trouble caused by "lust" or woman, then the best method for eliminating the trouble was at the source. Luther saw that the medieval ideal of monasticism was a farce in that lust too often broke through, as witnessed by numerable concubines and priests' children. Apparently, a more effective compromise was to limit sexual activities to one partner. Luther's thinking finally developed the idea that marriage was more chaste than celibacy. A further way of protecting society against the evil which was woman was to delineate for her a role which would restrict her to her own household. In this manner a much purer world outside the home, a man's world, could be maintained. This might explain somewhat

61 Ibid., I, 344.
Luther's omission of a detailed description of a good mother although he spoke frequently of the importance of the household in providing citizens for church and state. Perhaps he was more concerned with her being restricted than with her fulfilling any duty, whether bearing children or having sex.

In any case, marriage was for Luther a matter more of societal concern than personal at least in providing citizens for church and state and in preventing sexuality from flooding society. Further, marriage was a means of institutionalizing personal relationships. Heretofore, the ideal personal life had been monastic. Luther, however, for several reasons created marriage as the ideal life-style for serving God and society. One scholar calls this life-style "a school for character" and another "an estate of faith." Briefly, the former believes Luther's marriage ethic to have finished its development under the influence of his personal experience in marriage, while the latter contends that Luther's idea of evangelical marriage was developed wholly out of his theology and that his own marriage was a witness to this faith. One

62 Ibid., II, 131; XXII, 91; IV, 249; I, 240.
63 Bainton, Here I Stand, pp. 233-235.
64 Lazareth, Luther on the Christian Home, pp. 217-223.
cannot confront Luther's own words without noting the truth in the views of both scholars. That marriage was a realm in which the Christian was "called" to witness his faith in love to his spouse was made clear in Luther's discussion of St. Peter's view two years before his own marriage. While there was no doubt that the woman was to be submissive to her husband, it was also made clear that each spouse was to recognize the other as a Christian and honor him as such. Thus, marriage as an estate of faith was an early idea. While Luther did not deviate from this early-established marriage ethic, he did expand the concept in later years. And this expansion bore the mark of personal experience both in its comments on the trials to be born in marriage and also in its expression of the sweetness of the marital relationship. It seems that what both of these scholars are expressing in different ways is Luther's new idea of the ideal institution for ordering personal affairs. Heretofore, the ideal personal life had been service to God by withdrawal from the world into monastic life. However, Luther's belief in serving God by serving one's neighbor found expression in the more worldly-active life-style of marriage. Not that Luther conceived of marriage as

65 Luther's Works, XXX, 87-93.
qualitatively different from monasticism. The ascetic quality which Luther gave to marriage is one which he felt had been forsaken by institutionalized monasticism. Much of the evidence suggests that the home was the new monastery, especially for women.

In discussing marriage as the ideal life-style or as an "estate of faith" Luther ventured thoughts on woman's being-in-the-world in regard to the relationship between husband and wife. Luther's discussion of St. Peter's guide for this relationship exemplified Luther's belief that Christian matrimony with regard for God's work and will was an ideal life-style. However, much of the discussion revealed Luther's utterly masculine point of view.

It is a high and noble treasure for a woman to have when she conducts herself in such a way that she is submissive to her husband, for then she knows that she is doing a God-pleasing work. What greater joy can come to her? Therefore a woman who wants to be a Christian wife should think as follows: "I will not consider what kind of husband I have, whether he is a Gentile or a Jew, whether he is pious or wicked; but I will take into account that God has placed me in the state of matrimony and wants me to be submissive and obedient to my husband." If she renders such obedience, then all her works are golden.

But if she does not let herself be induced by this, she will not be helped in any other way. For you will accomplish nothing with blows; they will not make a woman pious and submissive. If you beat one devil out of her, you will beat two into her, as the

66 Ibid., I, 134.
saying goes. Oh, if married people knew this, how well they would fare! \textsuperscript{67} God wants peace and quiet to reign in a household.

What Luther was stressing in wifely submission was not husbandly due but rather God-pleasing work according to the Scripture. Of course, it was also a part of woman's punishment since the Scripture said woman would be subject to man after the Fall. \textsuperscript{68} But apart from pleasing God by maintaining harmony in the household Luther argued against wife-beating because of its ineffectiveness, perhaps because this was the more effective argument against this common practice.

St. Peter and Luther then discussed how a woman should conduct herself toward other people. Condemning outward adornment except to please the husband, Luther said,

\begin{quote}
\ldots a Christian wife should disdain it [adornment]. But if the husband wants it, or if there is any other proper reason for her to adorn herself, it is all right. Yet, as St. Peter says here, she must be adorned "in the hidden person of the heart with a gentle and quiet spirit." You are adorned beautifully enough when you are adorned for your husband. Christ does not want you to adorn yourself to please others and be called a pretty wench \ldots . Therefore one should keep and restrain women from adornment, since otherwise they are inclined in this direction. If a Christian woman hears this, takes it to heart and thinks: "I will pay no attention to adornment, since
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., XXX, 88.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., I, 202.
God pays no attention to it either; but if I must wear it, I will do so to please my husband," then she is properly adorned and decorated in the spirit.

Again Luther stressed that the woman who had the proper spirit was the one who pleased God by pleasing her husband.

Then Luther commented on the following advice to husbands (I Peter 3:7):

Likewise you husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker vessel, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered.

He said,

Woman is also God's vessel or tool, says the apostle; for God uses her to conceive, bear, feed, and look after children, and to manage the house. The woman should do works of this kind. Therefore she is God's tool and vessel. God created her for this purpose and implanted this in her. This is the way the husband should regard his wife. Therefore St. Peter says: "You husbands, live considerately with your wives. Do not rule them recklessly." To be sure, they should live as the husband rules. What he commands and orders, this should be done. But the husband should also see to it that he treats his wife with kindness and consideration. He should be tender, and he should honor her as God's weakest vessel.

A man is also God's vessel, but he is stronger than a woman. She is weaker physically and also more timid and downhearted in spirit. Therefore you should deal with her and treat her in such a way that she can bear it. You must take care of her as you take care of another tool with which you work. For example, if you want to have a good knife, you must not hack into stone with it. Now it is impossible to give a rule for this. God leaves it to everyone to treat his

69 Ibid., XXX, 89.
wife considerately according to each wife's nature. You must not use your authority arbitrarily; for you are her husband to help, support, and protect her, not to harm her. It is impossible to set specific bounds for you. Here you yourself must know how to proceed thoughtfully.

Luther's utilitarian interpretation of Peter's exhortation is striking. He did not emphasize woman's dignity as a joint heir of grace but rather reminded the husband that he might get better results with tender care than otherwise. While Luther compared a wife with a good knife, other comparisons such as slave, plowhorse, and automobile come to mind. Each has its own "personality" and the owner must experiment to find the proper or most effective way of getting the maximum benefit from his servant. The open attitude which kept Luther from setting hard and fast rules concerning marriage has been lauded for its advocation of protection of the wife's unique personality. While this attitude indicated Luther's realistic assessment of variety in human relationships, his view gave little dignity to the feminine half of marriage. Rather it covered the iron fist of masculine domination and utilization with the velvet glove of kindness, consideration, and tenderness.

70 Ibid., XXX, 91-92.
As Luther continued, the questionable quality of husbandly tenderness was further apparent.

Thus with regard to husbands we also know what God-pleasing works they should do. They should dwell with their wives, make a living, and treat their wives with kindness. It will not always be possible for things to go exactly as you would like to have them go. Therefore see to it that you are a man and that the less thoughtful your wife is, the more thoughtful you are. At times you must be lenient, slacken the reins a bit, give in, and also accord your wife the honor that is her due.

No doubt Luther felt he was progressive in encouraging husbands to be lenient with their wives. In a day when corporal punishment of wives was not infrequent perhaps this view was exceptional. Nevertheless, the imagery of the husbands slackening the reins indicates that while Luther may have had a humane attitude toward women he still viewed them as work horses in full harness. Luther also hinted that when things were not going as the man might wish, it was probably due to a lack of thoughtfulness of the woman's part. He then encouraged a patronizing air of toleration by the husband. Whether or not this was an improvement over wife-beating is a moot question. Perhaps the effect of Luther's exhortation was merely to refine this old method of domination by the male sex so that it appeared more civilized. This camouflage may have made it more difficult

\[72\] Luther's Works, XXX, 92.
for woman to achieve recognition as an equal human being than had the more direct method of male domination survived. Of course, it is inconceivable that corporal punishment of wives by husbands could have lasted into the present. Still, there is evidence that Luther's patronizing toleration has survived; so, perhaps his method actually had more clout than the club.

Luther concluded his interpretation of St. Peter's advice to marrieds by discussing the meaning of honor. Again the thrust of his comments came from a masculine point of view. He said that some believed honor to mean that the husband should furnish food and shelter for his wife while others think it referred to the conjugal duty. Luther himself believed a husband honored his wife by recognizing that she was also a Christian and God's creation. If both honored the other, then peace and love would reign in the household. But he reiterated that the husband should not judge his wife by her weakness and fraility.

No, he must bear in mind that she is also baptized and has exactly what he has, namely, all blessings from Christ. For inwardly we are all alike; there is no difference between a man and a woman. Externally, however, God wants the husband to rule and the wife to be submissive to him.73

73 Ibid., XXX, 92-93.
Luther's concern with pleasing God and with maintaining harmony within marriage are understandable. As the foundation of the church and the state, the household had to have order and a line of authority. However, the effect of his concern at this point was to emphasize the external differences between man and woman rather than the spiritual similarities.

In further outline of a woman's relationship to her husband Luther implied that woman really had no meaning in and of herself regardless of her inward similarity to her husband. He mentioned the ability of the godly woman to comfort and encourage her husband, citing Eve as the first example.\(^{74}\) He used Rebecca as an example of one who protects her husband, praising her deception of husband Jacob as she concealed the enmity of their sons from him.\(^{75}\) The role of the wife was to serve the husband in any way possible. Luther believed that woman needed man to put meaning in her life; without him she was "without head and without offspring."\(^{76}\) The ideal life-style for woman was largely serving God through service to her husband. There could be no thought of her

\(^{74}\) Ibid., VI, 255.

\(^{75}\) Ibid., V, 179.

\(^{76}\) Ibid., XVI, 50.
own identity or meaning because without the husband there was none.

For a husband's love is the life of a wife, and I want this to be understood of good and honorable women. When the husband is sad, morose, difficult, and angry, this is harsher for a godly woman than death itself. For she wants to be gladdened by her husband, and she fears contempt just as she fears darkness and the worst evils.77

The man was important; even the relationship was important; but the woman in herself was not. And that woman who thought she was was neither good nor honorable.

Luther's basic interpretation of the ideal life-style did not change although it expanded in several directions. The patronizing air toward the wife was somewhat balanced by a greater sensitivity to the mutuality of marriage, a realization that there were two people involved. Nevertheless, Luther also expanded his masculine viewpoint in encouraging men to enter the estate of matrimony in spite of the many trials to be encountered there. The "school for character" attributed to Luther's thought was a school primarily for the male.

Luther's condescension toward woman was in evidence as he commended Abraham for being a good husband who loved both his wife and harmony in the household. In a marital

77 Ibid., V, 315.
dispute Abraham, "... who was full of the Holy Spirit thought: 'Behold I am a man; but Sarah is a woman, a weak vessel. Therefore I shall preserve peace by being patient.'" 78

In another discussion Luther objected to husbands who wanted to be feared by and rule their wives with authority. He said this was unbecoming, especially to a Christian. There was "... no glory at all in subduing a sex so weak." 79

In other instances where Luther used Abraham and Sarah as an example he displayed a greater understanding of the mutual nature of marriage.

... Husbands generally are lions in their homes and are harsh toward wives and domestics. Similarly, the wives generally domineer everywhere and regard their husbands as servants. But it is foolish for a husband to want to display their [sic] manly courage and heroic valor by ruling his wife. On the other hand, it is also unbearable if wives want to dominate. Such marriages, where both are capricious—-are common, as the proverb has it: "Three things are rare, but they are pleasing to God: harmony among brothers, love among neighbors, and accord between spouses." The reason is that people generally enter into this kind of life without prayer and, like swine, regard only what is carnal. Therefore the wife does not see what is truly good in her husband. On the other hand, the husband sees in his wife only what displeases him. Since there is no mutual tolerance between them, quarrels and countless outbursts of anger arise. 80

78 Ibid., III, 58.
79 Ibid., V, 33.
80 Ibid., III, 353-354.
Luther related that between Abraham and Sarah there was great affection as it should be when a pair is well matched. Quoting Solomon, he exhorted husbands not to be lions in the home. Even though the husband did rule over the wife,

... it should not be the kind of rule usually exercised over slaves but the kind that the soul has over the body; for the soul is joined to the body in natural amity and is affected by both the comfort and the discomfort of the body.\(^\text{81}\)

With this example Luther seems to have become more sensitive to the oneness of marriage. However, his explanation of husbandly rule also reflected a natural male superiority, since in neo-Platonic philosophy the soul was certainly superior to the body. Luther also showed sensitivity to the personal aspect of marriage when he explained the meaning of the statement that "Adam knew Eve, his wife." He said this expression was unique to Hebrew, meaning "... experience and feel ... . He actually experienced his Eve as a woman."\(^\text{82}\)

However, even in personal considerations the masculine viewpoint prevailed, and woman remained the less than trustworthy servant.

---

\(^{81}\) Ibid., II, 296.

\(^{82}\) Ibid., I, 240.
Among the foremost praises of a wife is this, that her husband's heart trusts her, that is, that her husband loves her dearly, does not bear any ill will towards her, and is convinced that he is being loved and that his interests are being served by his wife.

For this reason Augustine learnedly enumerates three benefits in marriage: trust, children, and its sacramental character. And truly, if there is no trust, hearts will never unite closely; nor will there ever by any true love between them. But this world has nothing more beautiful than this union of hearts between spouses . . . .

However, he continued.

"Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom." (Micah 7:5) . . . (the) prophet does not want suspicion and hatred to exist between spouses; he wants the utmost love and good will, which cannot exist without mutual trust; and yet he wants a limit to this trust, because it can happen that it is mistaken. For she is a human being; and although she fears God and pays heed to his word, nevertheless, because she has Satan, the enemy, lying in wait everywhere and because human nature as such is weak, she can fall and disappoint your hope somewhere.

Luther explained that this insight will make it easier for "you" to have the Christian spirit of forgiveness. The importance of this passage is not that Luther enjoined a bit of reservation between spouses but that he encouraged only the husband in it, believing the woman to be more likely to be untrustworthy by virtue of her innate weakness.

---

83 Ibid., II, 301.
84 Ibid., II, 301, 302.
In his relation of the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, Luther was more gracious to the feminine point of view than in any other passage. His grasp of the personal potential within the institution is apparent even though he coupled it with the idea that a good personal relationship in marriage was a good public example. Luther speculated that Isaac hugged Rebecca not only to comfort her in a certain crisis but also as a playful gesture. Embracing and jesting was honorable fun with one's wife although it would not be proper toward a sister or domestics. While authority and dignity were proper there even when comforting, jesting and pleasant conversation were in order with one's wife. In an expansive digression, Luther pointed out that men often show themselves weaker than women in the affairs of church and state. After this rare departure from his usual view, Luther continued his comments on proper conduct in marriage. It was "very fine" when a husband allowed his friendly affection for his wife to be seen in his conduct. But it was "shameful and shocking" if men were harsh toward their wives and gave no evidence of their affection. The rarity of mutual love and harmony was apparent because a good marriage always drew comment from men and women alike.

. . . If there is mutual love, mutual play and friendliness, that marriage is loved and is praised everywhere
by all . . . and it makes itself known by definite indications and signs, which although they are silly and laughable, yet are proper and fitting for a good marriage.

Not only was a husband to conduct himself in a friendly and gentle way toward his wife in the bedroom, but also in public. "He should not be capricious, irascible, and surly; for examples of dissensions and offenses are easy to see and cause great displeasure, especially if jealousy is added. Then there is hell itself . . . ." Luther continued that spouses should be examples for the behavior of others, for marriage is a divine institution. They should be ready to forgive and forget no matter how great the offense of the other spouse, returning to "their customary friendliness, also to their outward friendliness." Thus, Luther regarded Christian behavior by husband and wife as necessary to a good marriage both personally and as a witness to the world. He had insight into the mutuality and meaning of marriage as a personal relationship, but he harnessed it to society's need for the institution.

In the belief that a good marriage was rare, Luther often talked about the trials of marriage, giving substance

---

85 Ibid., V, 31-32.
86 Ibid., V, 32.
87 Ibid.
to the view that he saw marriage as a "school for character."
In a lengthy passage Luther defended woman against those who would avoid marriage because of her faults. However, he fell into criticism himself, and revealed that he was in fact defending marriage rather than woman.

But in marriage there are two evils which sin and the devil have inflicted. The one is sin and imperfection; the other is death. Those two evils have so marred and corrupted our entire nature that reason can see nothing in the female sex but weakness and annoyances. In addition there are pains, sicknesses, and endless misfortunes, which are offensive to people and make important men even more hostile to this ordinance, as though these two evils adhered to women alone, when in fact we men have faults that are far more disgraceful: pride, avarice, and the like; because of which we create upheaval in government and churches. Add pains and sicknesses of every kind.

If listed, Luther continued, more evils would be accounted for men than for women. It is "... our wretched condition and foolishness" that causes man to see only the things that the devil puts forth about women. And this has caused many more insults of women than of men. Thus, men should put forth the effort necessary to counteract the devil's work.

For everyone will have to agree that this sex [female] is a creature of God. Moreover, Scripture states: "God saw, and they were very good." The

---

88 Ibid., IV, 290.
89 Ibid.
devil conceals those good things by means of his insults, and he is in the habit of mentioning and pointing out the things that are bad. We, on the other hand, should consider the use and the good things; for these good things surpass the faults and the evils to the extent that the kindness of God is greater than the devil's malice. But if we were able to see clearly the excellence of nature as it has been created, then we would be blessed, just as we shall understand perfectly in eternal life.

After this lengthy apology and defense of woman Luther lapsed into his usual criticism of woman as the weaker sex.

As I have stated before this sex has faults that are certain: death, that is, all kinds of punishments, sicknesses, and discomforts which pertain to death not only in the case of the mother but also in the case of the offspring. She is morose, the children are unruly and unrestrained, and the neighbors are mischievous and malevolent. But we are speaking about the faults that are within the bounds of marriage . . . . But all these faults should be buried by the good things and the advantages that have been mentioned in opposition. For even though the female sex is the weaker and carries around with it very many faults in the mind as well as in the body, nevertheless that one good thing, the womb and child-bear-ing cover and buries them all . . . .

The rampant masculininity of Luther's viewpoint is inescapable. Although his acknowledgment of masculine faults may have indicated his intention of being fair, his continuous lapses into masculine superiority reveal that he was merely trying to bolster the case for marriage rather than justify the existence of women.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid., IV, 290-291.
Luther regarded marriage as an estate wherein the Christian could please God with his witness of faith and love, but it was also implicit that the good husband could be more faithful than the good wife since his trials were greater than hers. In his account of a dispute between Sarah and Abraham he said,

This little section is intended to describe not only the perils of marriage and of the household but also the trials . . . . Therefore the Lord is at hand to oversee and direct marriages and households. He shows that He takes delight in that game, so to speak, of human relations.

In the household, quarrels and disputes arise between husband and wife. In the state peace is disturbed in various ways. In the church sects are established. The result is that he who observes these things rather carefully almost always begins to despair of a happy outcome.

But these accounts teach and admonish us to be prepared to bear troubles and to overcome them with patience, and not to be among those who want to be husbands or rulers of the state without having any trials; for these are futile thoughts of people who know nothing about this life.

And again he said, ". . . in a household a manly and stout heart is needed for the guidance of one's domestics and wife." The ascetic tone which Luther used is aimed at the male sex. A man could please God by getting married and bearing up under the trials encountered there.

92 Ibid., III, 53-55.

93 Ibid., VIII, 192.
... marriage is God's institution. "It is not good," He says, "that the man should be alone." But inconveniences, vexations, and sundry crosses are encountered in marriage. What does it matter? Is it not better that I please God in this manner, that God hears me when I call upon Him, that He delivers me in misfortunes, and that He benefits me in various ways through my life's companion, the pious wife whom I have joined to myself?

Marriage as "a school for character" was definitely a school for the male, in Luther's mind. Luther's post-medieval ideal of marriage circumscribed his idea of woman in society. Having neither ability for nor right to leadership in church or state, she belonged in the home. Idealized by Luther, marriage was a masculine institution calling for complete self-abnegation by woman either as mother, wife, or daughter. Rather than freeing her from the medieval ideal of celibacy, this idea chained her to a restrictive ideal of servitude. Moreover, Luther's teaching that God was pleased by this servitude served to spiritualize or hallow these biological roles, causing resistance against development in other areas. While man, too, remained a servant of God in Luther's ideal, his was the whole world to explore and to choose. Woman, on the other hand, was limited to marriage and the realm of the household, forbidden that factor ultimately necessary to

94 Ibid., IV, 6.
human dignity, choice. She served God by having children, served man by having sex, and served the spirituality of the whole world by staying home under the watchful eyes of her husband. This was Luther's woman in society.
CHAPTER III

THE REFORMATION MEASURED BY LUTHER'S
VIEW OF WOMAN

The significance of Luther's view of woman bears not only upon the history of woman, nor upon the history of personal relations, but also upon the meaning of the Reformation itself. If the chief precepts issuing from the Reformation are measured with Luther's view of woman in mind, another dimension is sometimes revealed. To what extent did the heart of Luther's theology recognize the female sex? Does his ethic take a different shape from a feminine perspective? And of what importance are his much discussed ideas of church and state to woman? Perhaps all history ultimately will have to be reexamined in like manner if truth is really sought. But without doubt Luther must be reexamined because his negative view of woman is so prominent.

In the Middle Ages the scholastic theology of the Church, in which Luther was thoroughly schooled, expounded a theory which in essence maintained that the sinner's salvation depended upon both the grace of God and the merit
of the sinner. Indeed, it was this emphasis upon the deeds of the sinner which so tortured Luther soon after his entry into the monastery. Like others before him, Luther suffered doubts about his salvation and anxiety over his sins. However, for Luther the established means of overcoming his fears in this regard were not effective. After his confession of sins he felt no less sinful than before. His burden was not lifted by his practice of other traditional means such as vigils, fasting, and private devotionals. His reliance upon the strength of his own will and his works demanded a perfection which he felt he could not achieve. He could never experience God's love as those around him seemed to do through the measures ordained by the Church. When Luther went to the Scripture he found not a loving God but a righteous and angry God demanding a love which he did not feel. Rather he felt defensive against this Power who left him utterly ineffective. And yet, still believing in the holiness of God, Luther could only despair.¹

It is not known for certain when this despair was lifted for Luther. But the central insight which reduced his gloom is unquestioned. Sometime between 1513 and 1519 Luther came to view the Gospel in a new way. The discovery of this

¹Boehmer, *Road to Reformation*, pp. 87-98.
insight has been capsuled into an event generally known as the "tower experience" because it apparently occurred when he was in the tower of the Augustinian monastery in Wittenberg. Luther himself related his discovery in his "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings" written near the end of his life.\(^2\) He explained that his attempts to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans was hindered by the word "righteousness of God." Luther hated this word for he took it to mean, as he had been taught, an active righteousness with which God punished the unrighteous sinner.

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God. . . . Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.\(^3\)

At last Luther came to a new understanding of the hated "righteousness of God."

And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me . . . .

\(^2\) Luther's Works, XXXIV, 327-338.

\(^3\) Ibid., XXXIV, 336-337.

\(^4\) Ibid., XXXIV, 337.
With this insight the Reformation was born, for it challenged the whole concept of the medieval church that man could stand before the righteousness of God clothed in his good intentions, righteous works made perfect by grace, and faith in the sacraments. For those who followed the evangelical teaching, "justification by grace through faith" became the watchword. Faith did not indicate a means by which a sinner might appropriate grace but rather was a recognition of the gift of grace. This concept which Luther rediscovered removed the potential of self-justification. A sinner could not make himself righteous but could only apprehend and accept the righteousness of God as his own. This is the central meaning of the Reformation.5

A second key phrase, "Scripture alone," also expressed an element in the development of Luther's theology countering the Church's reliance upon tradition. In the darkest days of his life in the monastery Luther continued to search the Scripture even when he found no comfort there. He was compelled to allow God to speak to him regardless of the effect upon his inner peace.6 Luther came to believe that


6 Boehmer, Road To Reformation, pp. 96, 110.
the Church was interpreting the Scripture for its own purposes rather than in the light of the revelation of the Christ. He recognized a need for interpretation, but he believed that when the Word was read in faith, it interpreted itself. The revealed Word of God was greater than the simple words of the text. And yet the faithful reader could be grasped by the Word through reading the Scripture. Luther further believed that the Scripture should be interpreted in light of its central message, Christ. For that reason, he did not regard all books of the Bible as equal in value.

In sum: the gospel and the first spistle of St. John, St. Paul's epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians; and St. Peter's first epistle, are the books which show Christ to you. They teach everything you need to know for your salvation, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or hear any other teaching. In comparison with these, the epistle of St. James is an epistle of straw, because it contains nothing evangelical.

Most important, Luther taught that the Christian should look to the Scripture rather than the Church as a guide for faith and a witness to God's grace in Christ.

A third important concept in the Reformation was "the priesthood of the believer," a concept which also challenged the Church at a very important point. The Church, believing

8Luther's Works, XXXV, 362.
the clergy to have received a special call from God, taught the superiority of the clergy over the laity. This was apparent in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, where only the priest was allowed to partake of both bread and wine, and in the mediation of the priest between sinner and Christ in confession and prayer. Luther denounced these practices in his Babylonian Captivity of the Church.⁹

In virtue of a physical anointing, when their hands are consecrated, and in virtue of their tonsure and vestments, the clergy claim to be superior to the Christian laity, who, nevertheless, have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. The clergy can almost be said also to regard the laity as lower animals, who have been included in the church along with themselves. Thus it arises that they may boldly to command and demand, to threaten and urge and oppress, as they please. In sum, the sacrament of ordination is the prettiest of devices for giving a firm foundation to all the ominous thing hitherto done in the church, or yet to be done. This is the point at which Christian fellowship perishes, where pastors become wolves, servants become tyrants, and men of the church become worse than men of the world.

Now we, who have been baptized, are all uniformly priests in virtue of that very fact. The only addition received by the priests is the office of preaching, and even this with our consent. If the Romanists had to grant this point, they would have to admit that they had no right to lord it over us, except in so far as we, of our own free will, allowed them to do so. Thus it says in I Peter 2 [:9], "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, and a priestly kingdom." It follows that all of us who are Christian are also priests. Those whom we call priests are really ministers of the word and chosen by us; they fulfill their entire office in our name . . . .

---

⁹Ibid., XXXVI, 5-126.

10 Luther, Martin, Martin Luther, Selections from His Writings, edited by John Dillenberger (New York, 1961), p. 345.
Luther placed all true Christians on equal ground in regard to their relationship to God. No longer was there the necessity for the mediation of a priest; each Christian as an anointed believer could serve as his own priest. Thus, with his belief in "justification by faith," "Scripture alone" as a guide, and the "priesthood of the believer" Luther attacked the efficacy of the sacraments of the Church, the Church's reliance upon tradition, and the priestly hierarchy.

A further expansion of his concept of "the priesthood of the believer" was Luther's idea of the Christian calling or vocation. This concept held that every Christian was assigned to a definite place to insure the working of God's love in the world. Until Luther's time the word calling (Beruf) denoted one's being called to an ecclesiastical office. In the context, the central meaning was the calling of some men by God to a higher office than those of most men. Luther, however, expanded the meaning of this term "calling" to include all honest and productive vocations. Therefore, every Christian who labored in the fear of God performed a work as sacred as that of any ordained minister of the Word.\footnote{Heinrich Bornkamm, \textit{Luther's World of Thought}, p. 271.}

In conjunction with the expanded meaning
of "calling" was Luther's contribution to the meaning of the term labor (Arbeit). The original word referred chiefly to "exertion, pain, struggle (Ringen)," often being applied to "ascetic, meritorious work." Through Luther's belief in the sanctity of all honest vocations, the word lost its connotation of privation and became the general expression for all human activity. The Christian's work became a joyful matter, pleasing to God in a positive manner rather than a sacrificial manner. The development of the idea that God is present in the workaday world implies a spiritualization of the world, which had heretofore been divided into holy and secularized components. What had before been secular and secondary to the ecclesiastic was not considered as spiritual as the religious.

The theological concepts expounded above generally are considered a central part of Luther's legacy to modern man. However, little has been said of the heritage given modern woman by Luther's theology. If this well-known core of theology did indeed apply to woman, it is quite possible in light of Luther's views concerning woman that its application to the female was somewhat different than to the male. The

---

chief Reformation concept, "justification by grace through faith," seems to have applied to woman just as it did to man. Luther spoke frequently of the equality of men and women in Christ, saying that women should be honored for this reason. Both were heirs to heaven in spite of their inequality on earth. Internally they were the same even though externally they were different.13

Perhaps the best evidence of Luther's good faith in including women among the elect was his advocacy of Christian education for girls. Teachers were to be hired "... for instructing young girls under twelve in true Christian discipline, honor, and virtue and, in accordance with the ordinance for our pastoral office, teaching them to read and write German ... ."14 In confronting the need for education Luther was meeting a gap left by the closing of monasteries, which had previously provided education for boys.15 However, the principle of education for girls, while not totally innovative was essentially a new step. Luther showed his seriousness in the matter by writing on August 22, 1527, to one Else von Kanitz, offering her room

13Luther's Works, XXX, 92-93.
14Ibid., XLV, 188-189.
15Ibid., XLV, 175.
and board in his home if she would open a school for girls in Wittenberg.\textsuperscript{16} In his treatise \textit{To the Christian Nobility} Luther advocated reading of the Holy Scripture for everybody in the universities and the schools, and added,

And would to God that every town had a girls' school as well, where the girls would be taught the gospel for an hour every day either in German or in Latin . . . . A spinner or a seamstress teaches her daughter her craft in her early years. But today even the great,\textsuperscript{17} learned prelates and the bishops do not know the gospel.

Evidently Luther wanted everyone to confront God's Word; even females could be justified by grace.

While this was the prevailing tone concerning the salvation of woman, there was at least one indication that Luther considered child-bearing itself to be, if not redemption itself, very closely related to it. He was recorded at table in praise of marriage.

. . . it is only right that we put a charitable construction on everything that may be frail in woman. For Christ, our Savior did not hold woman in contempt but entered the womb of a woman. Paul also reflected on this [when he wrote], "Woman will be saved through bearing children," etc. [I Timothy 2:15.] This is admirable praise, except that he uses the little word "woman" and not "mother."\textsuperscript{18}

There is no doubt that Luther does not mean literally that having babies would save woman, and Paul too goes on to

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., XLV, 344.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., XLIV, 205-206.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., LIV, 223.
include faith and charity in his prescription for woman's salvation. However, the inordinate emphasis upon woman as an instrument of procreation does at least mutely hint that except for this boon woman would not be worth saving. Nevertheless, in the central theme of the Reformation, "justification by grace," woman is included as man's equal. Her standing in matters of grace is not less than man's. In this step in religious consciousness man and woman moved from the medieval period if not side by side, at least soul by soul.

The second Reformation concept considered, Luther's belief in Scripture alone as a spiritual guide, was probably decisive in Luther's view of woman. Certainly, his belief that woman's submission to her husband and child-bearing were punishment for sin was scriptural. Both old and new testaments taught the submission of women. However, his teaching concerning the nature of woman as inferior to that of man can only be termed scriptural in the broadest sense. Remembering that Luther termed Biblical women whom he admired exceptional, it must be assumed that he allowed the Word and the Spirit to speak to him more deeply than the text itself. And Luther must have assumed that passages concerning submission also signaled at least implicit inferiority.
History witnesses that Luther was a critical reader of the Scripture, but there is no record of his questioning the assumptions which he made concerning woman. Even though his idea of her role in the home was reconcilable with the words of Peter and Paul, his use of Scripture for determination of woman's nature is questionable. His insensitivity to woman as a human being contrasted with the judgment that she participated in justification by grace. Perhaps this contradiction is inherent in the Scripture, and perhaps this is why Luther never questioned it. However, he questioned other contradictions, denouncing the book of James for preaching works instead of faith. It can only be concluded that Luther did not seriously use the Scripture to determine his view of woman in the same critical manner which he applied to other problems.

The idea of the "priesthood of the believer" is perhaps the most questionable of Luther's theological precepts in connection with his view of woman. One can hardly imagine Luther calling a woman a priest. Yet he did say,

It follows in addition that in the sacrament of penance and forgiveness of guilt a pope or bishop does nothing more than the lowliest priest. Indeed where there is no priest, each individual Christian--even a woman or child--does as much. For any Christian can say to you, "God forgives you your sins, in the name," etc., and if you can accept that word with a confident
faith, as though God were saying it to you, then in that same faith you are surely absolved.

Of course this did not give all men the right to preach, for this was an office given by consent of the baptized. But it gave no woman at all the right. Woman, though she received grace, was evidently not perfected by it and was not allowed to preach it to the believers. This was true even of the godly woman whose service to husband and children exemplified her faith. There was even a suggestion in Luther's ethical precepts for woman that she was not entirely without need of a mediator with God, that she dared not be her own priest. What saint of a woman might approach God both husbandless and childless? The emphasis which Luther put on the functions of motherhood and wifery left no room for the existence of individual woman, even as a sinner. It is almost impossible to conceive of woman "without head and without offspring" approaching God even as the humblest sinner. A woman who had not answered her only "calling" would have no evidence of her state of grace and thus, would appear unredeemed to true believers regardless of her true spiritual state. In practice, though not in the strictest interpretation of Luther's meaning, woman did need the mediation of husband and children.

19 Ibid., XXXV, 12.
There was also a suggestion that woman was in need of a mediator to truly relate to God. Could she really please God if she did not please her husband? And was not the husband elevated so that the wife was answerable to him as to God? The Neo-Platonic influence in Luther supports the suggestion that man as the spiritual superior of woman had to be her intermediary. At creation Adam not only named the animals, but also named his wife Eve, as an indication of his power over her. This certainly placed her at a level below man who was the link between spirit and flesh, God and the world. It is almost as if she were related to man as the highest of animals. Even her God-given functions of sex and procreation indicate her animality, especially in comparison with the many-faceted works of man. Luther's criticism of the clergy's relationship to the laity further illuminates his view of man's position as a mediator to woman. He said, "The clergy can almost be said also to regard the laity as lower animals, who have been included in the church along with themselves." If this were the kind of relationship which Luther was trying to end with his concept of the priesthood of the believers, he failed to eradicate

---

20 Ibid., I, 219.

21 Luther, Martin Luther, edited by Dillenberger, p. 345.
it completely, for this attitude was identical with his attitude toward women. Woman could be justified by grace; but nevertheless, man stood between her and God. Superficially Luther taught that woman might face God to receive grace, but the thrust of his thinking was to the contrary!

There is also an inherent contradiction in Luther's concept of the "calling." Woman's "calling" is established at birth. Man, on the other hand, moves toward his "calling" during his early years or accepts it during young manhood. Woman spends her childhood and her girlhood in acknowledgment of her destiny, seeking only the other who will seal it. The boy, the young man, is allowed to listen for God's voice, to attune himself to the divine, or as moderns might have it, to find himself, so that he may become what he was "meant" to be. The female is born; she is. The male is born; he becomes. This psychology permeated Luther's conception of the "calling."

The idea of "calling" takes on even another dimension when it is recognized that woman's vocation was to Luther inferior. This fact is clear regardless of the praises he sang to the importance of the household realm. While the home might have been important for rearing citizens for church and state; might have in this manner been absolutely
necessary for the survival of the other two realms, it was nevertheless the private realm. Why were women relegated to the home? They were incapable of participating in public affairs. A vocation in the home was not innately inferior, but Luther implied that it was by coupling the inferior female with domesticity alone. In this manner he established that woman is limited (capable of only one possible "calling") and that homemaking is a limited calling (suited only for a limited creature). In consequence of this dimension in Luther's concept woman carries the stigma that whatever she touches is limited, inferior. A vocation dominated by women is likely to have less status and lower pay than one shared with men. An interesting example of this in recent history is the field of library service. As an almost wholly female field, the prestige was little, the pay low. However, as males entered the field and became more prominent, the profession began to rise both in status and money. Another example is the dishonor which the vocation of homemaking has fallen into even among many women. While the roles of wife and mother are very demanding and can be dealt with in an imaginative way by a superior person, they have been denigrated as unfulfilling or unchallenging. This may be due not to the roles themselves, but to the fact that
no man has ever played them. Few men have been homemakers; therefore, homemaking is an inferior calling. That which has been wholly the domain of women is regarded as inferior or at least as a symbol of inferiority even by many women. Luther, a transmitter of the idea of female inferiority and the creator of woman's "calling," can certainly be named a prime mover in the present state of affairs.

Another aspect of Luther's idea of the "calling" revolves around his influence in the changing meaning of the German word for "work." Heretofore the word had had an ascetic tone. No doubt this was at least partially due to the Scriptural view that man had been charged with work as punishment for his part in original sin. By the sweat of his brow man was to make his way even though, as Luther emphasized, maintenance of life was God's gift, not something earned. Work was sacrificial, indeed ascetic, as indicated by the word used (Ringen). But with the advent of work as a "calling" the ascetic tone was replaced by joyful affirmation and a new word came to be used (Arbeit). On the other hand, woman's "calling" was still inextricably caught up with her punishment for original sin, the bearing of children and subjection to her husband. While Luther encouraged woman to take joy in her God-given tasks in the
home, he also affirmed her complete self-abnegation. She pleased God if she died in childbirth and if she subjected herself to her husband though he even be an evil man. While a man, too, might find himself suffering subjection or death at the hands of the state, he was nevertheless authorized to make a moral decision as to his responsibility.\textsuperscript{22} Woman, however, was given no moral responsibility, only a rigid criteria of self-denial which had the earmarks of the most rigid rule of monasticism. Rather than releasing woman from the medieval ideals of self-abnegation and withdrawal from the world, Luther's concept of her "calling" bound her more tightly to it.

At the center of Luther's theology are concepts which traditionally have been hailed as breakthroughs or at least renewals of mankind's religious consciousness. It is apparent, however, that these advances did not always apply to womankind in the same manner. Luther's contempt for woman clouded his affirmation of her equality in Christ. Although she could be justified by grace, only her husband and her children gave testament to her faith. Luther's integrity is suspect in light of his failure to struggle with scriptural contradiction in regard to woman as he did in other matters. The weight of his premise that Scripture

\textsuperscript{22} Note this discussion in Chapter 3, pp. 117-118.
should be the Christian's guide is somewhat lessened when it is recognized that it was not necessarily his guide in deciding the nature of woman. Whereas Luther followed the Scripture in preaching the priesthood of even the female believer, his insistent harangue on the male's dominion leaves the impression that actually woman required at least a husband, if not children, to mediate between her and God. The last facet of Luther's theology, the concept of the "calling" is shown to be basically different for man and woman, more active for the former, passive for the latter. It seems that Luther was a religious genius. However, his affirmative genius seems to have extended only to the male sex, while perhaps a more conservative or even cunning genius served to contain woman in medieval being, a servant to the male's becoming in the modern world.

Out of Luther's theology came an evangelical ethic which has been much discussed.\(^2^3\) Luther saw the world as divided into two realms, the redemptive and the creative. True Christians partook of both realms while the unredeemed lived in the creative realm. Luther believed that at creation God established an order in the world which continued as natural law. After sin or rebellion against God, His

perfect order no longer existed, and it had to be mended to stave off the chaos of sin in man's heart and actions. The state, and the home became dykes against sin. Thus the creative realm in Luther's ethic was a combination of that which existed in pure creation and that which was erected to maintain order in a sinful world. In this realm God existed but was hidden. The redemptive realm, on the other hand, was that realm in which the elect followed the teachings of Christ. Here, God was revealed. Through the work of Christians God's love reached the creative realm. For the Christian all works issued out of God's grace. Works were not good because of human intention but because God made them good through his grace. One could not become good by doing good works, as Aristotle said, but rather through the goodness of God. Luther used a paradox to explain his idea of Christian ethics. "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." In faith the Christian was inwardly made pure and there were no works which could replace this faith. However, the outward or carnal man warred with this inward man and had to be disciplined. Thus, the Christian had to make himself servant

24Luther, Martin Luther, edited by Dillenberger, p. 53.
in order to bring his body into subjection. While good works did not replace faith, the inward faith of man demanded that the outward carnal man be made subject to the inner man. This is what Luther meant when he said that the Christian was both servant and free. In like manner, the Christian though not subject to the law, willingly subjected himself to it for the sake of his neighbor. Rather than offend another, the Christian would submit to the law though he had inwardly been made righteous by God's grace and had no need of the law.  

The Christian ethic was dynamic rather than static in Luther's thought. There were no laws, no absolutes for the Christian. First, he knew that he had been made righteous by God's grace and that good works were simply done to please God. The two guidelines for the Christian's activities were the discipline and subjection of his own body and consideration of his neighbor's needs. Personally, the Christian was to live the Christlike life, not resisting evil. However, socially he was bound to the creative realm and had to do whatever necessary to fight sin in service to his neighbor. This ethic has been called existential in that no laws were laid down in Christ; and the Christian,

---

25 Ibid.
though made righteous, was not made perfect by grace. He was continuously struggling with the natural man within him; he was born and died daily as he constantly renewed his faith and tried to glorify God.\textsuperscript{26}

Where did woman fit into this ethical prescription? Like any Christian she was free in love to go about her everyday duties sure in the knowledge of pleasing God. Her works were good because God made them good. However, the problem of moral choice arises.\textsuperscript{27} Though Luther emphasized an existential manner of meeting life, he placed man in a position more open to the dynamic elements of his ethic. While either man or woman might constantly renew their efforts to rid themselves of sin or rebellion against God, the concrete actuality took different shape with each sex. While a man might find himself in a specific vocation in obedience to God's call, presumably he was free to change it if God should so direct. Woman, however, was delegated a specific calling by Luther which was evidently not subject to change. Therefore, should a woman have been convinced that some calling other than the domestic one was God's

\textsuperscript{26}For full discussions of Luther's ethic see Forell, \textit{Faith Active in Love} and Lazareth, \textit{Luther on the Christian Home}.

\textsuperscript{27}Note this discussion in Chap. 3, p. 107.
will for her, it is quite likely that Luther would have interpreted this as rebellion against God rather than obedience. For Luther saw in both Scripture and natural law the correctness of woman's place in the home. Thus, the freedom inherent in salvation by grace restricted woman much more than man in the creative realm. The injustice done to woman in this manner may easily be discarded as an aberrance of the time which should be overlooked in favor of the central insight of Luther's ethic—the goodness of all works done in faith and the necessity of constraint under the law. However, the effect of Luther's restraint upon woman goes farther than his own time. When Luther spiritualized what had before been secular, the home and the state, he hallowed the roles therein. For woman, this means that long after the Western world has forsaken doctrinaire Christian thought, her role in the home carries sacred overtones. And for her to rebel against this role has been in modern times a rebellion against that which is sacred, just as in Luther's time it would have been a rebellion against God.

Apart from this theology and somewhat in connection with his ethics, Luther's theory of the state and its relationship to the Church has been much examined. During the Middle Ages there was the concept that God had ordained two branches
of authority, which were strictly divided into the religious and the secular realm. The church was to have had power in spiritual matters while the state had authority to deal with questions in the worldly realm. However, while the Church and the Empire were ostensibly set side by side, the balance of power really lay with the Church by virtue of its closer relationship to God.  

It has already been pointed out that Luther refused to grant that the clergy were closer to God than the laity. He believed that all the baptized were called by God to come vocation and that even the meanest task done in faith was hallowed by God. Thus, Luther taught that the function of the state in matters of law and order were just as holy as ecclesiastic functions.

Therefore those now called "the religious," i.e., priests, bishops, and popes, possess no further or greater dignity than other Christians, except that their duty is to expound the word of God and administer the sacraments--that being their office. In the same way, the secular authorities "hold the sword and the rod," their function being to punish evil-doers and protect the law-abiding . . . . Hence secular Christian authorities should exercise their office freely and unhindered and without fear, whether it be pope, bishop, or priest with whom they are dealing; if a man is guilty let him pay the penalty . . . . the social corpus of Christendom includes secular government as one of its component functions. This government is spiritual in status, although it discharges a secular duty. It should operate, freely and unhindered, upon all members

---

of the entire corpus, should punishment and compel where guilt deserves or necessity requires, in spite of pope, bishops, and priests; and whether they denounce or excommunicate to their hearts' desire.

The meaning of the new emphasis upon the state as against the authority of the ecclesiastical church has been given a variety of interpretations by different scholars. None, however, have considered its meaning for woman. It is apparent that Luther by simply emphasizing the spiritual quality of the state greatly undermined the authority of the church. Although Luther himself could hardly have conceived of the ensuring fragmentation of Christendom and the growth of the modern nation-state, he laid the groundwork or built the bridge from medieval allegiance to the church to modern allegiance to the state. While many modern citizens are only nominal Christians, they are still spiritually united as members of one nation or another. This points to the fact that though the modern world left the ecclesiastical umbrella of medieval times for a non-religious approach to the problems of living, it nevertheless began and continued

29 Luther's Works
in a spiritual framework. And within this framework belief in the deficiencies designated as woman's by Luther still thrives with a spiritual fervor. So-called secular institutions were made sacred by Luther's teaching that God uses all aspects of the world in his maintenance of order and continuity.

Another aspect of the problem of Luther's influence upon the idea of the state is the question of the citizen's responsibility to obey and/or serve the state. This question is at the crux of Luther's influence in the twentieth century, for he has been suggested as a source both for the U.S. Bill of Rights and for German Nazism. Luther attacked this question in his treatise, Secular Authority. He based his advice to the Christian on the premise that secular law administered by the state was created by God because of the inability of non-Christians to live in peace and order. If only true Christians lived in the world, secular government would not be necessary. As it was, Christians were not to use the secular sword or law in their own defense. However,


32 Luther, Martin Luther, edited by Dillenberger, pp. 370-382.
they were to serve the sword in defense of their weaker neighbors. There was provision for disobedience to the state in matters of faith. If the state should order the Christian into idolatry, he had the right of passive resistance. However, the emphasis was upon the Christian's responsibility to the state since it was the creation of God.

The importance of Luther's view of the state and citizenship to a treatment of his thought concerning woman is indirect. First, none of Luther's ideas of the state nor any of the interpretation concerning these ideas involve woman at all. Since woman was limited to the home, she had no concern with matters of state in Luther's thought. Certainly not meant to be a leader in the state, she evidently was also denied citizenship and any responsibility which that involved. While the lives of countless women were to be influenced by the development of the state and the effect of Luther's thought in this regard, they were to be only passive observers swept along in the current of history. It is difficult to imagine anything but a passive woman, given Luther's construction of society. With no opportunity to influence events of history in any way, ordered to submit to the influence of a husband, woman's refusal to become completely passive is notable. Still, the exceptions to
Luther's rule have not been great enough to break tradition. Women have very little direct influence in matters of state and Luther's views of the citizen's responsibility have only slowly been applied to women as to men.

Luther's view of the state does give insight into his view of woman, however, in another regard. A comparison may be made between the institutions of marriage and the state as examples of the authority which Luther believed God placed in the creative realm as dykes against sin in society. The submission of the citizen (male, of course) to the state is comparable to the subjection of the wife to her husband. However, the submission of the citizen is much more flexible than that of the wife. Luther gave the citizen the right of moral choice or even the right to suspend moral choice without danger to his soul.

But when a prince is in the wrong, are his people bound to follow him then too? I answer, No, for it is no one's duty to do wrong; we ought to obey God Who desires the right, rather than men [Acts 5:29]. How is it, when the subjects do not know whether the prince is in the right or not? I answer, As long as they cannot know, nor find out by any possible means, they may obey without peril to their souls. 33

Thus, Luther left a large loophole for the Christian citizen who wished to exercise his own moral fiber even though the

33 Ibid., p. 399.
thrust of the treatise urged obedience to the state in regard for one's neighbor. For the wife, too, there was one loophole, one instance in which she was not held by her husband's rule. According to Luther a wife might leave her husband or make a secret arrangement if her husband was impotent but would not permit her to lie with another man. She had to do this in order to have children and to remain chaste.34 This exception to the rule in marriage, however, was quite legalistic in comparison to the leeway accorded the citizen in his relationship with the ruler. Luther did not allow the wife the right to judge her husband's orders. In fact, he said that the wife should not even question a wicked husband, but rather obey him out of trust in God.35 Luther's restriction of the wife's ability to make moral judgments cannot be explained by his belief in the necessity of a line of authority, for in the state Luther allowed this judgment to the citizen in spite of his proclivity toward authority and order. The submission of the wife, besides being scriptural, was based upon belief in female inferiority and quite probably in female evil rather than the necessity of order.

34Luther's Works, XXXVI, 103-105.
When the influence of Luther upon the state and the citizen are considered, it must be remembered that he spoke of men alone. And while he viewed the state and marriage as dykes against sin, institutions of and for order in God's creative realm, his prescription for order was much more rigid in the latter. If these insights do not lessen the authenticity of other accounts of Luther's contribution to the idea of the state, they at least give another dimension to those accounts. Furthermore, the universality of Luther's advice to princes and citizens becomes apparent as women join the ranks of citizens and rulers. For although historically Luther's admonitions were not addressed to woman, today as she becomes a participant in the governing of nations they apply to her as well as they do to her male counterpart.

Luther's religious insights can also be applied to woman whether or not he meant them to be. They are extraordinary in themselves and are not dependent on Luther's limitations nor upon the time and place in which they were discovered. However, for the historian the significance of these insights includes their relationship with time, place, and person. The factors which conditioned them as well as the factors conditioned by them are equally important to sensing the past as the insights themselves. Therefore, this study seeks
not only to delineate Luther's view of woman but to suggest that this view also colored many of Luther's other insights. The historian who ignores Luther's view of woman in an overall view of the man and his movement risks a distortion of some degree. For, though the insights may stand alone as ideas, they cannot be isolated in the historian's world of men and women.
Luther's picture of society was definitely colored by his view of woman. As an inferior and evil creature, she was not to be active in church or state. Her interference was likely to bring chaos either because of her natural inferiority or because of her purposeful evil. She was not physically, emotionally, mentally, or morally capable of bringing a good end to affairs of the church or state. She was biologically capable of bearing and nurturing children and of having sex. Therefore, she was to remain at home and exercise these capabilities. As a wife, she was to obey her husband. In this manner Luther created a new nunnery for woman and idealized a new form of asceticism for both man and woman in marriage. His active theology offered the whole world to man and only the home to woman. His philosophy of woman fits the thrust of Luther's life and thought. While it may not influence every part of his living and thinking, it must be considered in any interpretation of Luther if accurate historical accounting is sought.

The study of Luther's view of woman demonstrates the tentative searching nature of all attempts at grasping, or sensing, the past. Luther's role in history, the events
labeled "Reformation," can never be a closed book. The material of history lies waiting to be formed and reformed, and each addition or new insight into the body of knowledge not only extends its boundaries but changes its face. As Huizinga says,

... knowing in the historical sense rarely if ever means indicating a strictly closed causality. It is always an understanding of contexts. ... this context is always an open one, which is to say that it may never be represented in the metaphor of links forming a chain, but only in that of a loosely bound bundle of sticks to which new twigs can be added as long as the band around them allows it. Perhaps more suitable than a bundle of sticks might be a bunch of wild flowers. In their variety and their difference in value new notions added to the conception of a historical context are like newly found flowers in the nosegay: each one changes the appearance of the whole bouquet. ¹

The concept of Luther's view of woman is such a flower. That it affects the whole is sure. However, the extent of this effect upon the context of Luther and the Reformation, of woman, and of the modern world cannot be known without further examination. To what extent it will contrast or blend with the present picture of the past must be answered by seasoned scholars in due time.

The delineation of Luther's view of woman and the suggestions as to its meaning for his thought in other areas is a new consciousness of what Luther was and is in history.

This direction of thought can and should be further extended and refined for it presents as many questions as it answers. It should be extended to include a more detailed study of the reformation in social life from the medieval period to the modern age. More monographs of Reformation women should be done. Work on the history of woman needs to be undertaken with the hypothesis that the Reformation was a turning point for Western woman. There is also a need for a scholarly investigation into the history of the idea of woman's being inferior and evil. The effect of Luther on women in different countries should also be examined. All of these would not only further make a history of woman but would better define Luther and the Reformation.

2 Bainton's *Women of the Reformation* is a valuable contribution.


4 For a discussion of the relationship between the authoritarian state and patriarchal society see Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York, 1969.) Although she cites Germany under National Socialism as an example of the use of patriarchalism to support the state, she does not take Luther into account as an ideological support for a renewed subordination of women. This bears investigation in itself and in comparison with other Western societies subject to Luther's influence. For a simple comparison of social life in England and Germany at the turn of the century see Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick, *Home Life in Germany* (Chautauqua, 1908.)
This estimate, of course, presents a more far-reaching problem than any of the above. Should the whole of history be revised with consideration for the perspective of woman, i.e., taking into account the women who lived and worked at a given time, regardless of their role, and also taking into account the influence of the past on the present role of women in society. Before this question is termed ridiculous, it should be considered in correlation with the fact that written history thus far is primarily the story of man and an attempt to account for his present role in the state. The Preamble to the United States Constitution, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man spoke only of the rights of men. The American Civil War resulted in new voting rights only for black males. Are these facts so obvious as to be taken for granted? Or are they so neglected as to be ignored? History, as extraordinary events, primarily has been made by males, recorded by males, and written by males. It has been read, even by most women, from a masculine perspective. Now, historians must face a new consciousness of feminine perspective held not only by females but by males. The problem is the significance to be given to this consciousness in the writing of history. Is it a fad which will fade as the much-ridiculed women's movements of the past have faded with limited significance? Or is it a breakthrough of import in the
consciousness of mankind, the significance of which will be noted by generations in the distant future?

Every historian is seeking a universal perspective which will give his judgments timeless significance; none wishes to be caught in the throes of his own age even as he makes use of its insights. However, it must be suggested that this sought-after universal perspective has itself been masculine rather than neuter, on at least two levels. First, it has sought to be coldly logical, purely scientific, at the expense of intuitive perception. Second, it has emphasized the study of events at the expense of settings, of moods, of people, obliterating the importance of the ordinary in favor of the extraordinary and omitting the history of women, who have largely been only a part of a larger setting. Thus, historians have reflected in a masculine mode and written a masculine tale. This does not suggest that logic and concentration upon events should be shunned in favor of aesthetics but that the omission of the female perspective on both levels has been a loss. If this is true, then the acknowledgement of feminine perspective would be not only an addition to the writing and study of history but might initiate a basic change in the ideal objectivity for which historians strive.

If this ideal objectivity seeks above all to see a "context," as Huizinga calls it, a structure of the past, then
the omission of woman's past is a distortion in the writing of history. It may be noted that chronologists, historians, and women themselves left few records with which to construe the role of woman. However, neither those records available nor the absence of records concerning women have been accorded full consideration. The traditional disparagement of dealing with the role of woman in history is apparent in Reformation history in particular. Only in the wave of the current woman's movement has a work been done on women of the Reformation. And in the introduction this great scholar epitomizes the disregard for woman evident among his colleagues with his remarks concerning Luther's view of woman.\(^5\) Even in a study of Luther's influence on the Christian home his negation of woman is only casually mentioned.\(^6\) Perhaps the existence of the patriarchal society itself has blurred the vision of historians to the real context of the past. Or on the other hand, perhaps the immediacy of the new consciousness of female perspective demands more attention to some parts than the whole context demands. The serious historian will want to consider the questions aroused by this consciousness. The importance of


\(^6\) Lazareth, *Luther and the Christian Home*, p. 225.
a study of Luther's view of woman will in some degree depend upon their answers. At the least, it broadens the context of Luther studies. At most, it signals a new current in historical values.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Bornkamm, Heinrich, Luther's World of Thought, translated by Martin H. Bertram, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1958.


Kroker, Ernst, *Katherina von Bora, Martin Luthers Frau*, Zwickau, J. Herrmann, 1925.


Mackinnon, James, Luther and the Reformation, New York, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1923.


Mead, Margaret, Male and Female, New York, W. Morrow, 1949.

Millet, Kate, Sexual Politics, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1970.


Painter, Franklin V.N., Luther on Education, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1889.


Articles


Report


Unpublished Materials
