

Theological Convocation – MN South – February 26, 2011
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Thank you, Reverend Lehenbauer, for the historical overview and your thoughts on the process and documents. Thank you also, to those of you who organized this convocation - for providing a forum in which to discuss this important issue. I am honored to be here with all of you, and to be speaking along with Reverend Lehenbauer and Reverend Boehme. As it was given to me, my task for today is to respond to Reverend Lehenbauer's presentation but, more specifically, to share thoughts on a broader view for women in the Church. I hope, as I'm sure we all do, that our discussions today will lead to further meaningful conversation throughout this district and our synod.

Since I do not know many of you, let me just explain a bit about my background. I am trained and work in the area of *Christian Origins*. This means that I focus on the early years of the faith, the time period when Christianity was emerging from its Jewish roots - working in this area requires that one study the *New Testament* but also the Hebrew scriptures wherein the promises of God that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ were first given to human beings. This period is often called the time of the *parting of the ways*. It's that period when Christians and Jews gradually differentiated themselves from one another. That being said, I'd like to start by sharing a couple of stories about understanding the law of God.

As you all know, the third commandment says:

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

As good Lutherans, we then have to ask --- Yes. *What does this mean?* And then we follow up with the second great Lutheran question -- "*How is this done?*"

But Lutherans are not the only ones who ask *What does this mean?* and *How is this done?* when it comes to this commandment. Over the centuries, Jewish leaders have also asked this question and they have figured out quite a few things. For instance, one of the thirty-nine categories of prohibited activity on the Sabbath involves carrying anything for more than four cubits between a public and a private domain. It's okay to walk further than that but it's not okay to carry something further than that because carrying is work. This law creates trouble especially if one wishes to carry a child or to push an elderly person in a wheelchair from one relative's home to another on the Sabbath. If the other house is more than four cubits away, you're stuck, because you can't go through the public domain. Or worse yet, suppose someone needs to carry another to the hospital on the Sabbath. Technically, they're out of luck if the hospital is more than four cubits away, which it most likely is.

Many Jewish communities have solved this problem by creating what is known as an *eruv*. The word "eruv" means "to join together" and an *eruv* is basically a big string, such as a fishing line, that is strung for miles in order to enclose a larger community -- in this way, a large area filled with many public spaces can be transformed into an area thought of as one private space. I know this because *eruv*s exist in Brooklyn and in Queens; and in Manhattan in recent years there has been much debate regarding whether the

Manhattan *eruv* can be lawfully expanded to include the lower east side. Incidentally, in case you didn't know it, Minneapolis also has an *eruv*. It's in the St. Louis Park Community and is sponsored by an orthodox congregation there.

At any rate, you might think the biggest difficulty in regard to expanding an *eruv* or even having an *eruv* at all would be practical -- things like, we don't want people to be walking along and trip over an *eruv* boundary, or we don't want that string causing trouble with our phone and electrical lines. But those issues are minor -- there are actually *Eruv Boards* who handle those kinds of technical issues. The real difficulty is in determining if the *eruv* can really be made in such a way that the area can legitimately be called private domain. But in order to determine that, one has to consider a lot of things about the private domain: Is it really a properly enclosed space if the river is on one side? or if there's a bridge that goes through it? If not, is it possible to do something to make it proper? And what about the height of the string? *Eruv* constructions are supposed to resemble door posts. Telephone poles are usually used for the vertical parts but the horizontal ones that resemble the lintels are supposed to be lower. If you've got an area where you can't make a low enough "lintel" you're in trouble, *halakhically* speaking.

So, you can see that if a person is going to ask, *How is this done?* in regard to the third commandment, it is possible to get a very long and detailed answer. And this was true even before the first century and into Jesus' day, because even then there were already proto-Lutherans around asking that same question!

We know this because Jesus got himself in trouble frequently for violating the Sabbath by healing people -- *you have six other days to work*, they said, *why do you need to do it on the Sabbath?*

So the questions were there even then: *what exactly constitutes work? What is permissible on the Sabbath and what is not? What is really in good order and proper and what is not?* These were, and are, difficult questions.

In the gospel of Luke, we're told of an incident where Jesus, on the Sabbath, cures a man right in front of some Pharisees who had hoped to catch him in just such an infraction. Rather than waiting for them to accuse him, Jesus turns and asks them, "If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a Sabbath day?" And the next verse informs us that "they could not reply to this" (*Lk 14: 5-6*).¹

Well, perhaps you're thinking that of course they could not reply because that question was the most absurd ever -- Of course, no one would leave even an animal, let alone a child, in a well to die just because it was the Sabbath! That would be basically like letting a child die because you didn't have an *eruv* and couldn't cross public domain to get to the hospital. Nobody would do such a thing.

But if you thought that, you'd be wrong. You see, Jesus did not use an absurd example just to make the Pharisees look absurd. He used it because it reflected reality and because

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all Biblical passages are from the NRSV.

he wanted to remind the Pharisees that even they were not keeping the law as well as they might, and as well as some others apparently were keeping it.

One of the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran and most likely associated with the very strict Jewish sect known as the Essenes, sheds light on this topic and gives us an insight into why Jesus raised it. According to the *Damascus Document*, "No one should help an animal give birth on the Sabbath; and if it falls into a well or a pit, he may not lift it out on the Sabbath."² And a bit further on, the document states, "[a]ny living human who falls into a body of water or a cistern shall not be helped out with ladder, rope, or instrument [on the Sabbath]".³

That's right. To keep the law properly meant to keep the law in any and all circumstances; no ifs, ands or buts -- an interpretation that was strict even by Pharisaical standards. For the writers of this document, it was not about the animal, and it was not about the child or other person in the well. It was about the Law!

But not for Jesus -- who repeatedly makes it clear that "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath" (*Mk 2: 27*). Notice that Jesus doesn't argue his case with the Pharisees; he does not say, *Well, let me see, if it's a child, you pull it out but if it's an ox, forget it*. And he doesn't say, *Well, if the child is over two years old, pull him or her out but if under two, just walk away*. No, Jesus virtually never argues a case like that. Instead, he overturns the underlying hypothesis or approach to the problem. The Pharisees wanted to argue to what degree the law must be kept but Jesus said, *let's talk about the very purpose of the Law*.

So, in one simple phrase, "The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath," Jesus takes apart the whole foundation on which the Pharisees based their arguments against him (*Mk 2: 27*). We do have to admit that the Pharisees were masters at unpacking the law, but even so, Jesus accuses them of engaging in useless and damaging arguments. At one point, he calls them "blind guides of the blind" because when it came to the law, they were on the wrong track entirely (*Matt 15: 14*). It wasn't a matter of tweaking their arguments. Instead, he pointed out that their basic assumptions were faulty. In their thinking and in their arguing, they were simply barking up the wrong tree. They had become so focused on detail that they could not see the real meaning and purpose of the law.

This has been a long introduction to talking about our topic, *Women in the Church*, but it is meant to frame the underlying questions that I have about both the 1985 document and the newer document, *The Creator's Tapestry*:

Why are we so focused on the letter of the Law? And only in regard to women? Why do we zero in on "Women in the Church" at all? We rarely, if ever, talk about "Men in the Church" or "Men's Roles in the Church."

² James C. Vanderkam and Peter Flint, *Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, NY: T & T Clark, 2002, 340 (CD 11.12-14 [WAC, 69]).

³ Vanderkam, 340 [WAC, 69].

Jesus was quite clear that the Pharisees were on the wrong track. And today, the question I would pose is, *Has the LCMS also been traveling on the wrong track?*

For years now, we have attempted to ferret out the *most correct* meaning for the Hebrew words, *tselem* and *'ezer kenegdwo*. We have worked even harder on the Greek words *authentain*, *exousia*, *kephale*, *sigao*, *laleo* and *hupotasso*. We have worked every verse that contains any of these words to exhaustion and what we have come up with are arguments that look very much like those of the rabbinical schools. For any argument that one group makes, it is certain that another group can make a case for the opposite. Thus, we have become experts at selecting various verses from the Scripture, often without fully disclosing their context, and then shooting them at one another across the gulf of our disagreement; a process that is sometimes referred to as "Bible bulleting." And, we have become very good at shooting Bible bullets.

But this is not the method that Jesus uses. Perhaps Jesus would step into this fray, cut to the quick and remind us that *the Law is made for humankind and not vice versa*. The lifting up, rather than the pushing down of humanity is always the bottom line – *care for the poor, the widow and the orphan – pull the child, and even the ox, out of the well!*

Before the fall of the Northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE, God spoke to the people of Israel, and to us, through the mouth of the prophet, Amos:

“I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (*Amos 5: 21-24*).

And several years later, he spoke through the prophet, Zechariah:

“Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another” (*Zech 7: 9-10*).

And of course through the prophet, Micah:

“And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?” (*Mic 6:8*).

Our God, the God of the *Old Testament* and of the *New*, is a God of justice, not a God of limitations and oppression. The Pharisees ran into trouble because they had gotten bogged down in legalese and had forgotten that the heart of the law is "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (*Lev 19: 18, Matt 22:39, Mk 12:31, Lk 10: 27*).

Eusebius, the fourth century Church leader who took it upon himself to write the first history of the Christian Church, said this: “Anyone intending to write the history of the church must start with the Christ himself, from whom we derive our very name, a

dispensation more divine than most realize.”⁴ The Lutheran theologian and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, similarly wrote that “The source of a Christian ethic is not the reality of one’s own self, not the reality of the world, nor is it the reality of norms and values. It is the reality of God that is revealed in Jesus Christ.”⁵ As Lutherans we stand in a long tradition of Christians whose interpretive methods start with God as revealed in Jesus – therefore, as far as it is humanly possible, we do not approach theology with our own pre-conceived notions.

Yet, on this issue that is before us today, I do not believe that we have started with a "God-view." We have not let God, through scripture, guide us with his underlying paradigm of love and justice. Instead, both the 1985 report, *Women in the Church*, and the 2009 *Creator's Tapestry*, have begun from *man's*, and I do mean *man's*, point of view. As Rev. Lehenbauer conveyed here, the Commission has been concerned with cultural issues; early on with questions regarding women's suffrage, and more recently with perceived cultural attacks on the sanctity of marriage and with the possibility of ordination for women. Fear and reactivity, rather than meaningful Biblical study by men and women together, have been the motivating forces behind our discussions. Fear and reactivity toward these cultural issues have driven us to focus on the details while forgetting the purpose for which Christ came. For the Pharisees, this type of methodology led to a distorted theology and it has had the same results for us. The latest emerging trend is to focus on limitations that might be imposed based on ‘natural law.’ Again, another *man* centered view.

As *The Creator's Tapestry* points out, *Gen 1* does say that humans, males and females, were created in God's image and *Gen 2* does say that the woman was created from the man. Based on this, the document relies heavily on a theology referred to as the "order of creation," which the writers state "is paradigmatic for today -- and until the end of time."⁶ The document says this, even though it also states in the following paragraph, that the "order of creation" is not an expression found in the Biblical text and that some of its usages are even "objectionable from and even contrary to a Lutheran theological perspective."⁷ The question that arises is this: in accepting the order of creation as "paradigmatic" are we not treading on dangerous ground? -- because doing so forces us to throw out much of the rest of the Biblical text. The "order of creation" does not come from Lutheran tradition and there is good reason that it does not. It serves to create hierarchies that oppress human beings and God is not about oppression. Rather, God is about releasing the captives and setting the prisoners free.

Consider the following cases in which God turns over, *in human time -- not in some later heavenly realm*, the order of the world; lifting up those whom the world would never lift

⁴ Eusebius’ *Church History*, 1.1 [Paul L. Maier, trans.], *The Church History: A New Translation with Commentary*, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999, 22.

⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol 6 (*Ethics*), Fortress Press, 2005, 49.

⁶ *The Creator's Tapestry: Scriptural Perspectives on Man-Woman Relationships in Marriage and the Church*, A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Dec. 2009, 52.

⁷ *The Creator's Tapestry*, 52.

up and thwarting those who, by all rights (at least in a worldly way of thinking), should have occupied top positions:

Esau is Isaac and Rebecca's oldest son but in contrast to inheritance rules, Jacob takes the blessing and God sanctions it.

Moses is an infant born to Hebrew slaves but God uses him to thwart one of the greatest Egyptian Pharaohs that ever ruled.

Tamar is a woman who dressed up as a prostitute in order to get her father-in-law to sleep with her according to the law of levirate marriage. Far from ending in disgrace, she is honored by being named in the lineage of King David and later in that of Jesus.

Jael is supposedly just a weak woman but she is given the wherewithal to bring an unexpected and great victory to Israel by killing the powerful Canaanite general, Sisera.

David is a mere shepherd boy; like Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, he is the youngest of his brothers but God raises him above them all, making him arguably the greatest king of Israel.

And it is not as if this mode of operation stops in the *New Testament*.

Children were supposed to maintain their place but Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (*Mk 10: 14*).

And, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you" (*Matt 21: 31*).

And, "Have you never read what David did . . . [how he] ate the bread of the presence which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat . . . The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath" (*Mk 2: 25-28*).

The words of the prophets likewise underscore this reversal of worldly ways:

Through the mouth of the prophet, Isaiah, God declares, "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (*Is 43: 18-19*).

And from the mouth of Jeremiah: "Return, O virgin Israel, return to these your cities. How long will you waver, O faithless daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing on the earth; a woman encompasses a man" (*Jer 31: 21b-22*).

The God of the Bible is a God of surprises. He is not a God who upholds the worldly order. Rather, He is a God who throws off the usual order of the world -- and not just

after death but right in real time. The God of the *Old and New Testaments* is a God with a heart, a God who stands always with the poor and the oppressed -- He is a God who, in the words of Mary, the mother of Jesus, *scatters the proud, brings down the powerful, and lifts up the lowly*; a God who *fills the hungry with good things, sends the rich away empty, and helps his servant Israel according to the promise he made to all of our ancestors (Lk 1: 46-55)*.

The history of LCMS work on this topic reveals a hermeneutic not of love but of control. Subjugation is built into the documents. A priori, the writers seek to justify a hierarchical view of the church. What then emerges is an "order of creation" model, rather than a "Body of Christ" model. The 2009 document seeks to clarify Genesis 2: 18: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." The author does note that the word *'ezer* cannot be understood to imply inferiority since the word is also used a number of times to describe God himself (*Gen 2: 18 NIV*).⁸ But that thought is immediately undermined by an explanation of the full phrase, *'ezer kenegdwo*, a "helper fit for him." Rather than defining the term, *kenegdwo*, which means "corresponding to" or "equal to" or "adequate to," the author explains the phrase by describing woman as "the *mirror* in which the man will come to know himself as man."⁹ It is plausible to say that a mirror corresponds to its original but it is not plausible to suggest that a mirror is equal to or adequate to the original image. *Mirrors* are secondary images; and thus, *The Creator's Tapestry* reinforces its a priori stance that the woman is one created secondarily as a lesser being. Without explicitly saying so, it advocates the view that follows from a priori assumptions and it establishes the seemingly necessary hierarchy -- and then, the woman is inferior to the man!

This is a curious interpretation to stem from the initial phrase *'ezer kenegdwo*. Is the woman less because she's created second? As I've already pointed out, seconds are often favored in the Biblical text. In addition, with the creation of woman there are those who point out that woman is the pinnacle of creation -- the super-ordinate creature who finally is created after a long line of lesser creatures. Following this view some exclaim, *Thank God that he finally got it right!!*

But that view is also hierarchical and it too is flawed. In Christ, we are all made free; we are a new creation (*2 Cor 5: 17*); and in Christ, God gives to each of us the freedom to use the gifts he places within and around us. The harshest words that Jesus speaks are not against those who seek to use their gifts. Rather, his harshest words are directed at those who abuse their power, those who seek to justify, through scripture, the subjugation of others.

If, rather than starting with our own fears which move us to create hierarchies, we were to begin with a God-view, that is, with a hermeneutic of justice and freedom, we might find that what is paradigmatic is not an "order of creation" but rather a throwing off of that order; a stance that lifts limitations rather than a stance that works so hard to impose,

⁸ *The Creator's Tapestry*, 13.

⁹ *The Creator's Tapestry*, 14.

uphold and justify limitations. We would be freed to free people -- we could pull them out of the well instead of discussing whether or not it is lawful to do so.

Isaiah conveys the spirit, I would say the *heart*, of God when he brings these words of hope to the exiled people of Judah:

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners . . ." (*Is 61: 1*).

We could look at this text and read it as place specific; that is, as saying that Isaiah is only speaking about the release of the people from their Babylonian oppressors. We could even argue that when Jesus reads this text in a synagogue in Nazareth he is referring only to release of Israelites literally imprisoned by the Romans. The problem with such an interpretation is that the Hebrew word used in Isaiah for "captives," *shabah*, can mean a person literally imprisoned but can also refer to anyone who is in a state of affliction or misery.¹⁰ Since Jesus himself refers to the poor, the blind and all those oppressed, it seems he uses the phrase in its wider sense. It is also instructive that he does not work any miracles in Nazareth; that he recognizes the people's hardness of heart and their seeming concern only for themselves -- *Do for us as you did for those in Capernaum (Lk 4:18-30)* – instead of doing as they wished, he reminded them that in a time of famine, Elijah had been sent not to help a widow of Israel but rather to the lowest of the low, a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. The God of the Bible is a God who stands for the lowly regardless of who they are; and He is a God who continually turns the world upside down on their behalf. Our God is not about limiting people. He is, instead, about freeing all people to use the gifts that he has given them.

Please know that I do not doubt the sincere intent of those who worked both on the 1985 report and on *The Creator's Tapestry* and I certainly do not wish to disparage their scholarship. I know that much hard work has gone into this topic over the past several years; and that it has been done with great love for the Church and with every sincere desire to serve and follow God in the best way possible. Still, a Lutheran approach to scripture persuades me that we in the LCMS have been *off* in our focus just as surely as the Pharisees were *off* in the time of Jesus and just as surely as the rabbis who argue over proper *eruv*s today. The Hebrew word for sin is *chata*. At times it indicates a moral failing but more commonly, it simply means *to miss the mark*.¹¹ In regard to the issue of "Women in the Church" the best question to ask may well be: *Have we in the LCMS missed the mark?* Have we been straining out gnats while the heart of the gospel, and the heart of the Law, slips through our fingers?

Contrary to what some may argue, to begin with a God-view, that is, with a paradigm of freedom, is not to abolish or ignore the law. Rather, it is to recognize the fulfillment of the law in Christ and to make him our starting point. As Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but fulfill" (*Matt*

¹⁰ Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986, p 696.

¹¹ Davidson, 254.

5: 17). Jesus was not anti-law. However, he was very much against those who used the law in the service of limitation and injustice. The Law was to be understood through a lens, a paradigm, of love and freedom and it was to be applied through a hermeneutic of justice. And both Jesus and Paul are clear that justice is to be sought not just in some later world, not just in some later vague place where there will be an *Order of Redemption*, but rather, that *Redemption*, that is, Christ, is already in our midst and therefore justice must be made a reality in the present. On seeing Jesus, John the Baptist exclaimed to the crowd, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away [who is bearing] the sins of the world" (*Jn 1:29*). The grammatical construction used here is a present participle -- in John's time and in ours, the sense was the present -- The Lamb of God is bearing our sins right now, not later. Likewise, Paul underscores that hierarchies are abolished *not in some later Order* but in the present: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (*Gal 3:28*). Christ came to fulfill the Law, not later, but in real time -- even then, and even now! Christ is the fulfillment of the law -- He alone is our guide.

Across the Middle East today the battle lines are drawn over the law as interpreted by various Islamic groups -- we've all seen the news and the implications of legalistic interpretations. Now we really must ask ourselves -- Is this where we wish to cast our lot, with those who work to ferret out the letter of the law, to determine to what degree certain people must follow it, and then use it to oppress them? The church of Christ is called to proclaim *good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, and bring liberty to those in captivity*. But are we doing this? Or are we instead creating doctrines that actually fuel disrespect and violence toward others?

My eldest son walks around these days with 14 plates holding his pelvis together; also 17 screws, three nails, and an artificial hip. His name is Jacob. He's a Captain in the US Army and was almost killed two years ago when an IED exploded under his HUMMVEE. His interpreter, a young Afghani man named Mirweiss, died in the explosion. While he doesn't like to talk about it very much, Jacob is pretty clear about why he continues to believe in what he was doing over there. The reasons have to do with difficulties faced by the everyday people of Afghanistan. He said that the story was a common one -- he'd heard it from several village leaders, some of whom he'd gotten to know quite well. He said that they would tell how the Taliban would come to their villages, even into their homes, and threaten them:
You'll grow poppy and turn a percentage of the profit over to us, won't you? they'd say.
Oh, really, you don't want to? Of course you want to. You see, if you don't, we'll rape your wife and your daughters too, then we'll kill them -- oh, you can watch by the way -- and after that we'll take your sons and teach them to fight with us. You'll grow that poppy, won't you?

My son's mission, and that of all of our military stationed along that border was to help provide safety to the leaders so that one day perhaps they and their families -- their sons and their daughters -- will be able to live their lives free of such oppression.

But the lifting of oppression requires a worldview that starts with God, that is, with a paradigm of love and freedom. The Taliban do not start with such a paradigm. Instead,

they have a well-developed paradigm of oppression which they work out through a hermeneutic of hierarchy -- a hierarchy where men are at the top and women are at the bottom. This kind of hierarchy, which they too understand as the proper "order of creation," is the first step in the process of dehumanization; and once any group has been dehumanized, that is, made less in comparison to another, violence against that group follows easily. Recently, *Time* magazine featured an article about a young Afghani woman named Aisha.¹² Aisha's story gained much attention since the magazine also put her face on its cover -- and her face was a horrific sight. Horrific because this otherwise beautiful young woman had only a gaping hole where her nose used to be. Her nose, and her ears, had been chopped off by her husband and some of his brothers after a Taliban judge delivered his verdict. He declared that this would be *just* punishment for a woman running away from the family that (incidentally) had already abused her; and in the second part of his verdict, that she, as a woman, needed to be made an example lest other girls forget their subordinate status and act in a similar fashion.

From our vantage point here in the United States it is easy to shake our heads about the shocking and gruesome things that happen in some other *crazy* world. It can't happen here, we think. But the people of Nazi Germany thought the same thing -- *it could never happen here*, they thought, but it did. The process of dehumanization is subtle. It starts with making some less than others -- and it does not matter if we dress that lesser status up in nice language. It does not matter if instead of calling it subordinationism, we call it a "complementary view," as *The Creator's Tapestry* does. A complementary view, as defined in this document, means that submission on the part of the wife and headship on the part of the husband is accepted a priori; and that this complementary / subordinate view is not limited by the bonds of marriage but extends to the Church and particularly to the issue of the ordination of women.¹³ Clearly, the terms were set before the study began and they were driven by fear rather than by love and justice. A complementary view is another way of saying "separate but equal;" and just as separate was never equal in race relations, it is never going to be equal, or just, in gender relations either. Once any human being is objectified, that is made into an *other* by being labeled submissive or "sub" in any way, that human being is no longer our "neighbor" and thus, we no longer have to love him/her as ourselves.

Theology is never neutral, nor should it be. For good or for evil, we are responsible and we will be held accountable for the implications of our theological doctrines. As leaders in the Church, it is critical that we be on the right track. The directive given to us has been, and is, consistent from Moses, to the prophets, to Jesus, to Paul; and it is simply that in regard to all people we are to *do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God* -- because the greatest of the commandments is this: *love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind; and the second is like it -- love your neighbor as yourself.*

¹² "Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban," *Time*, July 21, 2010.

¹³ *The Creator's Tapestry*, 4 and 52-54.