

WOMEN IN COMBAT: Exploring Some Issues

for

The Committee for Ministry to the Armed Forces

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

by

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Introduction

C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* have become a classic in children's literature. Some "Gospel according to C. S. Lewis" scholars view *The Chronicles of Narnia* as much more than children's literature. For them, they are also an expression of the Christian faith to which he was committed. Book Two, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, provides an interesting scene. In chapter ten, "The Spell Begins to Break," the "faithful" are on their way to meet Aslan at the Stone Table. The White Witch's spell is weakened, the snow begins to melt, and Father Christmas returns to Narnia to distribute his gifts. It is all too apparent, however, that the Witch will not give up without a battle.

"Peter, Adam's Son," said Father Christmas. "Here, sir," said Peter. "These are your presents," was the answer, "and they are tools not toys. The time to use them is perhaps near at hand. Bear them well." With these words he handed to Peter a shield and a sword Peter was silent and solemn as he received these gifts, for he felt they were a very serious kind of present. "Susan, Eve's Daughter," said Father Christmas, "These are for you," and he handed her a bow and a quiver full of arrows and a little ivory horn, "You must use the bow only in great need," he said, "for I do not mean you to fight in battle." ...Last of all he said, "Lucy, Eve's Daughter," and Lucy came forward. He gave her a little bottle...and a small dagger. "The dagger is to defend yourself at great need. For you also are not to be in battle." "Why, sir?" said Lucy. "I think - I don't know - but I think I could be brave enough." "That is not the point," he said.

What *is* the point? Is Lewis merely reflecting the culture of his day which displayed a traditional aversion to women in combat or is he saying something more, something theological, as was his wont? His only commentary on the scene are the words, "Battles are 'ugly' when women fight!" Is he concerned about propriety, the "appropriateness" of "woman as warrior," or is "ugly" his disguised synonym for "sin?" Some say "ridiculous," others say "without a doubt!" (The later battle scene, which does depict some limited female participation, is so crafted by Lewis to leave no doubt in the reader's mind that this is a matter (Lewis' own words) "to defend yourself at great need." [Self defense?] Cf. also C. S. Lewis' 1940s argumentation in opposition to the ordination of women to the priesthood or the personification of "ugliness" in *Hideous Strength* relative to "woman as warrior.")

Another scene. Desert Storm. Reservist Lori Moore's unit is called up. Moore petitioned for a general discharge.

“This is all new for America and we’re feeling our way blindly,” Moore told Jane Gross of the *New York Times*. “This whole experience has changed my mind about many things. I hate to say it because it doesn’t fit with the whole scheme of the women’s movement, but I think we have to reconsider what we’re doing. For me, this was a major conflict between two loves. I’m a soldier. I was ready to go. But I produced these kids, and I need to take responsibility for them.... There’s no question that women can do this. The question is whether we should.”

Where lies the answer to the quandary in Ms. Moore’s “should?” Is it to be found in societal or cultural norms, personal opinion, public policy, the propriety of women in combat, in the Sacred Scripture, or in a host of other alternatives? Is it significant that at least six Protestant denominations have adopted, or are in the process of preparing, official doctrinal statements declaring “women in combat” to be a practice contrary to the Word of God, a position with which noted Jewish Rabbi’s (e.g., Rabbi David E. Eidensohn or Rabbi Jacob Neusner, “To consider woman as warrior would be to imagine the unimaginable!”) and theologians of Roman Catholicism (e.g., Donald J. Keefe, S.J., St. Joseph’s Seminary, Dunwoodie, NY) and Eastern Orthodoxy (e.g., Father Alexander F. C. Webster, Director of Orthodox Studies, Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, D.C.) concur?

One thing is certain, there is a serious debate in our land. The perpetual question of “who or what shall inform public policy in a liberal democracy?” begs for an answer. (For, in a liberal democracy do not the people determine the status, prerogatives, and roles of its military personnel?) [Some] patriots insist the debate revolves around the very heart of our national identity and of those things that America’s “civil religion” has always held “sacred.” [Some] radical feminists rise to defend their own “sacred” principle of gender neutrality, and [some] Christian feminists echo the position of their “secular sisters” by expounding a convoluted theology in which “in Christ there is no male of female” serves as an all encompassing *sedes doctrina*. [Some] theologians cry out that basic precepts of God’s revealed Word are being violated and the traditional Christian understanding of the “Orders of Creation” destroyed, while advocates of the “Naked Public Square” attempt to silence their opponents by insisting that religion has no legitimate role in public discourse or partisan debate concerning the issue. While many liberals declare that the current “Law of the Land” requires the continued conduct of current public policy relative to women in combat, most conservatives counter by maintaining that to do so threatens the viability of the nation’s armed forces and the very integrity of her national security. For many, alarmed by recent developments, the purpose of the military no longer appears to be success in battle or the defense of the republic, but the furtherance of a radically egalitarian social agenda. Argumentation crosses the spectrum from studies on upper-body strength, the violation of God-ordained gender roles, to the odious nature of male-dominated institutions that require traditional Drill Instructors be replaced by Sensitivity Leaders. The issues are as numerous and varied as are their proponents and antagonists. The conflict, at times, produces light; it always generates heat.

Some Parameters

This paper does not purpose to enter the vast arena of debate that surrounds the subject or to provide an in-depth analysis of its complexities, which are myriad. Rather, the concern

is to recognize the existence of the debate and to explore the nature of several of the core issues involved. Military chaplains, more and more, are being asked to counsel commanders and commanding officers regarding a biblical perspective on the nation's policy which now places women into combat roles. (One must review the details of the LCDR Kenneth Carkhuff case to appreciate the ramifications of the former sentence.) The purpose of this exploration, admittedly cursory, is to assist the service personnel of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to understand more fully those areas of the debate that may be impacting their own lives and, also, to equip her chaplains to engage in dialogue from a more informed stance.

Two things must be very clear from the beginning. It is neither the task nor the responsibility of the Board for Mission Services' Committee for Ministry to the Armed Services to (1) produce doctrinal statements or (2) instruct the federal government on how to conduct public policy. This paper attempts to do neither. Its purpose, as indicated in the subtitle, is to explore in order better to understand. To understand the nature of the current debate and its ramifications, however, inevitably engages one in an examination of issues related to both doctrine and the realms of the sacred/secular.

Lutheran Christians are not ill equipped to engage in dialogue on matters pertinent to the debate. On the basis of both Scripture and Confession, they bring, among other tools, a commitment to God's Word as "the only judge, rule, and norm according to which all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong;" a well articulated understanding of the relation of Church and State firmly grounded in the radical distinction between Law and Gospel; and a clearly defined position relative to the Orders of Creation/Redemption and the roles of men and women regarding the Orders. (In brief, both sexes are created in the image of God [Genesis 1:26ff] and that there is no sexual priority or preference with respect to salvation [Galatians 3:28]. Both Old and New Testaments identify a difference of rights, responsibilities, and roles between the sexes.) Because the scope of this paper cannot provide a review of these and other pertinent subjects, attention is directed to and a study encouraged of such readily available documents as: *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* (CTCR); *Render Unto Caesar...and Unto God* (A Lutheran View of Church and State) [a rather recent (1995) and refreshingly brilliant treatise prepared by the CTCR]; *Women in the Church: Biblical Principles* [Draft title: "The Role of Women in the Church"] (CTCR); "Neither Male nor Female: Reflection on the Relation between the Orders of Creation and Redemption" [A study presented to the Lutheran Council/USA, Commission on Men and Women of the Church, Techny, IL, March 6, 1982 by Dr. John F. Johnson]; *God's Woman for all Generations* [1987 Report of The President's Commission on Women, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod]. The latter contains a now dated, but still useful, bibliography.

A review of such documents is all the more helpful for the Lutheran Christian in view of the fact that nearly all the current doctrinal statements condemning "women in combat" as conflicting with the Word of God have been prepared by denominations of the Calvinist/Reformed tradition. While applauding the authors' declarations concerning the authority of God's revelation in the sacred Scripture, those who employ "covenant theology" in the formulation of their argumentation, at times muddy the waters by the inherent tendency of failing to distinguish between the "descriptive" and the "prescriptive" elements of a particular text or segment of Scripture. While not as blatant or overt as in the argumentation of Christian Reconstructionism, the appearance of this non-

discriminatory tendency must be observed and eschewed by Lutheran Christians who choose to become engaged in the dialogue and rhetoric of the current debate. This caution is particularly apropos when there appears to be no clearly identifiable text of Scripture that addresses directly the approbation or prohibition concerning the matter of women in combat. (A summarization, to be sure, but an example, nonetheless, of the need for caution can be found in the dominance of the following rationale that tends to permeate much of the “theological” literature produced to date. I.e., that the New Testament’s silence relative to the topic of “women in combat” is based upon the fact that God has already expressed His will in the Old Testament. Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” The theologian’s task is to understand properly the Old Testament laws, testimonies, and examples as they find fulfillment in Christ and the proper course of action will be apparent.)

Some History

Clearly, women in the military is not a new phenomenon in our nation’s history. The assignment of women to combat roles as an officially sanctioned and directed public policy, however, is a rather recent innovation. (In World War II, some 350,000 WACs, WAVEs, and nurses saw active service, but they never carried rifles.) Current policy caught many women, including members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, “off guard” who had entered the military ranks under prior legislation which limited their service to non-combatant roles and now express a dilemma of conscience regarding the matter. (It should be noted that in a “politically correct” military, there is tremendous pressure exerted to go along, get along, or get out. Cf. e.g., Sgt. Kelly Logan [pseudo-name] recently [February 1999] quoted by Catherine Aspy in *Readers Digest*, “Should Women Go Into Combat?” “I had a complete change in attitude...[but] it can definitely hurt your career to speak your mind publicly about these things.”) Was there no recourse? How, when, and why did this novelty appear on the scene?

Arguably, much of the transformation from former to current policy simply parallels a general cultural drift in America. (As Navy Secretary Richard Danzig once mused, “When a democracy changes, so must its military.”) It is no secret that civilian values and military exigencies have never shared a peaceful coexistence. Traditionally, the armed services have managed their personnel with a legal code much harsher than the nation’s criminal code. To enter the military has meant the willingness to sacrifice some of the rights offered to the civilian sector by the Constitution’s First Amendment. Independent behavior normally tolerated throughout American society frequently has been deemed intolerable in a military force. As General Walter Kerwin once defined the seeming incongruity: “The values necessary to defend the society are often at odds with the values of the society itself. To be an effective servant of the people, the Army must concentrate not on the values of our liberal society, but on the hard values of the battlefield.”

To walk that delicate line between the civilian and military worlds was no doubt less problematic when the Congress and Cabinet included a majority of people with military experience. This is no longer the case. Seventy five percent of the members comprising the United States Congress in 1971 had prior military service. That number was a mere 34 percent in 1998. The presidential inauguration of 1992 placed into office the first Commander in Chief who had no military experience since the inauguration of Franklin

Delano Roosevelt nearly sixty years earlier (although his public service record, particularly that as Secretary of the Navy, demonstrated a enviable understanding of the role and workings of the military). In 1998, former Secretary of the Navy James Webb noted in a speech to the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island: "For the first time since the formation of the Department of Defense by the National Security Act of 1947, none of the principals in the national security arena - the president, the secretary of defense, the secretary of state, the director of the CIA - have served in the military." Added to that is the fact that during the past decade the veterans of World War II and the Korean conflict have been dying at the rate of some thousand a day, taking with them, as Williamson Murray, a former soldier and military historian, declared, "a realism...about the use of military force and the nature of military institutions." Former Marine and columnist Philip Gold has dubbed the current national climate as "military illiteracy."

Nature abhors a vacuum, and it was soon filled by civilian leaders dedicated to social reform and anxious to experiment with social policy and sweeping experiments at cultural transformation. Sometimes it has worked. E.g., few would call President Harry Truman's 1948 integration of blacks into the military anything but a success. Sometimes it has not worked. E.g., Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, caught up in the spirit of President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty" in the late 1960s, decided to "salvage the lives of the subterranean poor" by ordering the military to admit 300,000 young men (Category IVs) who had been rejected because they scored too low on baseline recruitment tests. They failed to adapt, and few would call his experiment successful.

For the past three of four decades another force has been at work. While recognizing the inherent dangers in broad brushstroke labels and the immediate response of many to assume any use of labels to be pejorative, this force may be called feminism or the women's movement. The activities of this force were largely focused on the workplace, the home, the schools, etc. during the seventies and eighties. There were some exceptions, to wit, in 1975 the all-male service academies were ordered to admit women. In the mid-1980s the National Organization for Women (NOW) was nearly successful in adding an Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution that well could have required a female draft (solely dependent upon individual judges' interpretations).

It is appropriate to identify at this point some distinctions that apply to the use of the term "feminism." For example, equity/equality feminism must be distinguished from gender/radical feminism. The former acknowledges that there are two sexes, that they are biological realities, and seeks equal dignity, equal treatment, equal pay for equal work, etc. for both sexes. It does not seek equivalency and interchangeability of males and females. Radical feminism, by contrast, speaks not of "sex" (a biological term), but of "gender" (a grammatical term). It identifies sexual differentiations and roles as social constructs, and on its agenda is ridding the nation of legally endorsed policies which differentiate between men and women. In other words, if society has created these distinctions, it can also abolish them. (If, however, they are part and parcel of God's "Order of Being", that is a horse of another hue! If God is the Creator and Designer of the sexes and their differences, to overturn that "order" would appear to imply the abandonment of biblical religion.)

Ann Coulter takes a swipe at the pragmatic foolishness of the gender neutrality posture of egalitarian feminism applied to the military when she writes in her recent volume, *Slander*:

Neurotically promoting the idea of women in the military, liberals lightly instruct soldiers to learn to repress their sexuality. That's a brilliant liberal idea for better living: Train men to stop looking at women sexually. The left's ideal world is G. I. Jane showering while she chats with her Navy SEAL commander who registers no response at the sight of a naked woman. [Egalitarian feminists] seek to destroy sexual differentiation in order to destroy morality. *The Vagina Monologues* is the apotheosis of the left's desire to treat women's sexuality like some bovine utilitarian device, stripped of any mystery or eroticism.

Consistent are the words of Stephanie Gutmann in *The Kinder, Gentler Military*:

..it's very important that the folks in charge remain wedded to the idea that sex differences are just a societal construct, erasable with a few strong lectures and a bit of "sensitivity training." Achieving a force that recruits, assigns, and promotes in a "gender neutral" way means believing that (after the requisite amount of sensitivity training, of course) men and women can eat, sleep, tent, march, and haul loads together like a merry band of brothers without the fireworks and histrionics that have characterized sexual/gender relations throughout human history.

The 1990s had witnessed a shift in focus for radical feminism from the civilian sector to the military with its male-only domain called "direct combat." In a national climate in which masculinity had been examined, criticized, and often rebuked, "direct combat" was a domain in which the male species still ran free. And so it might have remained had not the President of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, arrived on the scene in August of 1990 to tell the world that he had just invaded Kuwait, faucet for the oil supply that provided vitality to the nations. On January 17, 1991, an American missile was fired that would have a massive impact on the subject of this paper.

The reservists were "called up," and news reporters sallied forth to get their Norman Rockwellish pictures of "the tearful farewell." The photos were developed and instead of the expected portrait of the young man in military attire striding forth to action and adventure amid the tears of mom, dad, and sweetheart, the pictures were often of tear-eyed women doing the departing, while dad and the kids stared out the living room window with bewildered looks. Deployment to meet the aggressor was a different sort of "family affair."

What was happening? Among other dynamics, the Department of Defense "in order to meet the competition of the private sector" (as stated in one DOD document) had established policies aimed at providing military personnel "a normal family life." Since recruitment goals were declared "impossible to meet with men", large numbers of women were recruited and a host of "women-friendly" policies instituted. (Few are aware, for example, that the most expensive federally funded program of childcare in the nation is that maintained by the Department of Defense. The figure would boggle the mind of the average American taxpayer.) Since 1975 (simultaneous to the lifting of the female ban at the service academies), pregnant women or those who otherwise acquired dependent children were allowed to remain in the military. By the time full-scale deployment to the Gulf was underway in December 1990, DOD statistics reported 55,103 single parents serving in the armed forces (proportionately twice that in the Navy alone as in the civilian

population). The gender reversal of the “Coed War” depicting women in camouflage and helmets here and moms in cockpits there and sailorgirls swabbing decks elsewhere was a journalist’s holiday. But it also raised serious questions in the minds of many spectating and speculating Americans.

Senators and representatives flooded the congressional hearing rooms to produce bills like the “Gulf War Orphans Act” which would keep parents out of combat zones, while groups like NOW and the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) and the National Women’s Law Center wrung their hands. (DACOWITS was established in 1951 to help recruit female auxiliaries during the Korean War. By the 1970s it had become an assertive lobby on behalf of the full integration of the military by sex.) These organizations had acquired much of the enlarged roles for women in the military with argumentation declaring that women would not need nor would they ask for special treatment. As feminist author Linda Bird Francke states in her volume *Ground Zero*, “Advocates of equal opportunity have long known that interchangeability of father/mother roles is essential to downplay a mother’s indispensability to her young children and thereby allow her to pursue a guilt-free life outside the home.” But were the children equally “indispensable” to the mothers? What were those tears about?

A flashback. The conscription of more than 13 million men in World War II was deemed sufficient only for combat roles. What about non-combat positions? Could they not be filled by women, asked military planners, and “free a man to fight?” Thus was born the first all-women, all-volunteer auxiliary, the Women’s Army Corps (WAC). It worked, and in 1948 Congress passed the Women’s Armed Services Act (WASA) which authorized permanent status for women in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and (newly created) Air Force, with the stipulation that the number of women in those forces could not exceed two percent. WASA included something else. That something else was the Combat Exclusion Law (CEL) which established boundaries: “Women may be assigned to all units except those with a high probability of engaging in ground combat, direct exposure to enemy fire, or direct physical contact with the enemy.” A line in the sand was drawn.

Back to the Gulf. An attempt to assuage the rising collective national guilt over Vietnam had been made in 1973 when President Nixon decreed an end to conscription (the draft) and the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). The two percent stipulation of WASA was waived. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird gave the services ten months to have female generals and flag officers and twenty months to create a successful plan for bringing women into the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs, vowing to freeze promotions for all officers until the “goals” were achieved. When deployment for the Gulf War began, the percentage of women in the armed forces had grown to 11 percent from the 2 percent of 1973. (Current percentage, March 2000, is 14.) (Cf. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Barbara Pope, “We are in the process of weeding out the white male as norm. We are about changing the culture.”)

Mere numbers did not impress such folks as Representative Patricia Schroeder (“Combat-exclusion laws have outlived their usefulness and are now nothing more than institutionalized discrimination.”) or Patricia Ireland of NOW (“The essence of feminism for me is the freedom to live our lives as we please, and to reinvent the world as we do so.” - from *What Women Want*) or the activists who supported them. There remained an inaccessible “plum” - the combat MOSs, the cockpit of combat jets, the bridge of combat

ships - and the obstacle was two-fold: public opinion and the 1948 Combat Exclusion Law (CEL). Neither remained obstacles for long.

Public Opinion: The American Press declared the Gulf War to be “a test of the coed military which women had passed with flying colors.” “Thirteen women died in the Gulf deployment,” reported the *Los Angeles Times*, “five in combat (sic!), eight in accidents.”

“We must take time to remember the thirteen women who risked their lives for their country despite...the discriminatory laws and practices...intended to exclude them from combat,” wrote Amy Eskind in a editorial for the *Washington Post*. (While thirteen women did die in the Gulf War theater, the facts surrounding their demise is far less dramatic than the picture painted by the “fourth estate.”) Surprisingly, to many, the public appeared to take in stride the novelty of female casualties and POWs. Added to this was the television induced impression that modern technology had made warfare a rather sanitized process, no longer dependent upon the brute physical strength normally attributed to men. Somebody, what difference if man or woman, merely presses a button and that is it. The enemy is on the run. Technology has leveled the playing field and anybody can push a button. The closing statement of Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder during a “Firing Line” debate (March 22, 1993, “Resolved: Women in the Military Should Be Excluded From Combat”) is representative of advocates for current policy:

This is a high-tech army. We’re still talking about combat boots and all this stuff. This is a high-tech army where we need the best brains and the best thoughts that we’ve got. It’s who outsmarts each other. And to deny yourself half the population because of their chromosomes doesn’t really make sense.

CEL: That, too, did not take long. “Barriers based on sex are coming down in every part of our society, and women should be allowed to play a full role in our national defense free of any arbitrary and discriminatory restraints,” declared Senator Edward Kennedy, as he provided fellow legislators a bill to rescind the CEL. (Ted Kennedy also led the drive to repeal a law banning abortions for service personnel at military hospitals overseas. “Those who oppose this amendment are exposing servicewomen to substantial risk of infection, illness, infertility, even death,” Kennedy hysterically declared. [There *are* citizens who wonder whether the Senate should have been talking about abortion at all. Instead, ought not it be “hysterically” debating how a great nation has so declined that it now entrusts its national defense to pregnant women?!]) In April 1993, President Clinton’s newly appointed Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, issued an order. It contained now historic words. “The services shall permit women to compete for assignments in aircraft, including aircraft engaged in combat missions.” Further, the Navy would “develop a legislative proposal to repeal the existing Combat Exclusion Law and permit the assignment of women to ships that are engaged in combat missions.” Next (1994) came the order to the Army to open combat MOSs (Military Occupation Specialties) hitherto reserved for men, and the rest is history. The military had become just another workplace. (Consult Stephanie Gutmann whose carefully researched *The Kinder, Gentler Military*, [Scribner, NY, NY: 2000] provided much helpful data and dates referred to in the preceding paragraphs.)

What is the Issue?

While volumes have been produced, in recent years, by a veritable “rainbow” of commentators, much of the literature regarding women in combat deals with the “seduction of feminism” (often excoriating male military leadership for their viewed pusillanimity) or the pragmatic issues relative to “women in combat,” vowing that “never again (an obvious reference to the Vietnam Conflict) will American troops be put in harm’s way without the right training, the right equipment, the right leadership, and the right mission.” (The implication, of course, is that “women in combat” is a concept which places all four “rightnesses” in serious jeopardy. Cf. also military sociologist Richard A. Gabriel, “It will avail us little if the members of our defeated forces are all equal. History will treat us for what we were: a social curiosity that failed.” Or author William Manchester, “The erasure of distinctions between the sexes is not only the most striking issue of our time, it may be the most profound the race has ever confronted.” - *U.S. News and World Report*. Anthropologist Olivia Vlahos points out, “I know of no society which has routinely treated men and women as interchangeable and equivalent units in war - the policy now being pursued by the American military. Humankind has been around long enough to have tried everything at least once. If females belong in foxholes, we should find evidence of it in previous experiments that have worked. Alas, annals of the past offer no examples of formal, sexually integrated military forces.”) However, a significant amount of the literature came from another frame of reference, the religious or theological implications of the concept. It is such literature that this examination attempts to address.

Prior to the historic order of Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, a report was provided to the President of the United States by his appointed Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces (PCAWAA). The following statement is taken from that report:

Theological testimony was received from representatives of a wide range of different religions and denominations. Among the major religious establishments in the U.S., none has adopted a position regarding women being assigned to combat positions on the basis of theology. The Commission concludes that although the U.S. has an undeniably strong religious heritage, it is not one that speaks clearly on the issue of women in combat.

Those “representatives of a wide range of different religions and denominations” or evidence of their theological reflection on the issue of women in combat remain difficult, if not impossible, to identify. It would appear, in fact, that most, if not all, of the “wide range of different religions and denominations” were taken by surprise by the SecDef order of 1993. Some “representatives of denominations” conducted surveys of their military chaplains, others began to examine the issue on the basis of their church’s expressed doctrine, and a host of concerned laymen and clerics took up pens to denounce the policy on claims of Biblical prohibition. Some expressed bewilderment at the apparent silence of Lutheran input concerning the matter and queried representatives of those church bodies as to how Lutheran theology might inform the dialogue/ debate. (It should be noted that the American public was neither well informed nor consulted on this administratively ordained paradigm shift. Citizens were vaguely aware, at best. Congress sponsored no debate, the media were quiet, the retired-military voice was scarcely a whisper, former POW’s were ignored, the church was ignorant or acquiescent, and active-duty personnel appeared to be intimidated.)

Manhood and Womanhood An Order of Creation

For some years prior to the “women in combat” order of 1993, however, there were several varieties of “concerned Christians” involved in the process of articulating their dismay over the impact of the “gender-neutral” (the proposition that the differences between men and women are merely culturally imposed [for nefarious purposes, according to the extremists of radical feminism]) cultural shift in America and the uncertainty and confusion it was creating relative to traditional understanding of the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity. In December of 1987, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) (which includes two seminary faculty members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod) met in Danvers, MA, to prepare what is commonly referred to as the “Danvers Statement.” Among the “rationale” cited for the concern that produced the statement are the following:

- The tragic effects of (gender) confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood.
- The increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives.
- The emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of biblically faithful witness.
- The increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of biblical texts.
- The apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

Among the “Affirmations” the “Statement” produced are:

- Both Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
- Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart.
- Adam’s headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin.
- The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women. Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community.
- In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission - domestic, religious, or civil - ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin.
- A denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

Some five years after its publication in November of 1988, the rationale and affirmations of the “Danvers Statement” and a wide variety of related documents were found to be readily translatable by any number of churchmen and women whose “heart” told them that something was not right about the new public policy but were searching for some basis upon which to voice their concern. The “Orders of Creation” struck a chord. Others, of course, felt they had already found that basis in other biblically based rationale that will be considered later in this examination.

What would be the response of Lutheran Christians? Was it not the work of nineteenth century Lutheran, Adolf von Harnack, who provided the modern interpretation of “Schoepfungsordnungen” (orders of creation) (although “Schoepferordnungen” [orders of the Creator] would appear to be more descriptive of his usage of the concept)? Be that as it may, Lutheran theologians have (with various interpretations) affirmed the doctrine that God has placed humanity (male and female) in particular structures of existence (nationality, race, sexual identity, family, work, government, etc.) as part of what it means to exist as a human; and that the law and commandments of God are revealed through these common created morphological structures and function apart from (and often in tension with) the special revelation of God in the Gospel or Jesus Christ. (A distinction which Karl Barth severely criticized, but which, many feel, provides Lutheran theology a pivotal position from which to articulate its confessionally identifiable prohibition of the church telling the world what to do in every matter of social and political action.) Lutherans confess to live in a world (albeit a fallen world permeated by sin and death) in which God continues to order the natural life of humanity by means of structures that impinge on our existence, systems of government, economics, and family life that frame our activity. Within that framework, Christians are called to divine obedience and neighborly service, never submitting uncritically to the status quo, but examining those structures on the basis of God’s revealed (Scripture) intent. Yet the contemporary Lutheran voice remained silent. No written document or doctrinal formulation was forthcoming,

It was to the “orders” (however interpreted) argumentation that other religious leaders and a variety of opponents of current public policy now turned to voice their dissent. Word studies of the Hebrew account of creation multiplied. Obviously, this paper cannot provide a review of the extensive nature of those studies. Most included an examination of the descriptors involved in Adam’s role in Eden, the Hebrew words ‘abad’ and ‘shamar.’ The thrust of the studies is as follows. God created Adam to serve [dress] (‘abad’) and keep [tend] (‘shamar’) the garden. Eve was created to assist and complement/help man in his task of dressing and keeping the garden.

As leader, Adam was given the ultimate responsibility of serving and guarding his wife as part of his stewardship within the garden. This arrangement was normative for mankind. Scriptural references for the latter usually are not cited, but a leap to Romans 5:12-17 and I Timothy 2:8-15 frequently is indicated. The rationale for the citations is expressed in the fact that the thrust of these texts holds Adam responsible for the fall of man based upon the abdication of his headship role to “guard” (‘shamar’) his wife. Supportive argumentation often is supplied by identifying the poetic synonym of ‘shamar’ to be ‘nasar’ (to protect) with references made to Deuteronomy 33:9; Psalm 12:8; 105:45; 119:34, 55-56, 145-146; 140:5; 141:3; Proverbs 2:8,11; 4:6; 5:2; and 27:18. Further support is sought by observing that the root of ‘nasar’ is found in the verb describing the

activity of the cherubim who “protect” the garden by preventing access to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24).

From this vantage, the argumentation moves to “women in combat” along the following lines. The Sovereign Creator has directed the affairs of society. The present U. S. policy is a social experiment clearly out of step with God’s ordering of His creation. Scripture norms society, and a departure from the norm expresses rebellion and defiance against divinely ordained structure (Romans 1:18ff). Disobedience leads to chaos and death. Hence, one must assume, the wording in a (seven page) 1999 Overture to the General Assembly from the Philadelphia Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America:

The sovereign Maker of heaven and earth has established for His own glory an order in creation governing the position in which each part holds. God has revealed His will concerning this order, both in creation itself and in the Scriptures. When mankind arrogantly or ignorantly defies the divine order and abrogates divine law, he brings God’s inevitable wrath upon society itself, for suppressing the truth by pretending autonomous freedom from God (Romans 1:18-32; Isaiah 3.9:16; Nahum 3:13).

With this conviction we must bear witness as ministers of God, that this nation’s policy of military training, equipping and incorporating women for the enterprise of war and assignments to kill is contrary to the revealed will of God, from whom all human government derives its just authority (Genesis 9:1-7). A society has no warrant to expect approval from Almighty God when such a policy opposes the Sovereign’s expressed will. Instead, there is Biblical warrant to fear divine discipline. The assignment of women to be warriors, positioned to engage the men of enemy forces, marks an abdication by men of their solemn duty toward women as well as a fundamental abuse of women.

The Overture closes with resolutions urging

any of our female members involved in training which can lead to engaging in active combat or considering such a career to make a careful study of God’s Word

and directing the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly to send a copy of the report to

the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council, the National Association of Evangelicals, to our military chaplains, and to the President of the United States, the Senate, and the House of Representatives as our testimony.

Similar statements and overtures from Presbyteries, denominations (Reformed Church in the USA, “The Biblical View of Women Serving in the Military” dated April 26, 1996; Resolution of the Presbyterian and Reformed Church in North America, dated June 18, 1998; Resolution of the Southern Baptist Convention of June 2-1, 1998 [meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah]; Resolution of the Bible Presbyterian Church of August 11, 1998; etc.), individual churches (including Messiah’s Congregation, a Reformed Church in Brooklyn, New York [November 20, 1995]; Lehigh Valley Presbyterian Church September 2, 1997]; Leidy’s Covenant Presbyterian Church, etc.), denominational leaders, theologians (Harold O. J. Brown, Donald J. Keefe S.J., Jack Kinneer, Peter Lillback, Donald Stone, Bruce Waltke, etc.) and private citizens were commonplace. Articles in religious publications

abounded (*Credendum Table Talk, Biblical Worldview*, etc., Andrew Bacevich, “Losing Private Ryan;” Stephen Ambrose, “The End of the Draft and More: Misanthrope’s Corner;” Walter McCougall, “Sex Lies, and Infantry”; Robert Miller, “Women for War; Men for Shame;” Donald Stone, “Missing From Action,” “Women in Combat: a Biblical Perspective,” “Is God’s Moral Law Violated When Women Serve as Combatants?”; Douglas Wilson, “Women in Combat: Gender Warriors,” “Tolerable Folly and Abomination,” etc.), books rolled from the presses (Brian Mitchell, *Women in the Military: Flirting With Disaster, Weak Link: The Feminization of the American Soldier and Women in the Military*; Weldon Hardenbrook, *Missing from Action: Vanishing Manhood in America*; Patrick Mitchell, *The Scandal of Gender*; Bethke-Elshstain, *Women and War*; George Gilder, *Sexual Suicide*; Robert Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*; Lionel Tiger [an atheistic anthropologist!], *The Decline of Males*; Linda Francke, *Ground Zero: The Gender Wars in the Military*, [a view from a feminist perspective] etc., etc.), and the “word studies” continued.

The Mighty Man

The posturing of “woman as warrior” is identified in many documents listed above as an abominable conception, which conveys a biblically unimaginable aberration of God’s revealed purpose in forming man as male and female. Citations are frequent and varied. They run the gamut from John Chrysostum:

Woman was not made for this, O man, to be prostituted as common. O you subverters of all decency, who use men, as if they were women, and lead out women to war, as if they were men! This is the work of the devil, to subvert and confound all things, to over leap the boundaries that have been appointed from the beginning, and remove those which God has set to nature.

to Alexis de Tocqueville’s “How the American Views the Equality of the Sexes” in *Democracy in America*.

Significant attention, however, is paid to a specific Hebrew construct in Deuteronomy 22:5, a text traditionally interpreted as denouncing the practice of transvestitism. The text reads: “A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing, for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this”(NIV). The Hebrew construct of import is the noun ‘keli-geber’ (the latter derived from the verb ‘gabar’) translated above as “men’s clothing.” A number of statements, articles, books, etc. point out that the Hebrew word ‘keli’ denotes equipment, specifically a soldier’s equipment (cf. Judges 18:16). Military combat gear pertains to men only since, in the Old Testament, only men are mustered for war and wore combat gear.

The cursory limits of this exploration do not permit an expansive review of the numerous Old Testament citations employed by those opposed to “women in combat” on biblical grounds. It should be noted, however, that much is made of the fact that when the men of Israel are numbered for war (cf. Numbers 1:20ff.), the count is made of all men (Levites excepted) twenty-years old and above, with time-limited exemptions granted to those who have bought a field, married a wife, etc. Further, Israel considered only men of other nations to be combatants. In cases of aggression, Israel’s army was to drive the intruders back to their own fortified cities where an offer of peace was to be extended. If the peace was not accepted, only men were to be put to the sword. Women and children were

excepted (Deuteronomy 20:12-15). (Conversely, Christian feminists point out, in support of women in combat, that the New Testament makes reference to the “armor of God” [Ephesians 6] and to the Christian as “good soldier” [I Timothy]. In both instances the references clearly are employed metaphorically. The latter, interestingly, is applied only to Timothy, a man, in his labor as a minister of Jesus Christ. Reference has also been made to Revelation 19:14 relative to the “armies” [riding on white horses clothed in white linen] of the “called, chosen, and faithful.” This symbolic representation of Christ overcoming His enemies can scarcely be applied to public policy relative to “women in combat” without abandoning the most elemental hermeneutical principles.)

Regarding “combat gear” the argumentation follows that combat military gear is not be worn by women since a sanctified distinction must be maintained (by divine mandate) between the sexes. One document points out that, in support of this dictum, John Calvin once quoted the heathen poet Juvenal, “What shame can she, who wears a helmet, show, her sex deserting?” (from Calvin’s Commentary, *Harmony of the Four Last Books of the Pentateuch*). The studies further note that the Hebrew noun for “man” (i. e., ‘geber’) in this passage is the word denoting “mighty man” or “warrior.” Thus a proper translation of the phrase in Deuteronomy uses language of a decidedly military flavor, “No woman shall put on the gear of a warrior!” Several documents point out that an identical thrust is expressed by Josephus in *Jewish Antiquities* as he comments on Torah; “Beware, above all in battle, that no woman assume the accoutrements of a man nor a man the apparel of a woman.” Luther (*LW, V XIV*) comments on the verse as follows: “A woman shall not bear the weapons of a man, nor shall a man wear female clothing. The prohibition of a woman’s bearing the weapons of a man and of a man’s wearing female clothing does not apply to cases where this is necessary to avoid danger or to playing a game or to deceive the enemy. Nevertheless, such things are not to be done as a matter of serious and constant habit and custom, but due uprightness and dignity are to be preserved for each sex; for it is shameful for a man to be clothed like a woman, and it is improper for a woman to bear the arms of a man. Through this law, however, he seems to reproach any nation in which this custom is observed.”

The obvious theological thrust given to these word studies is that a woman is not to be a combatant in warfare. Why? God created male and female with specific and complementary characteristics. It is in their relationship with one another that the two constitute the full, expression of humanity. It is a strike at the natural order and harmony willed by the Creator to blur the intersexual distinction established by God. In somewhat more military imagery, woman was created to be a vessel for life, not to be commissioned to kill and destroy. (It should be noted that any number of the documents examined take care to distinguish between a warrior assigned to kill and an individual seeking to survive through self-defense [including self and family].)

Woman as Warrior

Ask a Christian feminist who endorses current policy (and those that reflect that position) to cite a biblical epic supportive of the concept of “woman as warrior” and the response will be, “the Deborah story.” Ask an Orthodox Rabbi who condemns current policy (or Christians who uphold his position) to cite a biblical epic opposing the concept of “woman as warrior” and the response will be, “the Deborah story.”

No serious student of biblical scholarship approaches the Book of Judges without the realization that much of its narration depicts a period in Israel's history when the relationship between God's Chosen Ones and Yahweh was somewhat strained, if not estranged. The caveat contained in the final verse of the book, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit," dare not be overlooked. But what is it about the Deborah story that attracts the attention of both advocate and opponent of "women in combat?"

For the former, it may be that the memory of Deborah's valor as conveyed by "Bible Story" books left an indelible impression of glamorous embellishments not contained in the biblical account. For the latter, the facts are rather clear. Deborah (a mother in Israel, Judges 5:7 and wife of Lapidoth, Judges 4:4) emerges as "judge," a political leader following a time of national moral depravity. God allowed the nation's enemies to prevail. They cry for mercy. God employs Deborah to communicate his command to a man, Barak, directing him to recruit an army. Barak is recalcitrant and insists Deborah accompany him. As a reprimand for Barak's obvious lack of trust in God displayed by his unwillingness to obey him, God vowed to shame Barak by giving honor for victory to a woman. Deborah accompanied Barak to the point of attack (Mt. Tabor) but no further. Resisting the opportunity to be a precursor of Joan of Arc, she remained on Mt. Tabor. It was Barak who led 10,000 men into the valley to a resounding victory as God had promised. The rebuke for his recalcitrance was rendered when a heroic woman, Jael (occupied by her household chores), was afforded opportunity to slay the fleeing enemy commander. This she accomplished in her own tent (with a household tool) by a single act of deceptive treachery (guerrilla tactic) and not as a warrior in battle. This act takes place, not on a battlefield, but in a home.

Seen through these lenses, the story of Deborah has far more to do with the condemnation of male cowardice than the exaltation of "woman as warrior." The Lord raised up a godly woman to fill a vacuum created by pusillanimous men, not to serve as a military commander.

Several "asides" are interesting to note. Modern Israeli law excludes women from direct combat. Famed Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan once commented on the failed attempt at "gender-integration" of the Israeli combat troops of 1948 with the words, "Never again!" and Israel quickly reverted to segregated training and all-male combat complements. The "by faith" hagiography of Hebrews 11 credits Barak with the victory (no mention is made of Deborah). And as for Joan, while twelve charges [real or mythological] may well have been leveled against her, the historical record indicates that two placed her on the flaming pyre - her violation of the canon forbidding women to wear men's combat gear and her inability to articulate the 15th century Church's teaching on "the separation of the realms." This happened, by the way, not at the hands of the "English Church" (there was no Church of England until the Tudors of the following century) but by the Bishop of Beauvais, who had purchased her from the English for ten thousand francs. She was not canonized until Benedict XV sought reason to do so (relations between Italy and France following WWI?) in 1920. Not unlike the Deborah story, the Jeanne d'Arc epic says much more about a 15th century piety that identified obedience to God with emerging French nationalism than it does about "woman as warrior." (Multitudes of what remained of the populace, following the ravages of the plague and its resultant decimation, of 15th century Europe were greatly moved by anyone whom they believed to be inspired by God.)

To Be Like Women

At the risk of appearing to be blatantly “politically incorrect” but in an effort to be as thorough as the limitations of this exploration allow, one final line of Old Testament argumentation must be examined. It is one that makes no apology for the apparent unabashed sexism recorded in the text of Sacred Scripture. However, what is sexism to one may be viewed as ‘biblical prudence’ by another. This is certainly the position of those who employ the following argumentation and biblical citations to support the proposition that, according to Scripture, women simply are not suited for combat.

It must be noted that hostility to women is not the intent of the following argumentation. Those who employ it certainly recognize that misogyny (hatred of women) is both sinful and clearly prohibited to followers of Christ. Scripture is clear. Husbands are to love their wives in the same way that Christ loves the Church (Ephesians 5:25). Peter unmistakably instructs men to take special care to honor their wives (I Peter 3:7). Proverbs 31:28 defines a godly man as “one who rises in the gates of the city in order to bless the name of his wife.” Ask any man blessed with a godly wife - he has found a treasure far beyond the price of all rubies.

But what does one make of the following? The prophet Isaiah (chapter 19) declares the judgment of the Lord against Egypt by employing these words to describe their fears: “In that day Egypt will be like women, and will be afraid and fear because of the waving of the hand of the Lord...” Not dissimilar are the words of Jeremiah in chapter 50: “A sword is against the soothsayers.. .a sword is against her mighty men...and they will become like women.” A chapter later he echoes a similar theme; “And the land will tremble and sorrow... The mighty men have remained in their strongholds; their might has failed, they became like women” (chapter 53). The prophet Nahum does the same in chapter three of his condemnation; “Your people in your midst are women! The gates of your land are wide open for your enemies; fire shall devour the bars of your gates.” (It might also be noted that while Israel’s prophets relentlessly [and iconoclastically] challenged the injustices of their culture, never do they challenge its patriarchy.)

As indicated, these passages are not employed to support an agenda of misogyny. They are used to voice opposition to “women in combat” on pragmatic grounds relative to God-ordained gender differentiations. They are cited as biblical examples of a method utilized by God’s prophets to tell people that their military might has failed. The way they do it is to indicate that their warriors fight like women. The thesis is not that the Bible is a sexist book, but that men go to war, not women. As for combat in the cause of national defense, Nehemiah has something to say in chapter 4: “And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, ‘Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.’” No prophet of Israel ever suggested that armed women be utilized in this enterprise outside the circumstances of self-defense.

Another Line of Argumentation

One must not opine that all theological opposition to “women in combat” is couched in terminology relative to the “orders” or cadenced by themes dependent upon the

employment of Old Testament imagery, epic, and dictum which restrict participation in warfare to the male. A significant body of substantive theological literature has been produced since 1993 that argues from quite different perspectives. Again, the limitations of this study prohibit a review of the entire corpus, but attention is directed to a representative work entitled “Women in Combat” prepared by Father Donald J. Keefe, S.J. of St. Joseph’s Seminary in Dunwoodie, NY. Fr. Keefe is a lawyer and professor of Law and Theology, whose argument is grounded more in philosophical constructs and “liturgical tradition” (specifically, the Sacrament of Marriage) than in scriptural proof-texts.

Father Keefe’s years of Jesuit preparation, his immersion in the history of philosophy, and the clarity of his understanding of the issue (he served for years in the military [active duty in the Korean War] prior to preparation for the priesthood) is evident throughout his intriguing and sophisticated argumentation (as is his penchant for lecturing students on “law and religion”). The Lutheran reader, by the way, cannot help but note the inclination toward an Augustinian understanding of major theological concepts (e.g. “grace” as “free gift”) instead of the expected utilization of strictly Thomistic categories in his presentation. The work is lengthy (at times downright ponderous [but always both enlightening and stimulating]), and this examination submits the following summarization with the realization that the restrictions of brevity cannot and do not do it justice.

Keefe unapologetically identifies his bias early in the work. He, among many others, observes a radically egalitarian social agenda at work in the nation that would rid it of any policy requiring the differentiation between men and women. He labels such policy elitist. “The voices of those who will be affected by such foolishness are not heard: it is for the elite to speak and for the plebes to listen.”

This stance he finds popularized by “an early feminist,” John Stuart Mill, in his 1859 essay “On Liberty,” which summarizes the Rousseauvean romanticism of the late Enlightenment. (Remember, Mill was a member of that extraordinarily privileged institution, the English upper middle class of the 19th century [untouched by the general grinding poverty induced by the Inclosure Acts and the Industrial Revolution], whose members displayed an absolute cultural and moral ascendancy over the rest of the population.) In his essay Mill identifies liberty (freedom) with a radical personal irresponsibility limited only by proven necessity. He considered any unnecessary governmental limitation upon personal autonomy to be paternalistic and iniquitous, an affront to personal dignity. Persons are mere social atoms void of intrinsic significance or intelligibility. The absence of all inherent personal relationship or obligation constituted, for Mill, the ideal human condition. (The elite, of course, were excepted.)

Except for the elite, there exist only the coerced - those reduced to and regarded as objects of immanently necessary social and economic laws with which it would be impious to interfere. People are atoms swirling in a void, insignificant, indefinitely disposable. This “complacent elitism” at the root of Mill’s theory of freedom prevented him from considering the possibility that freedom and dignity could be universal. Liberty, freedom from restraint, or coercive paternalism were for the (elite) few, not the many.

Now Keefe’s argumentation takes an interesting turn. Mill’s concept of freedom made it impossible for him to entertain a traditional understanding of marriage. Mill’s equation of personal dignity with the intrinsic absence of all relation to any other human being could

never admit a permanent marital bond. To do so would be to recognize the intrinsic personal orientation of men to women, and women to men, or the complex mutuality which bonds parents to their children. Mill's notion of liberty simply excludes the reality of elective love demonstrated in the covenantal bonding of one man and one woman. Marriage is the counterpart, the counter-cultural riposte, to Mill's definition of liberty as personal autonomy, personal irresponsibility. (Obviously, Keefe is referring to the Judaeo-Christian institution of marriage.) He (i.e., Keefe) views the contrast between marriage and Mill's definition of liberty to be that of contradiction. Any understanding of the authentic expression of liberty as covenantal fidelity could not be more remote from Mill's musings "On Liberty."

With blistering sarcasm Keefe critiques Modernity (identifying Mill as prime originator) as the radical rationalization and dehistoricization of the human condition which leads to an immanently necessary salvation worked by man and not by God. This (rationalistic) salvation scheme is simplistic in the most literal sense. It identifies what is wrong with the world (always some variant of injustice), and having done so (some variant of unfairness), it enlists all humanity in this "intuitively clear[!]" vision of what salvation from evil must be; viz, a programmatic elimination of whatever has been identified as the source of all suffering, of all evil.

Such a "soteriologically-driven" program must, of course, be totalitarian. Nothing (or no one) must be allowed to stand in its way, and any resistance to it must be condemned a priori as cooperation with evil. Only the salvation process itself is pure. Keefe's frightening analysis of the result is that the process always devours its children (i.e., its directors as, he says, "the world has learned from Hitler, from Mao, from Stalin").

The critique continues. The process (of salvation) requires total and abject personal submission to this continued "historical criticism." To possess any other attitude is to abjure the totalitarian faith. Infidelity (from this faith) is unthinkable from within the intuited utopian vision, for that vision (that faith) is perceived as necessarily true. Its intuitive clarity (the immediate possession of the fullness of truth) admits no discussion or discursive examination. The intuition is necessary, of necessary truth.

Thus, for Keefe, the feminist enlistment in the libertarian agenda is merely another (Mill inspired) "pagan flight from history." One dare not look to history for salvation because there (in history) one encounters the dialectic of good and evil. The libertarian must, of necessity, abolish history and the historical self. The basic absurdity of history (and its radical ambiguities) ultimately coalesces in inequality, and inequality is rooted in (even identified with) differentiation. The "failure of history" is its failure to provide that absolutely undifferentiated sameness in which alone the struggle for justice (equality?) may find surcease.

The possibility that differing realities (e.g., men and women) may be at once different and equal does not even arise. Equality is identity, and the quest for justice is the quest for indifferentiation. Thus the pseudo-soteriologies of modernity are egalitarian. That is why those who find "injustice" in barring women from combat must speak from this moral conviction. Any differentiation whatever between men and women is unjust and must be undone or ignored (at whatever cost to reality). The contrast between modernity and the Judaeo-Christian tradition could not be more complete. Why? The latter tradition celebrates the sexual difference, while the praxis of modernity deplores it, attempts to

abolish it, will not afford it social, moral, or legal significance (Keefe employs all three verbs/phrases). “The Judaeo-Christian Tradition” (as viewed by Millerian feminists) is the historical institution par excellence in which the evil of differentiation (and thus of inequality, unfairness and injustice) is established, defended, and perpetuated. It finds clear expression in (the Sacrament of) marriage. (Keefe appears to accept [with several understandable caveats] all marriage of the “Judaeo-Christian tradition” as expressive of this sexual differentiation.)

It is obvious, the argumentation continues, that the egalitarian agenda is not concerned with preserving the free institutions of Western civilization, for they are founded on the praxis of freedom (the criterion being marriage). Instead, these institutions are viewed as mediating the very primal injustice which is to be eradicated. Indeed, they cannot be reduced to immanent necessity (i.e., to “necessary reasons”). The crime of these institutions (e.g., the free, customary associations of men and women expressed in marriage, specifically marriage as the imaging of God) is their freedom, the fact that their establishment cannot be justified on the grounds of abstract necessity (the sole test of secular justice). This agenda, according to Keefe’s discourse, fuels the drive to legitimate the use of women in combat.

The issue, as he sees it, is a solitary one - the inherently impossible problem of “the one and the many.” The most ineradicable example of this problem is the two irreducibly distinct sexes in one humanity. Every rational, logically necessary solution entails a denial of one of the elements of the problem, either the reality of the irreducible sexual differentiation making masculine and feminine persons, or the unity of humanity. Keefe posits that is precisely the full humanity of the feminine that has been denied (by such “reasoning”).

Having identified the significance of the married couple as symbolizing the good creation, whose goodness is its imaging of God, a goodness incomplete without the creation of woman as the “helpmeet” of the man, co-equal, “bone of his bones, flesh of his flesh,” Keefe asserts that it is precisely this co-equality that has been counter-cultural in the extreme. The lengthy commentary that follows this assertion is most attractive. Its examination, however, would stretch the parameters of this examination beyond the binding strictures of brevity. Therefore, to summarize, both Plato and Aristotle recognized the masculine-feminine polarity as antagonistic, irrational, and in need of rationalization. This was done by reducing historical humanity to a non-historical monadic substance. (Plato did it by placing formal [masculine] intelligibility outside history into his “world of forms,” reducing to ideal nothingness the historical (feminine) resistance of matter to formal intelligibility. Aristotle did the same, but by a different process, by rationalizing masculine-feminine polarity into the impersonal abstractions of formal actuality and entirely passive potentiality [whose historical composition could then be seen as necessary]). For both, then, (in a monadic quest for a necessarily intelligible unity) intelligibility was purchased at the cost of historical understanding; truth became unchanging, permanent, abstract from historical mutability, i.e., de-feminized. (The dyad, or principle of multiplicity, was suppressed in order that the world be comprehensible. There follows a review of Parmenides in the West and Hindu and Buddhist seers in the East, the retreat from the incalculables of history to the immobilism and serenity of personal submersion in absolute Unity.)

In contrast is the mystery of Creation, Fall, and Redemption in Jesus the Christ. The New Covenant is the restoration, in sign and sacrament (i.e., concretely, objectively, and historically), of the lost covenantal, free, nuptially-ordered unity by which man is created in the image of God. Romans 8 sees all creation longing for the final fruits of that redemptive Sacrifice, the restoration of the full freedom of the children of God, a liberation that is the plenary gift of life by the Father, the renewal of creation achieved by His sending of the Son to give the Spirit. This restoration of creation to its free unity simply repeats the insight of Genesis into the marital character of the good creation, the free unity of an irreducibly unique man and an irreducibly distinct woman in their covenant of marriage. Here lies the radical expression of human freedom, authority, responsibility and dignity. Here (in marriage) the man and the woman each bear the full dignity of humanity, but do so differently, irreducibly, and (therefore) non-competitively (not as adversaries, but in a covenant of mutual love). It is on this free unity that all free society rests.

(Skipping 4 1/2 pages of commentary) Keefe posits that here is to be found an enormous advance in our understanding of the human condition. The free marital order of “properly human” existence is at once liturgical and trinitarian - the man, the woman, and their covenant form a trinitarian human unity, a free substance, the “one flesh” whose freedom is its tri-relational, tri-personal imaging of God. The man, the woman, and their covenant thus stand to each other as analogues of the Trinitarian Person. As the denial of the full divinity of the Son and Spirit was the first great Christian heresy, so a denial of the full humanity (the full freedom, authority, responsibility and dignity) of the woman and the marital covenant is heresy. Any “monadic” understanding of these principles (authority, responsibility, freedom, dignity) of human existence is their immediate de-historicization, their reduction to mere monadic abstraction, ideological atoms without existence in the world. To reject the free rationality of the masculine-feminine-nuptial tri-polarity of humanity is to deny human freedom, responsibility, authority, dignity, for these subsist only in the nuptial reality.

The point of all this relative to the issue of women in combat? Keefe apologizes for the lengthy “introduction” but deems it essential:

This lengthy preface to considering the merits of the assigning of women to combat duties is indispensable to understanding the egalitarian postulates which urge such assignment. These postulates are precisely those of an elite eager to impose its diktat upon the free community whose customary distinction between masculine and feminine roles the egalitarian pessimism derides as irrational, unjustifiable, sexist, and so on.

The introduction is necessary, says Keefe, because [it is necessary to understand that] underlying the familiar feminist and libertarian rhetoric is the doctrinaire denial of the existence of any intrinsic, personal, and therefore ineradicable significant difference between men and women (bolstered by a doctrinaire resolve that such differences as manifestly exist shall be regarded as nullities). This stance (of the egalitarian elite) affronts the common sense of humanity which has always insisted upon protecting and celebrating (in marriage) precisely those differences. Unfortunately, even that “common sense” has been blurred by two generations or putative Christians who have been taught to “test authority” and be skeptical of just those institutions whose customary establishment and authenticity has been taken for granted by preceding generations. And it is particularly the

ancient institution of marriage that is under assault (for it is definitive and constitutive of the free interrelation of men and women in the free society and the personal dignity proper to men and women). How ironic, quips Keefe, that marriage (“in the brave new world”) is scandalous (barring the exorcising of the aura of the sacred which has surrounded it), “whereas the prospect of the woman as machine gunner, artillerist, rifleman, and grenadier is solemnly attested.”

Is Keefe asserting that the elitist egalitarian agenda that drives much of America’s current social policy is “pagan” at the root? The answer is a resounding “Yes!”

Keefe’s presentation represents a significant body of literature (articles, books, dissertations) that approaches and attempts to address the issue of “women in combat” from a variety of theologically related perspectives. A thorough examination of the subject requires exploration of such studies. For an Eastern Orthodox perspective on this issue one may consult Father Alexander Webster, “Paradigms of the Contemporary American Soldier and Women in the Military” published in *Strategic Review*, or his recent book, *The Price of Prophecy: Eastern Orthodox Churches on Peace, Freedom and Security* (Eerdmans), especially chapter 7. Fr. Webster is academic dean and associate professor of moral theology at St. Sophia Ukrainian Orthodox Theological Seminary in South Bound Brook, New Jersey. A layman in the Orthodox tradition, Brian Mitchell, has published (with his own interspersed commentary) a collation of verbatim transcriptions from the writings of the Eastern Fathers dealing with biblical texts on manhood and womanhood entitled *The Scandal of Gender*. Orthodox Rabbi David E. Eidensohn of Monsey, New York (at the request of Rabbi Yehuda Levin) has prepared a study presenting the position of the Orthodox rabbinate entitled “Women in the Military? An Orthodox Jewish Perspective.”

Questions

An exploration of the literature and positions relative to the issue of “women in combat” appears to raise more questions than provide answers. The questions that do arise are often rhetorical, or, at least, so it seems at first blush. Others, however, appear to be well worth some pondering and reflection by the concerned Lutheran Christian. Some individuals have raised the question, ‘Are women in our church unwittingly engaged in a *military* contest that belongs properly to men - and without the appointed weapon for *spiritual* contest, an understanding of “the whole counsel of God”? Others ask, “Is the order of creation (or the first two chapters of Genesis) normative for humanity in the rest of Scripture or is it not? Must one speak only of order of redemption from Genesis 3:15 through the Revelation? How does one possibly extend the clearly identifiable biblical role of woman as “helpmeet” to the exigencies of the battlefield? Does Paul’s appeal to Genesis 2:24 (in Ephesians 5) address the point that “from creation” the institution of marriage is prophetic of the union of Christ with His Church and does that, in turn, address pressing concerns of our current culture and, by implication, the subject of this exploration? What, exactly, does it mean to proclaim “the whole counsel of God,” or what are the implications of manhood and womanhood as “imaging God?” Does a Lutheran understanding of Christian marriage enlighten the latter? And there are other questions.

For example, if current cultural/social mores and its reflection in national policy is found by Lutheran assessment to be (as asserted by Keefe, et. al.) that of a radical egalitarian

nature that is in actuality “pagan,” is there a “Law-based duty” of the corporate church to issue warning or instruction to those responsible for its proliferation? Of course, if “women in combat” is in fact only a civil matter, the church must “mind her own business;” if, however, issues clearly are involved that contradict the counsel of God’s Word, how may the church justify a stance of silence?

Neither Luther nor Calvin displayed much reticence relative to communication with the “Christian Prince” or the “Royal Magistrates.” But the American “experiment” took great pains to rid its landscape of emperors and princes. (The very thought of the presence of even a “Bishop” in colonial and early post-colonial America was resisted lest they become but “stalking horses” for emperor and prince.) To pretend, even for a moment, that the political or social structures of 16th century Europe in any way parallel those of a pluralistic liberal democracy of the 21st is to pretend the absurd. American Lutherans have struggled with the practical application of their prophetic role in society since their arrival on “new country” shores. Without a doubt, the social agenda of Calvinist/Reformed (particularly that rooted in Puritan expression) Christians differs from that of confessional Lutherans. (The same, of course, applies to the expressions of Eastern Orthodoxy, Western Catholicism, and Orthodox Judaism, but for differing reasons.) What may appear to be “a matter of course” for the one can be extremely challenging for the other.

Can this ever be offered as an excuse for traditional Lutheran “quietism” on matters pertaining to public policy and social structures? On one thing Lutheran must agree. The confessional writings of the 16th century clearly address the issue of church and state. (The application of their address is not so clear.) Never do they suggest that Lutherans take a stance of uncritical alliance with Christians whose political activism is expressed in ways that conflict with the radical Law/Gospel distinction that grounds the confessors’ work. The complexities surrounding the practical application of that distinction for 21st century American Lutherans may well require theological reflection and courage equal to that of the theologically reflective courageous company that produced those writings

It cannot be denied, of course, that a major issue clouds theological engagement in the matter of “women in combat,” i.e., the apparent lack of any definitive text of Scripture that addresses the subject. Argumentation *ex silencio* is fraught with a magnitude of difficulties. A reasoned search of Law, Prophets, Gospels, Epistles simply does not indicate this to be an issue on which God has spoken authoritatively. Is the apparent “deafening silence” of Scripture, however, reason enough to dismiss the topic without an attempt at theological reflection? Does silence automatically imply adiaphora? Relative to the levitical priesthood, for example, certainly God commissioned only men to serve as servants for the Lord’s household. Few there be that would question that that is clearly God’s intent. But where does the Old Testament “ban” women from this priesthood? Where, as some ask, is found a direct Scriptural “ban” for abortion? To argue merely from the Decalogue is viewed by some as requiring a degree of hermeneutical maneuvering.

Then there is the matter of the texts themselves that are posited in support of a biblically identifiable ban on women in combat. Indeed, it would appear that such matters as the numbering and mustering of men in Numbers or the “cross-dressing” prohibition of Deuteronomy 22 are rather shaky “proof-texts” upon which to hang the will of God! Further, at a time when there are a plethora of false prophets who claim to speak for God,

it is incumbent upon all members of the Christian community to display great care about any claims regarding God's will where He appears not to have spoken.

But could it not be argued that the import of such passages as cited above is to be discovered by their being viewed as "coordinate matters" displaying both principal and propositional support for the examination of scriptural wisdom (comparable, perhaps, to the argumentation relative to the office of the public ministry that, since our Lord did not number women among His disciples...), or is that a category outside the purview of a Lutheran exegetical/hermeneutical approach? Do not the passages support aspects of a creatively ordained social structure in which the Creator purposed to install man in His image, distinctively male and female? Is there any relation here to the issue of women who insist on standing in the places where men are specified for leadership in the church? Do or do not the Scriptures reveal a divine differentiation that considers sex to consist of male and female, and assign specific categorical roles to each? In a book written following World War II, *Victors, Beware!*, a former minister in exile from Franco's Spain (Salvador de Madariaga) observed that the push for "sameness" will not stop until it attempts to create "equivalency" in the one place where nature itself will not permit it, namely, between the sexes. How prophetic his words! Are there biblical concepts at the root of his "warning" pertinent to the subject at hand, or is such a pursuit just another quixotic attempt to fashion chicken salad from chicken feathers?

How much of a hermeneutical oddity is involved in an examination of a Pauline principle expressed as, "whatever [Greek: everything that?] was written in earlier times was written for our instruction" (Romans 15) or, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for ... instruction" (II Timothy 3) as being germane to the issue? While it may seem enviably easier for a Calvinist, employing The Westminster Confession of Faith, than for a Lutheran, utilizing The Lutheran Confessions, to apply such a hermeneutical principle, does Scriptural usage itself in the 16th century Lutheran confessional writings provide some basis to entertain such a consideration?

Finally, of course, there is the vast (and often unexplored by Lutherans) region of the "oughts" and "ought nots." Does a Lutheran ethical perspective on this issue even exist, or should it? Lutherans frame their responses in a matrix dominated by a Law/Gospel polarity and have every good scripturally based, confessionally identified basis so to do. Contemporary Roman Catholic (more recently, perhaps, Eastern Orthodox as well) moral theology, (rooted in a philosophical framework) operates from another "polarity," the distinction of formal/material norms. Can one learn from the other, or is that just plain dangerous? Is there a way in which philosophy properly can be viewed as a servant of theology in matters of ethical formulation, or should such an approach be dismissed 'out of hand'? To what degree does "prudence" understood as "sanctified common sense" remain an untapped resource for a Lutheran ethic on the subject under exploration?

There are enormous risks, to be sure. It is rather safe to appeal to "formal" norms (moral virtues that Christians [indeed, all persons] "ought" to *possess*). Anyone, the church included, can peddle platitudes, and church assemblies are all too prone to become political conventions without political responsibility. To begin to address "material" norms (things that Christians [indeed, all persons] "ought" to *do*) is another matter. Without restraint "imposed" by a clearly identified and authoritative "magisterium" it is possible for uncontrolled (or "un-normed") ecclesiastical agencies and individual agents to plunge headfirst into the fabrication of policy "for" rather than "with" those responsible

for formulating civil matters that impinge upon the nation and her citizenry (and for carrying out the details of those formulations). On the one hand, the church is in need of “all the help she can get” in these difficult times in sharpening the focus of her own moral scope while at the same time addressing the “existential” decisions that weigh heavily on the shoulders of any sincere public policy-maker in just such times as these. On the other hand, to suggest any “learning from one another” appears redundant. Does not the proper structure already exist in the assigned responsibility of the CTCR in such matters and the Law-based duty of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to advise civil authorities, particularly on issues that directly concern her work, her dogma and on public legislation that impacts her constituencies? Note: A Lutheran response to the question of “*who* speaks for the church?” likely has never been more concisely articulated than in the Epilog of the 1995 CTCR document on Church and State. But what about the *how*? Chapter III of the document is a masterpiece. But is there yet more remaining to be said? There is an earlier sentence in that document, “It is not surprising that there should be changes in thinking as this application [i.e., the application of Lutheran theology to modern America] progresses, although not all such changes finally can be viewed favorably.” A non-definitive statement, to be sure, but does it entertain the possibility that there is yet to be found a “legitimate latitude” in the application of the *how*?

And so the questions mount. Perhaps most significant is the following: Before these, and related, questions continue to multiply *ad infinitum*, should not thoughtful Lutheran theologians engage themselves in providing some scripturally based, confessionally consistent reflection to enhance their resolution?

This paper began with a quote from C. S. Lewis. It closes with a thought from the (counter cultural) vision of truth and virtue set forth by J. R. R. Tolkien in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Unfortunately, Director Peter Jackson's current Hollywood version provides a less than faithful rendition of the author's text. How sad, for example, that in order to make the band of warrior Elves (in the eleven kingdom of Lothlorien) look beautiful, Jackson makes them androgynous, denying to them the virtues (and identities) of masculinity and femininity. Of course, there are more men than women in Tolkien's manuscript. For Jackson, that appears to be “politically incorrect.” But Tolkien is writing about *war*, an activity he clearly identifies as masculine.

G. W. Dickinson (*Touchstone*, October 2002) has written a brilliant article relative to Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Ring* and its misreading by Jackson. In one section, he comments about the betrothed couple, Aragorn and Arwen, and points out that the focus of Aragorn's ideal masculinity is his willing service of others in combat and hardship. His submission to the reality of his own creation (as male) makes him emotionally strong and confident. Arwen, in contrast, submits to the reality of her own creation (as female) and displays her own form of self-sacrifice and service (e.g., her patience and encouragement and faithfulness to both her betrothed and her father). Quite the opposite of the feminist's negative image of the weak and passive woman, Arwen displays tremendous strength and courage. But Tolkien makes one thing very clear (which is totally obfuscated in the film version); *she does not go to war*. In spite of possessing more than enough requisites to be a St. Joan, the self-sacrifice and service required by her obedience to her own creation as a female are more than sufficient. She has no need to seek martial adventure. Dickinson understands Tolkien in an area in which Jackson does not. For Tolkien, to truly value and live out the masculine and feminine idioms in sacrificial love is to submit to the created

order. The refusal to honor masculinity and femininity, on the other hand, is, for Tolkien, tantamount to rebellion (against the Creator?).

Recommendations

One: that The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations undertake an examination of the theological/doctrinal implications raised and provide the church with a reasoned response.

Two: that our military chaplains continue their able ministry of providing the proclamation of God's Law and God's Gospel and the very finest in pastoral care to all the church's members in uniform. The prime responsibility of the ministers of the church has and must remain the proclamation of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins, for Christ's sake, solely by grace through faith. Spiritual persuasion, not temporal coercion, has always been "the Lutheran way." Any implicit prophetic role chaplains might identify in this exploration should be recognized as non-definitive. Great care must be exercised, lest one proclaim God's will in an area in which it is yet not clear that God's Word has spoken.