



# Women's Ordination through the Lens of the Apostles' Creed

**A FRATERNAL THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE OF THE  
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## ABBREVIATIONS

AC — Augsburg Confession

Ap — Apology of the Augsburg Confession

CTCR — Commission on Theology and Church Relations

FC SD — Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration

KW — Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000)

LC — Large Catechism

LSB — *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006)

LSCwE — *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017)

LW — *Luther's Works, American Edition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann and Christopher Boyd Brown, 75 vols. (Philadelphia and St. Louis: Augsburg and Concordia Publishing House, 1955–)

SA — Smalcald Articles

SC — Small Catechism

TA — Theses of Agreement

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# Women's Ordination: The Defining Issue of Today's Church?

*Rev. Dr. Jonathan E. Shaw*

The ordination of women may well be the defining issue of the church of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.<sup>1</sup>

There appear to be many good reasons to doubt this assertion. Current LGBTQIA+ challenges to the historic Christian ethics of human sexuality appear to run much broader and deeper than any discussion of the sex of an eligible ordinand.<sup>2</sup> Macro-evolution, radical materialism, and the re-creation of bodily identity assault the biblical foundations of human origin, meaning, and identity. It seems that so much more is at risk here than in the doctrine of ordination. And what about the challenges of liberal Protestantism's new Christ, who, having suffered unjust violence from the political structures of His day, now sends His church into the world to confront unjust systems of politics, society, and religion,<sup>3</sup> instead of to preach the atoning sacrifice, forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation in His blood? Or what of the secularist culturalization of Scripture, which asserts that it is more important to contextualize the Word than to deliver a "theoretical," objective, authoritative, intended sense? Yes, women's ordination matters, but can it really matter that much?

On Dr. Francis Pieper's scale of fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines, and primary and secondary fundamental doctrines, the answer would be no. Fundamental doctrines bear on what is necessary for saving faith in Christ, and it is possible for an individual to be saved without a correct understanding of the doctrine of ordination to the holy ministry.<sup>4</sup> But the relative weightiness of doctrines, comparing one to another, is not the issue at hand.

The issue is how women's ordination bears on the Christian confession of faith, on the church being the church catholic. This booklet examines the question of women's ordination from this perspective, with special attention given to the ancient, baptismal creed — the Apostles' Creed. The creed stands as the summary of the Gospel; the proclamation of the creative, redemptive, and sanctifying works of God; and the confession of the faith into which one is baptized for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. The reason that women's ordination may well be the defining issue of today's church is that it contradicts the three articles of the Apostles' Creed. This slender volume offers initial investigations toward proving this thesis.

Many confessional Lutheran scholars have already published significant studies on women's ordination.<sup>5</sup> Some have taken a primarily exegetical approach, based on Genesis 1–2, 1 Corinthians 14, and 1 Timothy 2. Henry P. Hamann's "The New Testament and the Ordination of Women," and John Kleinig's "Disciples But Not Teachers: 1 Corinthians 14:33b–38

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<sup>1</sup> This introduction recasts remarks given January 16, 2023, at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, to open the "Fraternal Theological Dialogue between the Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)" on women's ordination.

<sup>2</sup> "LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity." For further distinctions and definitions, see "Defining LGBTQ+" at [gaycenter.org/community/lgbtq/](http://gaycenter.org/community/lgbtq/).

<sup>3</sup> This new Christ and the church's new mission lie at the heart of the Lutheran World Federation confession.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 80–93. Nonetheless, "The denial of non-fundamental doctrines endangers faith. It involves the denial of the divine authority of Scripture," 92.

<sup>5</sup> See Matthew C. Harrison and John T. Pless, eds., *Women Pastors?: The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective*, 3rd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012).

and 1 Timothy 2:11–15,” offer compelling studies based on the authority of Scripture that preclude ordaining women.<sup>6</sup> Others have offered an historical perspective. William Weinrich’s “Women in the History of the Church: Learned and Holy, But Not Pastors” and his “‘It Is Not Given to Women to Teach’: a Lex in Search of a Ratio” survey biblical, patristic, and medieval history to demonstrate a consistent, male-only ordination to the pastoral ministry.<sup>7</sup> Yet others have taken hybrid approaches. Bo Giertz’s “Twenty-Three Theses on the Holy Scriptures, the Woman, and the Office of the Ministry” focuses on the unity of the church founded on the authority of Scripture in the context of social demands for women’s ordination.<sup>8</sup> Gregory J. Lockwood’s “The Ordination of Women” distinguishes customs, culture, principles, and commands of the Lord relative to women and the preaching office.<sup>9</sup> David P. Scaer’s essays, “May Women Be Ordained as Pastors?” and “The Office of Pastor and the Problem of the Ordination of Women Pastors,” explore exegetical arguments, sociological contexts, and church offices of ministry.<sup>10</sup> We build on these foundational works here as we undertake a confessional, creedal approach.

A confessional, creedal approach is always culturally offensive. Since the fall in Eden, the confession of the only true God has always been made on a wartime basis, in battle against the devil, the fallen world, and our own flesh. A benign god of grandfatherly kindness might be tolerated, but a Triune God demanding unrivaled fear, love, and trust — that God our fleshly culture, or cultural flesh, cannot abide.<sup>11</sup> The Old Testament confession of the *Shema Israel* drew the wrath of the pagan nations who worshiped a multiplicity of gods. The confession of Adonai Elohim was culturally offensive in its claim that Yahweh was the Lord, the one God over all gods. St. John the Baptist’s confession of the Christ as the Lamb of God atoning for the sins of the world offended the religiously pharisaic right, the theologically Sadducaic left, and the politically sensitive Herodian realists.

With Christ’s atoning death and justifying resurrection, the early Christians could find no neutral cultural ground for their confession, nor did they seek such. That is always the nature of making the good confession. Their summary confession, “Jesus is Lord” (Ἰησοῦς κύριος), was taken as a slap in the face by loyal Romans who exchanged the common greeting on the street, “Caesar is Lord” (Καῖσαρ κύριος).<sup>12</sup> Beginning with the Old Roman Creed of A.D. 85, which grew by accretions into the Apostles’ Creed, and including later creeds such as the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, Christians stated positively the saving faith in the Triune God’s revealed truth in Christ and rejected the false confessions that were creeping into the church.<sup>13</sup>

Today it is women’s ordination that is creeping into the church and, in many locations, is already firmly implanted. This heresy attacks the truth of all three articles of the creed under the guise of donning a compassionate cloak of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Against such deception, our three authors take up the good confession of faith in terms of the three articles of the Apostles’ Creed.

In chapter one, Dr. Adam Hensley examines the enduring truth, goodness, and beauty of the order of creation within the family and within Christ’s church. His essay, “The Ordination of Women and God’s First Article Gifts of Human Sexuality and Order in Creation,” is written against the backdrop of the internal turmoil of the Lutheran Church of Australia seeking

<sup>6</sup> Harrison and Pless, *Women Pastors?*, 3–15, 51–62. Note Kleinig’s helpful bibliography, 60–62.

<sup>7</sup> Harrison and Pless, *Women Pastors?*, 171–96, 461–95.

<sup>8</sup> Harrison and Pless, *Women Pastors?*, 249–61.

<sup>9</sup> Harrison and Pless, *Women Pastors?*, 137–67.

<sup>10</sup> Harrison and Pless, *Women Pastors?*, 303–27, 329–40.

<sup>11</sup> The law of God is received by sinful flesh as hostility, and is used by God to drive sinners to contrition to prepare for the Gospel. The law is received by the spiritual man as God’s everlasting, good will to lead him in God-pleasing paths.

<sup>12</sup> Roman citizens viewed Caesar as both lord of the civil realm and a god to be revered — if not by personal conviction, then at least by edict and for personal preservation.

<sup>13</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (New York: David McKay, 1972).

to allow the practice of women's ordination without reference to Holy Scripture as decisive. Hensley's First Article exegetical study bears powerful witness to the goodness of God's creative gifts of human sexuality, to His order in creation, to the continued applicability of that order in the lives of families and the church's ministry, and to the fulfillment of the new creation as the risen Christ teaches, preaches, and administers His Sacraments for forgiveness, life, and salvation through those He places into His office of the pastoral ministry.

In chapter two, Dr. David P. Scaer provides a hybrid exegetical, historical, and systematic approach to the Second Article's understanding of Christ and His institution of ordination. His article, "Women's Ordination: Government and Culture Ruling in the Place of Christ and His Apostles," traces the rise of women's ordination through a historical review of Constantinian, Reformation, and Enlightenment Christianity leading to a readiness in culture for ordaining women, and in liberal government to legislate the change. In opposition to this, Scaer offers biblical evidence of Jesus establishing His Office of the Ministry in the line of Adam and the Old Testament priests, consummated before the heavenly throne in the atonement on the cross, and continued in the office of male-only apostles and pastors.

In the concluding chapter, "Women's Ordination and the Doctrine of Scripture," Dr. Roland Ziegler takes up the Third Article gift of Holy Scripture as the sole authority for the church's doctrine and practice, and its implications for women's ordination. Ziegler begins with an interesting study of the hermeneutics and the doctrine of Scripture used by proponents of women's ordination. He demonstrates how these proponents hold to an historically relativized approach to the text, dismiss certain biblical moral judgments as culture-bound, and reject any enduring creative order that might be viewed as subordinating women. Ziegler then documents a hermeneutic based on six principles derived from Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions that affirms an inspired, inerrant text of Holy Scripture and upholds enduring creative distinctions between men and women. Ziegler concludes that accepting women's ordination requires a hermeneutic that is destructive of scriptural authority; however, accepting Scripture as verbally inspired leads to a rejection of women's ordination.

This booklet, *Women's Ordination through the Lens of the Apostles' Creed*, grew out of a theological dialogue of the Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). These discussions were held January 16–17, 2023, at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Instrumental for the genesis of this dialogue were the Lutheran confessional commitment, love of the enduring LCK-LCMS relationship, and personal integrity of LCK President Rev. Eun-Seob Kim. At an April 19, 2022, meeting in St. Louis with LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President Kim brought the news that at the 2020 LCK church body convention a question had been raised about elevating women's service in the church — understood as pointing to women's ordination. President Kim was personally concerned about this development and what it might mean for the LCK-LCMS relationship, with women's ordination being a doctrine unpracticed in historic Christianity and divisive for confessional Lutheran church fellowship.<sup>14</sup> At the meeting, we agreed to gather for a fraternal theological dialogue, now documented with the publication of this booklet.

Participants at the January 2023 theological dialogue included:

Rev. Eun-Seob Kim (*President of the Lutheran Church in Korea*)

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison (*President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*)

Rev. Dr. Jun-Hyun Kim (*Interim President of Luther University, Dean of the Graduate School, and LCK Pastor*)

Rev. Dr. Adam Hensley, essayist (*Professor, Australian Lutheran College, North Adelaide, Lutheran Church of Australia*)<sup>15</sup>

Rev. Dr. David P. Scaer, essayist (*The David P. Scaer Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, LCMS*)

<sup>14</sup> At the April 2022 meeting, President Kim also noted that the LCK was seeking the LCMS's help in accurately documenting the history of its work in South Korea and in recovering the historic church practice of *diakonia*. At the January 2023 dialogue, the LCK and LCMS discussed these areas based on presentations made by Rev. Dr. Daniel N. Harmelink and President Harrison. The two church bodies continue to cooperate in these areas.

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Hensley now serves as Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, LCMS.

Rev. Dr. Roland F. Ziegler, essayist (*Robert D. Preus Professor of Systematic Theology and Confessional Lutheran Studies; Chairman of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, LCMS*)

Rev. Dr. Jonathan E. Shaw, moderator (*Director of Church Relations, LCMS*)

Rev. Michael N. Frese (*Deputy Director of Church Relations, LCMS*)

Rev. Dr. Daniel N. Harmelink (*Executive Director of the Concordia Historical Institute, LCMS*)

Rev. Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer (*Executive Director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, LCMS*)

Rev. Charles Ferry (*Regional Director of the Office of International Mission for Asia, LCMS*)

Rev. Dr. Tom Park (*Theological Educator in Taiwan and Korean Translator, Office of International Mission, LCMS*)

A spirit of theological unity and fraternal care permeated the presentations and discussions, in keeping with the prayer of the Psalmist, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). This spirit has overseen the history of LCK-LCMS relations, and a brief review of this history will be helpful to those unfamiliar with the dialogue context.

The LCMS has worked together with Koreans in one way or another since the Korean War, when LCMS chaplains reached out with the Gospel of Christ. In 1958, the LCMS sent missionaries Maynard Dorow, Kurt Voss, and Paul Bartling, who formed the Korean Lutheran Mission along with Korean counterpart Dr. Won-Yong Ji. In 1971, the LCK was formally established as an independent Lutheran church body in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS.

Since then, the two church bodies have worked together in varying ways. Especially significant was the work of LCMS missionary Dr. George Riemer. He was involved in nearly all aspects of LCK ministry and lived in Korea for decades.<sup>16</sup> Today the LCK is a church body with about 55 congregations, 3,500–5,200 members, and about 60 active pastors, with membership in the International Lutheran Council, but also the Lutheran World Federation since 1972. Internal conflict and disputed leadership within the LCK impeded joint work with the LCMS for four years, but internal peace and resolution came with the 2021 reelection of President Eun-Seob Kim. He and Dr. Il-Young Park traveled to St. Louis in April of 2022, committed to “unfreezing our LCK-LCMS relationship,” to use their words, and to convey the convention discussion of women’s ordination. This led to the dialogue and subsequent publication of *Women’s Ordination through the Lens of the Apostles’ Creed: A Fraternal, Theological Dialogue of the Lutheran Church in Korea and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*.

God blessed the dialogue richly. Within days of the dialogue’s conclusion, President Kim was comfortable with the LCMS position expressed on women’s ordination. He sought the publication of the dialogue essays, with a Korean translation to be shared and discussed with other LCK pastors and leaders. Toward these ends, a follow-up LCMS church relations visit to Korea is scheduled for late 2023. God grant His blessing wherever these dialogue proceedings are considered, according to our prayer in Christ:

Lord Jesus Christ, the Church’s head,  
You are her one foundation;  
In You she trusts, before You bows,  
And waits for Your salvation.  
Built on this rock secure,  
Your Church shall endure  
Though all the world decay  
And all things pass away.  
O hear, O hear us, Jesus!

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<sup>16</sup> As a U.S. Army Chaplain assigned to South Korea, I worked with Dr. Reimer on occasion 1992–1994.



O Lord, let this Your little flock,  
Your name alone confessing,  
Continue in Your loving care,  
True unity possessing.  
Your sacraments, O Lord,  
And Your saving Word  
To us, Lord, pure retain.  
Grant that they may remain  
Our only strength and comfort.

Help us to serve You evermore  
With hearts both pure and lowly;  
And may Your Word, that light divine,  
Shine on in splendor holy  
That we repentance show,  
In faith ever grow;  
The pow'r of sin destroy  
And evils that annoy.  
O make us faithful Christians.

And for Your Gospel let us dare  
To sacrifice all treasure;  
Teach us to bear Your blessed cross,  
To find in You all pleasure.  
O grant us steadfastness  
In joy and distress,  
Lest we, Lord, You forsake.  
Let us by grace partake  
Of endless joy and gladness. (*LSB 647*)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The Commission on Worship, *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006). Text © 1941 Concordia Publishing House. Used with permission.



# The Ordination of Women and God's First Article Gifts of Human Sexuality and Order in Creation

*Rev. Dr. Adam D. Hensley*

## 1. Introduction and Summary

When it has not been or deteriorated into a political push for change in a synod's life and teaching,<sup>18</sup> the theological debate on the ordination of women has typically centered on two texts from St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy

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<sup>18</sup> In modern times, the ordination of women movement had its genesis in the European state Lutheran churches, where it was often introduced and eventually imposed on congregations through government legislative action. The Norwegian government passed women's ordination in 1938, but congregations resisted it, and it was not until 1961 that the first women were ordained. Other countries followed suit: Denmark (1947), Czechoslovakia (1953), Sweden (1959), France (before 1962), and "most of Germany by 1968" (see <https://womenpriests.org/ecumenism/lutheran1-evangelical-lutheran-church-in-america> report on ordination of women-1970/). The American Lutheran Church and Lutheran Church of America, which later merged to form the ELCA, each approved the ordination of women in 1970.

By contrast, more than fifty years on the Lutheran Church of Australia has on numerous occasions formally rejected calls for women to be admitted to its ministerium. Yet its protracted debate makes the LCA an instructive example and interesting case study of how this issue has affected a synod's confessional subscription to the Holy Scripture as "the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged" (Ep 1).

For most of the LCA's several decades debating this issue, synod proposals framed it as a matter to be decided for the whole church on the basis of Scripture. But that approach was abandoned at the most recent general convention in Melbourne (February 2023), where the issue was framed as merely a matter of different "practices." The journey to this point is worthy of note. At the union of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia and United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia in 1966, the newly formed LCA agreed that:

Though women prophets were used by the Spirit of God in the Old as well as in the New Testament, 1 Cor 14:34, 35 and 1 Tim 2:11-14 prohibit a woman from being called into the office of the public ministry for the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This apostolic rule is binding on all Christendom; hereby her rights as a member of the spiritual priesthood are in no wise impaired." (Theses of Agreement VI.11)

The LCA has since held five synod votes on the ordination of women (2000, 2006, 2015, 2018, 2023). None of these synod votes produced the necessary 2/3 majority to overturn the LCA's teaching articulated in TA VI.11. Importantly, the first four votes were preceded by renewed study of the Scriptures on the issue, framing the discussion as a matter to be decided for the whole church by a right understanding of God's Word (the fifth in 2023 was a failed proposal simply to remove TA VI.11). The 2018 convention was an especially notable example given its singular focus on testing whether the LCA could endorse the arguments offered for the ordination of women. When women's ordination failed the test of synod for the third time in 2015, that convention resolved to have the LCA's Commission on Theology and Inter-Church relations prepare a document to test whether there exists a biblical-theological basis for ordaining women into the office of the ministry. The ensuing document was entitled the "Draft Doctrinal Statement: A Theological Basis for the Ordination of Women and Men" (DDS) with an accompanying lengthier "Background Statement." The DDS went through two drafts incorporating wide-ranging responses and critiques and receiving feedback from more than 30 churchwide open consultations with LCA members throughout Australia and New Zealand. Yet despite all this, the DDS failed the test of synod in 2018. A few months earlier, the DDS had failed to gain even simple majority support at the General Pastors' Conference.

This should have been the moment the LCA interrogated the hermeneutics and understanding of the Gospel at work in arguments for the ordination of women. Instead, resigned to the idea that the church was at an irresolvable impasse, LCA leadership promoted proposals to the synod convention in February 2023 that framed the issue as though it were only a difference of "practice" not affecting the LCA's teaching on the Ministry and that sought ways to include both "practices." The convention was thus being led to a practical denial of its confession that the Scriptures are "the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine, and life" (LCA Constitution, Art. II).

If proponents of women's ordination should succeed in introducing it into the life of LCA, they will have done so via political approaches and solutions to this biblical, spiritual issue, as their European counterparts did.

2. And rightly so. Both texts speak to how God has ordered the public preaching and teaching of the Word in worship, and both texts specifically address the eligibility of women to publicly teach (1 Tim. 2:12) or weigh what is said in church, thereby exercising public doctrinal oversight (1 Cor. 14:32–35; cf. AC XXVIII, 21).<sup>19</sup> Significantly, St. Paul does not anchor the commands and prohibitions of these texts in social customs, changing cultural sensibilities, or religious standards now overturned by the Gospel, as proponents of women's ordination often claim.<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, he appeals to a host of authorities that include direct appeal to the first article realities of God's creation of mankind in His image with its inherent male-female distinction, taking us back to Genesis 1–3. Far from being anomalies within Pauline theology and wider biblical teaching, then, St. Paul's instructions concerning women in public worship draw on and affirm God's ordering of man and woman in the Edenic sanctuary and fit the larger pattern of biblical faith. What is more, in giving these commands, St. Paul would have the Church avoid the same dysfunctions and disordering that characterized the Fall. Accordingly, the divinely given pattern of headship and subordination in marriage and the Church are not a temporary consequence of the Fall that is now "corrected" in some "new order" in the Church where "male and female" no longer matter. Such thinking is, rather, the result of reading Gal. 3:28 out of its baptismal context. The biblical teaching on the Church as "new creation" does not repudiate this created order "in the beginning" (Genesis 1–3) but affirms and restores it.

To unpack this further, this paper takes 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14 as its primary points of departure, demonstrating how St. Paul bases his instruction on order in the Church on the First Article reality of our sexual differentiation as human beings and its right ordering in creation.<sup>21</sup> To that end, it also unpacks God's ordering of the human community in Genesis 1–2 and the serpent's disordering of the same in Genesis 3, and it observes how God redresses that disorder in the institution of Israel's priesthood, the calling of the apostles, and St. Paul's instructions in the above texts. Further, it expounds the true nature of "subordination" as seen within the Holy Trinity and the pattern of Christ and the Church as Divine Bridegroom and Holy Bride as opposed to human analogues of subordination borne of the humanistic (and pagan) habit of casting God/gods in our own image, thus inverting Gen. 1:27. Finally, it evaluates the relevance of Gal. 3:28 to the ordination of women debate, considering the Church as "new creation." The paper is organized as follows:

## 1. Introduction and Summary

### 2. 1 Timothy 2:11–14: Created Order and Public Teaching/Preaching in Worship

#### a. Back to the Beginning: (More on) Order in the Edenic Sanctuary

##### i. Summary

##### ii. Genesis 1–2

##### iii. Recognizing Modern (Gnostic) Notions of Self and (Sexual) Identity

#### b. Back to the Beginning: (More on) Disorder in the Edenic Sanctuary

### 3. 1 Corinthians 14:34–35: Being Subordinate, Not Weighing God's Word in Accordance with Created Order

#### a. Uncreated Order: The Divine Pattern of Headship and Subordination within the Holy Trinity

##### i. 1 Corinthians 11:3

##### ii. 1 Corinthians 15:27–28

#### b. Created Order (in God's Image): Headship and Subordination in the Human Community (Marriage and the Church)

##### i. Summary

<sup>19</sup> I have addressed the broader questions around the meaning of "speaking/silence" in 1 Cor. 14:34 as "weighing/sifting/judging" in "σιγάω, λαλέω, and ὑποτάσσω in 1 Cor. 14:34 in their literary and rhetorical context," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55, no. 2 (2012): 343–64.

<sup>20</sup> Such claims depend on reconstructions of the context that are speculative and that obscure the plain sense of Paul's own rationale for his teaching or ignore it completely (see footnote 29 below).

<sup>21</sup> The New Testament also calls Christians to live subordinate lives within other orders through which they also receive good gifts from God, for example, earthly government (Rom. 13:1, 5; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13), without reference to the created male-female distinction. This distinction proves foundational to divine order in marriage and the church, however. For a fuller discussion see John W. Kleinig, "Ordered Community: Order and Subordination in the New Testament," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 39:2/3 (2005): 196–209.

- ii. Identifying Some Recurrent Distortions in the Debate
- iii. Man and Woman in Marriage as Types of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5)
- 4. Creation and New Creation (and Gal. 3:28): The Church as the Restoration of Created Order
  - a. Galatians 3:28
  - b. The 1 Corinthians 11–14 Unit
- 5. Conclusion

## 2. 1 Timothy 2:11–14: Created Order and Public Teaching/Preaching in Worship

St. Paul grounds His commands and prohibitions on created order, as seen most obviously in 1 Tim. 2:11–14, where he writes:

As to woman, in quietness let her learn with all subordination (ὑποταγῇ). But to teach I do not permit a woman, nor to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain in quietness. *For (γὰρ) Adam first was formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman, having been deceived, came into [a state of] transgression.* (my translation)

St. Paul's commands in vv. 11–12 command women to learn, on the one hand,<sup>22</sup> while forbidding them from “teaching or having authority over a man,” on the other.<sup>23</sup> Positively, all women (like all men except the pastor and head of the Christian congregation; cf. 1 Tim. 3:1–7) are to assume a subordinate (ὑποταγῇ) posture as learners/disciples in the Christian congregation.

In so ordering the Christian congregation, St. Paul follows the pattern of Jesus in calling both men and women to discipleship but restricting the apostolic ministry to men only, whom He sent to carry out the apostolic ministry of preaching and teaching and administering the Sacraments as His representatives (Luke 9:1–2; 10:16; cf. Matt 26:20, 26–29; 28:16–20). According to both Jesus and Paul, then, women may be disciples but not apostles (or their successors, pastors). They may be — indeed must be<sup>24</sup> — learners among God's gathered people, but not teachers of God's gathered people.

Already in 1 Tim. 2:11, then, we see that St. Paul is concerned with “order” and “sub-ordering” within the Christian congregation, which he immediately bases on Adam's creation “first” and Eve's transgression in vv. 13–14. The term ὑποταγή belongs to an important group of taxonomical terminology that features prominently in St. Paul's teaching on order along with its counterpart “head(ship)” (κεφαλή), as seen especially in 1 Corinthians 14 (ὑποτάσσεσθαι); 1 Cor. 11:3 (κεφαλή); and in Eph. 5:22–32 on marriage (both κεφαλή and ὑποτάσσεσθαι). We shall return to these later (see below).<sup>25</sup> Even in 1 Timothy, however, St. Paul uses ὑποταγή again just a few verses later in 3:4, which also proves instructive. There St. Paul likens order in the Church under a pastor/supervisor (ἐπίσκοπος) — to whom learners/congregants are spiritually

<sup>22</sup> In contrast with contemporary Jewish practice regarding Rabbinic instruction, St. Paul included women in the congregation of disciples/learners. Moreover, the jussive “let her learn” goes beyond mere encouragement; it exhorts woman to take up her proper vocation as a disciple of the Lord and His Word. This does not extend to the role of teacher or “overseer” of the congregation, however, as the text makes plain (see below).

<sup>23</sup> The word order is significant: διδάσκειν δὲ γυναῖκι οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός. Although proponents of women's ordination sometimes question the meaning of αὐθεντεῖν, to exercise authority, St. Paul places διδάσκειν, to teach, in emphatic position at the beginning, about which there is no question as to its basic meaning. Moreover, in 1 Timothy διδάσκειν St. Paul twice commands young *Pastor Timothy* to “teach these things [ταῦτα διδάσκει] ... etc.” in 1 Timothy (1 Tim. 4:11; 6:2; cf. 2 Tim. 2:2).

<sup>24</sup> See footnote 22 above.

<sup>25</sup> Besides the noun ὑποταγή and middle verb ὑποτάσσεσθαι “to be subordinate”/“subordinate oneself to someone”, St. Paul also uses the noun τάξις (“order”) from this word-family in these texts (1 Cor. 14:40). This taxonomical language is key also to other “orders” as Kleinig, “Ordered Community,” discusses. This paper, however, limits its discussion to those orders where the male-female distinction plays a definitive part (marriage and church).

subordinate — to a father whose children should likewise “be subordinate.”<sup>26</sup> The Church is, in fact, God’s own “household” (NB. οἶκος // ἐκκλησία in vv. 5, 15) of which He is Father.

Importantly, the term γὰρ (“for” or “because”) establishes the connection between vv. 11–12 and vv. 13–14. What he is about to say in vv. 13–14 is the basis, the reason, for the instruction just given in vv. 11–12.

Just as important — and often underappreciated — is *how* St. Paul cites Genesis 2–3 in these verses. First, in v. 13 he cites God having formed Adam first (πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη). By this simple statement, St. Paul recalls specifically Gen. 2:7 (καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον), the adverb “first” recalling the chronological sequence of Adam’s creation vis-à-vis Eve’s in Genesis 2. To recap: After forming the man (Gen. 2:7), God planted the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8), placed Adam in it “to work it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15), and laid the command upon him not to eat from the Tree of Knowing Good and Evil (Gen. 2:16–17). Only after these things does God create Eve from Adam’s rib as a “helper fit for him” (Gen. 2:18, 20–24). In forming Adam first, then, God made Adam singularly responsible for the command (Gen. 2:16–17). Though also required to observe the command, the woman was not made responsible for it in the way Adam was. Rather, she would receive the divine instruction, thus also its life-giving and life-preserving benefit, through Adam. Genesis 2–3 confirm Adam’s singular accountability for God’s Word in the Edenic sanctuary (see below).

Second, in v. 14, St. Paul holds Eve up as an example for Christian women *not* to follow; that is, they should not, like Eve, assume the spiritual lead in public worship (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3).<sup>27</sup> This is apparent from the way he cites the Genesis 3 narrative. He first states that “Adam was not deceived” (καὶ Ἀδὰμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη), which is not as complementary as it might first appear. If anyone should have had to confess “the serpent deceived me [ἠπάτησέν με]” it should have been Adam, not Eve (Gen. 3:13), since God had charged him with the command! In stating this, then, St. Paul is not so much speculating on Adam’s or Eve’s inner convictions and weaknesses as recalling Eve’s active role in assuming responsibility for the Lord’s command given to Adam in 2:16–17. His following words confirm this: “But the woman, having been deceived (ἐξαπατηθεῖσα), came into [a state of] transgression (ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν).”<sup>28</sup> Here St. Paul first recalls a detail from the Genesis 3 narrative, Eve’s deception, via a subordinate clause (participle) with the same verbal root Eve used. But then comes the main clause and real point: She *came into transgression*. Via this main clause, St. Paul draws the implication and consequence of Eve’s role as the one the serpent deceived in Gen 3:1–6; she “came into [a state of] transgression”

<sup>26</sup> Indeed, St. Paul’s discussion on church order does not cease with 1 Timothy 2’s instructions but extends into chapter 3, giving instruction on who is eligible for the (pastoral) office of oversight in the Church (ἐπίσκοπος) and prescribing qualifications of deacons/deaconesses so that they may also serve with “great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” in their complementary vocations (1 Tim. 3:8–13). Notably, an ἐπίσκοπος is to be the “husband of one wife” (μίας γυναικὸς ἄνδρα) and thus a man. He must also be “apt to teach” (διδασκικόν) — a qualification not required of deacons/deaconesses, since they are not charged with “caring for (ἐπιμελέομαι) God’s household” (the Church) as the ἐπίσκοπος is (1 Tim. 3:4–5). Indeed, he is to care for it as a father and husband directs/manages (προΐστημι) his own family, as one to whom his children are subordinate (τέκνα ἔχοντα ἐν ὑποταγῇ; cf. Titus 1:5–9). St. Paul’s expectation that the ἐπίσκοπος — and not the men and women serving as deacons/deaconesses — be “apt to teach” complements his earlier prohibition against women publicly teaching or having authority over a man in church (1 Tim. 2:12). In Titus 1:5–9 St. Paul gives similar instructions to Titus, whom he charged with appointing πρεσβυτέρους, “elders” — and a synonym for ἐπίσκοπους (cf. Acts 20:17, 28). Again, v. 9 affirms this meaning of “teach[ing]”: “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine [παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ] and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (ESV; cf. 1 Tim. 6:2’s Ταῦτα δίδασκε καὶ παρακάλει).

<sup>27</sup> The linguistic connection between 1 Tim. 2:14 and Genesis 3 is established by Paul’s twofold use of “deceive” (ἀπατάω), recalling Eve’s confession in Gen. 3:13, “the serpent deceived me [Ὁ ὄφις ἠπάτησέν με] and I ate.” Indeed, 1 Tim. 2:14 uses an augmented form (ἐξαπατάω) of the same verbal root in Gen. 3:13 (ἀπατάω). BDAG, s.v. ἐξαπατάω and ἀπατάω, defines the first as “to cause someone to accept false ideas about someth., deceive, cheat,” and the second more simply “deceive, mislead,” indicating that the augmented verb shares the same basic — if intensified — meaning.

Worthy of note is that St. Paul also uses the augmented verb in 2 Cor. 11:3 where he recalls this same event: “But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived (ἐξηπάτησεν) Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (ESV). Just beforehand St. Paul says, “I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ,” whereupon he compares the deception of Eve with the danger of the Christian congregation’s deception by false teachers (2 Cor. 11:2–4). As Bride of Christ, the Christian congregation corresponds to Eve as bride of Adam, the type of the One to come (Rom. 5:14). In 2 Cor. 11:3 as in 1 Tim. 2:14, then, St. Paul holds up Eve as a negative example for the Christian congregation not to follow. Instead, she is to receive her Divine Husband’s true Gospel and not be led astray from it by false teachers.

<sup>28</sup> ESV renders ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν “became a transgressor,” which conveys the pf. tense of the verb quite well (γέγονεν indicating a change of state) but substitutes the prepositional phrase with a noun. As St. Paul articulates it, however, the point is less about *what* she became (though it is of course also true that she “became a transgressor”) than *where* or *in what* condition her being deceived landed her; namely, in the realm or state of transgression, hence outside her divinely-ordered station and vocation. (NIV’s “became a sinner,” while also theologically true, is still wider of the mark). Accordingly, I have rendered it “came into [a state of] transgression” to reflect both the pf. verb and the prep. phrase.

(ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν), having overstepped by assuming spiritual responsibility for the command given to Adam to guard.

Positively, then, St. Paul would have only eligible men lead God's "household," the Church, (1 Tim. 3:1–7; cf. Titus 1:5–9), just as Adam had been charged with responsibility for the divine Word in creation. Consistent with this, St. Paul elsewhere charges Adam (who was culpably silent there "with her" in the garden) as ultimately responsible for the Fall (Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45). Negatively, he would have women avoid the archetypal disorder that Satan brought about with the Fall when he enticed Eve to usurp Adam's role.

As all this makes clear, St. Paul certainly does not base his commands in merely cultural expectations that may be set aside but on a profoundly theological basis.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, v. 13 shows that the divinely created order between man and woman originates with creation and not with the Fall as though headship and subordination were simply an old covenant measure now overcome under the new. Rather, St. Paul calls the new covenant people of God back to God's created order.

### ***a. Back to the Beginning: (More on) Order in the Edenic Sanctuary***

#### **i. Summary**

As the preceding discussion has begun to show, St. Paul's instructing woman to learn "in all subordination" and his "not permit[ing] her to teach or have authority over a man" in worship makes explicit the same realities of headship and subordination expected of Adam and his wife in the Genesis 2–3 narrative. According to New Testament, this order (i.e., male headship and female subordination) applies specifically in the estates of marriage and the Church.

Regarding the order of marriage within the family, God's creation of Adam and his wife establishes the institution of marriage within His ordering of the human community. Marriage is not a human construction but has been established by divine mandate (Gen. 2:24). What is more, the institution of marriage as God created it is itself a type of the marriage between God and His people, between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31–32).<sup>30</sup> Thus marriage of "male and female" made in God's image reflects the proper relationship between God and corporate humanity, restored in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1–2) through Christ the Lamb and Divine Husband of His Bride, the Church (Rev. 19:7). The divinely established order within marriage is thus relevant to the question of the ordination of women because the pastor represents Christ the Bridegroom to the Church as he preaches the Word and presides at the Lord's Supper, "a foretaste of the feast to come" (cf. Rev. 19:7–9). Neither the types (husband and wife, male and female) nor their antitypes (Divine Husband and Holy Bride) are interchangeable but are ordered in relation to each other (see further below).

Regarding the Church, God's charge to Adam and his proper responsibility for the Word (Gen. 2:16–17) identifies Adam as high priest of the Edenic sanctuary. It thus establishes the foundation of Israel's male-only priesthood responsible for teaching the people concerning the holy things and their life before God (Lev. 10:10).<sup>31</sup> He, rather than Eve, is charged with "working" and "keeping" the garden (Gen. 2:15) — the same verbal combination later applied to Levites in the service of the tabernacle (Num. 3:7–8). Liturgically, Christ's calling male apostles and St. Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 2 (and

<sup>29</sup> Besides more feminist readings that consider Paul a misogynist who misjudges matters (e.g., Julie F. Parker, "Blaming Eve Alone: Translation, Omission, and Implications of עֲמָה in Gen 3:6b," JBL 132 [2013]: 732), advocates of women's ordination who claim a higher view of Scripture tend to skirt the issues by paying little attention to vv. 13–14 and resorting to extra-textual speculations about the supposed context in the Ephesus region that they claim limits the scope and applicability of Paul's instructions. Such speculations include Paul's supposed concerns about the Athena cult at Ephesus with its priestesses, or a concern about offending Jews, or otherwise obstructing the Gospel. There is, however, no hint of such concerns here as in, for example, 1 Cor. 9:22. Moreover, given the acceptance of pagan priestesses among Gentiles, it would be odd indeed for the same St. Paul who insisted Gentile men not be made to submit to circumcision before being received as Christians (Gal. 2:11f) to put such a "stumbling block" before the Gentiles if the man-woman order in 1 Timothy 2 were only a temporary requirement for the sake of the Gospel. This is especially so here, for St. Paul reminds his hearers in v. 7 that he "was appointed a preacher and an apostle ... a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

<sup>30</sup> On this see further Adam D. Hensley, "The 'Metaphor' of Marriage in the Bible," *LOGIA* 28, no. 2 (2019): 7–14.

<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the tabernacle furnishings are modelled off the garden. For more on this and the rest of what follows in this and the next section, see Adam D. Hensley, "Redressing the Serpent's Cunning: A Closer Look at Genesis 3:1," *LOGIA* 37, no. 3 (2018): 41–44.

1 Corinthians 14) stand in continuity with this. Although there were women prophets, most famously the judge Deborah (Judges 4–5), they did not assume the liturgical, priestly responsibility of administering the holy things and teaching the people for which Aaron and his successors were solely responsible (Lev. 10:10).<sup>32</sup>

## ii. Genesis 1–2

Genesis 1 gives us the wide-angle picture as God creates and orders the whole world, culminating with humanity. God said, “Let us make man (אָדָם) in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26a), whereupon we read, “So God created man (אָתָּה אָדָם) in his own image, in the image of God he created him (בְּצֶלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ); male and female he created them (זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם). Then follows the “First Commission” in which God authorizes and empowers them to “be fruitful and multiply” by His performative blessing and charges them with dominion over earth’s creatures.

A couple observations are noteworthy for our purposes. First, אָדָם is used in several ways throughout Genesis 1–3. It can function as a generic term for “man” or “mankind” or refer to a singular male person (cf. Gk ἄνθρωπος) whereby its anarthrous form, “Adam,” serves as his proper name as the head of humanity. אָדָם assumes these latter two senses throughout Genesis 2–3 where it often takes the definite article (הָאָדָם) but also stands alone as Adam’s proper name, especially when God speaks to him personally and directly (Gen. 2:20; 3:17, 21). Either way אָדָם refers to the primal man — distinguished from his wife Eve — as the head of the old, fallen human community in Genesis 2–3. St. Paul affirms Adam’s headship when preaching Christ as “the last Adam” (ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ) and “the second man” (ὁ δεῦτερος ἄνθρωπος), the new Head of humanity for the Church, His body (Rom. 5:12–14; 1 Cor. 15:45–49; cf. Eph. 5:23–32). Second, Gen. 1:27 moves from the singular to the plural when describing “man” in God’s image, as the pronouns also show: “In the image of God He created him, male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27 thus affirms man’s creation in God’s image not only individually to affirm the equal worth and inestimable value of every human life (cf. Gen. 9:6), but also corporately as male and female together (and ordered).<sup>33</sup>

Likewise, Genesis 2’s “zoomed in” view powerfully illustrates the complementary nature of the male-female distinction. God forms woman from Adam’s side as “bone of his bone” and “flesh of his flesh” (Gen. 2:23) to be a “helper, his complement” (עֲזָרָה כְּנֶפֶשׁוֹ).<sup>34</sup> She is neither beneath him or above him in dignity, nor of lesser status as a member of the human community. Her equal humanity does not mean their relationship to one another lacks order, however. Indeed, as noted above, Adam is created first and charged with responsibility for the command in Eden rather than she (Gen. 2:16–17). She receives God’s Word from Adam. St. Paul confirms this order in 1 Cor. 11:3, 8–9 (as discussed below).

## iii. Recognizing Modern (Gnostic) Notions of Self and (Sexual) Identity

The Scriptures, therefore, do not conceive of our humanity as something we have separately from our being male or female. We are, according to Gen. 1:27 “male human beings” or “female human beings.” Genesis 2 confirms this reality. Woman is taken out of the man (אָדָם in Gen. 2:23) called Adam. He is not an “it” — some sexless, androgynous “human” but a male human being from whom God forms a female human being.

Yet many today assume the sexual distinction between male and female is secondary to our humanity. We are, the thinking goes, “human” first and then our “maleness” or “femaleness” is a secondary “attribute,” much as “sexual orientation” is often talked about today, or even such other marks of “identity” as ethnicity that one can supposedly define for oneself. This is a

<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the events of Judges 4 and Deborah’s song in Judges 5 shame many of the men of Israel for abdicating their proper responsibilities as men in Israel or acting timidly. Jael killing Israel’s archenemy Sisera instead of Barak exemplifies this, since Barak would not confront Sisera as God had commanded him unless Deborah went with him (Judg. 4:6–9, 18–22; 5:15b–17).

<sup>33</sup> Genesis 1:27’s opening, “So God created man (אָדָם) in His image” also sets the stage for Genesis 2, where אָדָם applies to the first man as differentiated from the first woman, and where he is head and representative of the human community and indeed the source from whom woman and all subsequent generations would come.

<sup>34</sup> Literally the prepositional phrase כְּנֶפֶשׁוֹ means “according to his opposite/what is in front of him.” Concretely, the image is of man and woman facing one another so that man finds his complement in woman; she “completes” him and he her.



peculiarly modern (Western) idea found in feminist thought and, more recently, taken to greater extremes with transgender ideology. While different, to a greater or lesser extent, feminism and transgenderism both deem “male and female” to be human or social constructs and thus subject to redefinition or even rejection, along with any ordering between them. Indeed, transgenderism exhibits the essentially Gnostic notion that our material humanity is subject to inner impulses and feelings that we may have about ourselves, and that these define who or what we truly are. Our bodies must conform to this inner sense of self.<sup>35</sup>

But feminism also tends this way as it deconstructs the biblical order of male and female created in God’s image. A prominent example is the feminist biblical scholar Phyllis Trible, who considers *אָדָם* in Genesis 2 to be a sexually undifferentiated “human” until woman is created later in the narrative; only then is there “man and woman” (*אִישׁ* and *אִשָּׁה*) in any meaningful sense according to her. Of course, the narrative consistently differentiates “the man” (*אָדָם*) from “the woman” (*אִשָּׁה*) later called “Eve” throughout Genesis 2–3 (the *אִשָּׁה* is still called *אָדָם* thereafter), so her argument does not hold up.<sup>36</sup> Most significant, however, is that it illustrates this modern, quasi-Gnostic view that sexual differentiation is something secondary to our humanity, and thus it is comparable in nature to, for example, the social distinction between slave and free.<sup>37</sup> Again, this is profoundly relevant to the ordination of women debate since its proponents sometimes draw parallels between their cause and the abolition of slavery, as though such male-female ordering were, like it, a social, political construct of human making rather than divinely established in creation before the Fall. Similarly, this assumption affects how Gal. 3:28 is understood and applied to the issue (see below).

### **b. Back to the Beginning: (More on) Disorder in the Edenic Sanctuary**

In addition to unsettling the woman’s confidence in God’s Word with his question, “Did God actually say ... ?” by singling her out and speaking to her (*אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה*), the serpent *disorders* the order God had established when He laid the command and responsibility upon Adam.<sup>38</sup> In this way, the serpent entices her to weigh the matter instead of Adam, whom v. 6 says was “with her” (*עִמָּהּ*). She usurped the responsibility with which Adam was charged, later confessing that the serpent deceived her (Gen. 3:13). Meanwhile, Adam abdicated that responsibility and attempted to blame Eve and even God for making her: “The woman whom you gave to be with me” (Gen. 3:12). Accordingly, the serpent succeeded in corrupting the right relationship between God and Adam, between Adam and Eve.

The narrative reinforces this proper, divinely created order throughout Genesis 2–3. As I’ve summarized elsewhere, in Gen. 2:16:

God had commanded (*צִוָּה*) Adam (*עַל-הָאָדָם*) in the masculine singular (*לָא תֹאכַל*). Although the content of the command clearly applies to both Adam and Eve — that is, neither are to eat of this tree — responsibility for it is another matter. Throughout chapters 2 and 3 God repeatedly affirms Adam’s singular accountability for the command. When God seeks his fallen creatures in 3:9 he calls out “to the man” (*אֶל-הָאָדָם*), then asks him in 3:11, “Have you eaten (m. sg.: *אָכַלְתָּ*) of the tree of which I commanded you (m. sg.: *צִוִּיתִיךָ*) not to eat?” Although both

<sup>35</sup> For more information about and incisive analyses of these philosophical and cultural trends see Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*, Crossway Books, 2020; Gene E. Veith, *Post-Christian: A Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, Crossway Books, 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Fortress, 1978). See the summary and critique of John J. Collins, *The Bible After Babel: Historical Criticism in a Post-modern Age* (Eerdmans, 2005): 86–87.

<sup>37</sup> To the extent feminist thinkers still consider womanhood or manhood inherent to one’s creation as a human being, they, unlike transgenderists, are able to distinguish “male and female” ontologically. Yet the feminist project would nonetheless redefine or reimagine how these are ordered in the Church and family. And they must read against the plain sense of Scripture teaching that our maleness and femaleness are gifts given to us by God by which He defines and orders us.

<sup>38</sup> The Hebrew raises a small question as to whether this is a question (interrogative *he*) or an assertion spoken deliberately in Eve’s hearing (“Indeed! God said ...”). Either way its function is the same, however, enticing her to weigh the matter for the human community instead of her husband. Indeed, the serpent’s words epitomize the issue of women’s ordination in which the plain sense of St. Paul’s instructions in 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14 are subjected to the same basic question: Did St. Paul really say *that*? Could he really mean *that*?

have eaten, God addresses the man whom he had charged with the command with a twofold masculine singular *you*. It is not the last time God does this. A little later in v. 17 God lays the responsibility at Adam's feet: "Because *you* have listened [sg.: כִּי־שָׁמַעְתָּ] to the voice of your wife and have eaten [m. sg.: וְאָכַל] of the tree of which I commanded *you* [m. sg.: צִוִּיתִיךָ], 'You shall not eat of it' [m. sg.: לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ]," etc. Again, *you* is masculine singular throughout the verse, as in the original command in 2:16. Adam is accountable for the command in a way that Eve is not, a point confirmed by the absence of any such accountability when God addresses Eve in 3:16...

This emphasis on Adam's accountability for God's command makes it all the more striking when we read 3:1, where the singular gives way to a plural, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat [לֹא תֹאכְלוּ] of any tree in the garden?'" Indeed, the serpent *must change the verb in order to redirect the matter to Eve* for her deliberation, which betrays a more subtle — and for that reason more insidious — deception.<sup>39</sup>

There can thus be no suggestion that the male-female ordering originates with God's words of judgment to the woman in Gen. 3:16, "Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you,"<sup>40</sup> as though this were just an old covenant measure now superseded under the new covenant. This order was there from the beginning, as St. Paul affirms in 1 Tim. 2:13.

### 3. 1 Corinthians 14:34–35: Being Subordinate and Not Weighing God's Word in Accordance with Created Order

In 1 Cor. 14:34–35, St. Paul offers essentially the same instruction on order in the Church as in 1 Tim. 2:11–14, using some of the same key vocabulary (bold) amid other parallels (underlined).

"Let the women in the churches be silent; for **it is not permitted**<sup>41</sup> for them to speak, but let them **be subordinate**,<sup>42</sup> as the law also says. And if they want to learn anything, at home — their own men — let them interrogate; for shameful it is for a woman to speak in church" (my translation, preserving Greek word order).

First, what St. Paul describes as "teaching and having authority" in 1 Tim. 2:12, he here describes as "speaking" and being "silent" — that is, in respect to weighing others' prophetic contributions in the gathered Church (cf. διακρίνω in 1 Cor. 14:29). Thus the essence of the apostolic command is the same as in 1 Timothy 2: Women are not authorized to teach/ weigh, but to subordinate themselves and their own vocal contributions to the weighing of other prophets, just as "the spirits of (true!) prophets" characteristically do (1 Cor. 14:32).<sup>43</sup> Functionally, both find their counterpart in preaching today, as the pastor of a congregation preaches God's Word to the congregation as one called to "rightly divide<sup>44</sup> the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:16). Since preaching involves the public weighing of doctrine and distinguishing of Law and Gospel for the congregation, when doing so, the pastor also publicly exercises the Keys for the edification of Christ's Church (Matt. 16:18–19; cf. John 20:21–23).

<sup>39</sup> Hensley, "Redressing the Serpent's Cunning," 41–42.

<sup>40</sup> Note the parallel language in God's warning to Cain in Gen 4:7, where sin's "desire is for" him (וְאֵלֶיךָ תִּשְׁוָקָה) but he "must rule over/master it" (וְאָחֲזָהּ תִּמְשָׁלָהּ). Similarly, the harmonious headship and subordination that was possible before the Fall is now corrupted by sin, selfishness, etc. Yet the order itself remains intact.

<sup>41</sup> What Paul writes as a divine passive in 1 Cor. 14:34, "it is not permitted" (οὐ ... ἐπιτρέπεται), he writes as a first-person apostolic prohibition in 1 Tim. 2:12, "I do not permit" (οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω).

<sup>42</sup> "But let them be subordinate/subordinate themselves" (ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν); cf. "with all subordination" (ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ) in 1 Tim. 2:12.

<sup>43</sup> For a fuller exegetical discussion of the meaning of 1 Cor. 14:34, see Adam D. Hensley, "σιγάω, λαλέω, and ὑποτάσσω in 1 Cor. 14:34 in their Literary and Rhetorical Context," JETS 55 (2012): 343–64.

<sup>44</sup> Greek: ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας. Concerning St. Paul's use of ὀρθοτομέω in 2 Tim. 2:16, BDAG states, "ὀρθοτομεῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας would prob. mean *guide the word of truth along a straight path* (like a road that goes straight to its goal), without being turned aside by wordy debates or impious talk 2 Tim. 2:15. For such other mngs. as *teach the word aright, expound (it) soundly, shape rightly, and preach fearlessly*." Whatever the precise nuance, the preacher exercises oversight of the congregation with the Word. In Lutheran parlance, he "judges doctrine" (AC XXVIII.21), rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel.

Second, St. Paul's appeal to "the law" recalls his earlier allusions to Genesis 2 in 1 Cor. 11:8–9 (at the beginning of the chapters 11–14 section addressing public worship), where he writes, "For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (ESV).<sup>45</sup> In 1 Corinthians 11, this allusion to the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 served as the basis for St. Paul's instructions by which he qualified women's involvement in public prophecy in the congregation (i.e., under authority [v. 10]). Similarly, in 1 Cor. 14:34, he premises the divine mandate, "It is not permitted for them to *speak*, but let them be subordinate" on the law: "as the *law* also says." While the precise meaning of "law" here has been much discussed,<sup>46</sup> St. Paul's own argument suggests the Torah's teaching on God's creation of man and woman is again in view, as it had been in chapter 11. The divine mandate to "not speak but be subordinate" in 1 Cor. 14:34 thus finds its theological foundation in the ordering of humanity in creation, just as it does in 1 Tim. 2:11–14.

Third, St. Paul's further reason, "for shameful (αἰσχρὸν γάρ) it is for a woman to speak in church," recalls the shame experienced by Adam and Eve before God after their disobedience as something to be avoided in the Christian congregation. Before the Fall in Gen. 2:25, the newly created and rightly ordered man and woman, though naked, were unashamed (οὐκ ἤσχύνοντο); afterward, however, their eyes were open to their nakedness and they hid from God (Gen. 3:7–11). Accordingly, "shame" does not refer to a sense of shame defined by mere social conventions constructed by people, either in Genesis 3 or in 1 Cor. 14:35. Rather, it refers to what is shameful before God (cf. Eph. 5:12) as Adam and Eve, having departed from their rightly ordered relationship to God, creation, and each other, now felt compelled to hide themselves from Him. It was primarily His gaze they sought to avoid rather than one another's as they hid together in the trees, afraid (Gen. 3:8, 10). God also addressed this shame, replacing their home-sewn fig leaf coverings with His own divinely provided garments by which He covered their nakedness (3:21; cf. 3:7). Nevertheless, the cause of their shame — the sin they now knew in their fallen state — would remain a constant threat to the rightly ordered relationship between man and woman for which God had created them. That is what sin does; it opposes God's order and robs us of the original harmony for which we were created. Because of the corruption of man and woman's sinful nature, God's restoration and maintenance of their rightly ordered relationship would meet their resentment (Gen. 3:12) and resistance (Gen. 3:16). Thus St. Paul's warning about shame *coram Deo* remains always relevant to his Christian hearers in every age, for none are immune from sin and the disorder it wreaks on the human community.

This adds yet another reason to understand "the law" in v. 34 in reference to Genesis 2–3. It also demonstrates another way St. Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 echo each other. As noted above, 1 Timothy 2 similarly enjoins the Church to follow divinely created order rather than the disorder manifested in Eve's transgression and Adam's abdication of his responsibility. Further, in the preceding verses (1 Tim. 2:9–10), St. Paul also urges women to godliness (θεοσεβεία) and other such virtues, thereby avoiding their opposite, "shame," about which he warns the Corinthians explicitly here.

Additionally, both texts address the Church in public gathering where the Word of God is under public discussion/proclamation, typically in the worshipping context.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> For a more thorough discussion of this point, see Hensley, "σιγάω, λαλέω, and ὑποτάσσω in 1 Corinthians 14:34," 355–57.

<sup>46</sup> One common suggestion is that it refers to Gen. 3:16, an idea rightly dismissed by Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1153. Quite apart from chapter 11 already clarifying what "law" St. Paul has in mind, such a reference to God's judgement as a result of the Fall could not advance St. Paul's argument against those claiming to be free from gender-differentiated roles in the Church.

<sup>47</sup> All of 1 Corinthians 11–14 concern issues arising in public worship, whether St. Paul is qualifying how women are to comport themselves in the matter of public prophecy/sharing God's Word (1 Cor. 11:1–16; 14:34–35), the importance of clear teaching over obscure tongues (1 Cor. 14:1–25, 27–28), or instructing them about the right use of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17–34). Similarly, in 1 Timothy 2 St. Paul commands public prayers where men pray without quarrelling — that is, together in public worship (1 Tim. 2:1–6).

## **a. Uncreated Order: The Divine Pattern of Headship and Subordination within the Holy Trinity**

### **i. 1 Corinthians 11:3**

Chapters 11–14 of 1 Corinthians concern issues arising in public worship and are “bookended” by St. Paul’s specific instructions pertaining to women. His concern for order is not orderliness of any kind but divinely established order with its foundation in God’s creation of mankind in his image as male and female. St. Paul makes this clear from the beginning of the 1 Corinthians 11–14 unit and underscores it again when it reaches its climax at its end. In 1 Cor. 11:3, he lays out a taxonomy foundational to all that follows: “But I want you to know,” says St. Paul, “that the *head* (κεφαλὴ) of every man is Christ, the *head* (κεφαλὴ) of a wife is her husband, and the *head* (κεφαλὴ) of Christ is God.” This headship of husband — and of those who publicly weigh in the congregation (1 Cor. 14:29b–30, 32) — finds its complement in the subordination of those whom they serve with the Word. Similarly, 14:40 concludes the section, “But let all things be done decently/becomingly (εὐσχημόνως) and according to order (κατὰ τάξιν).”

### **ii. 1 Corinthians 15:27–28**

Nowhere else does St. Paul — or any place in Scripture — concentrate “subordination” language (ὑποτάσσω/ὑποτάσσομαι) more densely than in 1 Cor. 15:27–28 (6x), the very next chapter following his commands concerning order in 14:34–40. These verses speak of God’s subjecting (ὑποτάσσω) all things under Christ’s feet, as St. Paul applies Ps. 8:6 to the Father and Christ: “you have subordinated (ὑπέταξας) all things under his feet.” Importantly, the pattern of subordination here does not apply just to Jesus’ earthly life and humiliation but also now in Christ’s hidden rule over all things as exalted Lord (translation of ὑποτάσσω italicized and underlined):

For “God has put all things in subjection (ὑπέταξεν) under (ὑπὸ) his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection (ὑποτέτακται),” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection (τοῦ ὑποτάξαντος) under him. When all things are subjected (ὑποταγῇ) to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected (ὑποταγήσεται) to him who put all things in subjection (τῷ ὑποτάξαντι) under him, that God may be all in all (ESV).

As I have summarized elsewhere:

Paul unambiguously applies ὑποτάσσω-language to the Son with respect to the Father, just as he had applied headship language to the Father with respect to the Son in 11:3. Clearly, these descriptions apply to the Son futuristically and eschatologically and not merely to his earthly humiliation (cf. Eph 1:10, 20–23). Moreover, that God the Son ‘sub-ordinates himself’ to God the Father fits the broader NT witness. The NT is replete with examples bearing witness to the non-interchangeable roles of the Father and the Son within the life of Trinity that enact the taxonomy spelled out in 1 Cor 11:3 and 15:27–28. According to the NT the Son does not do his own will but the will of the Father who sent him (e.g., Matt 12:39, 42; Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; Phil 2:8). Even the Son’s teaching is not ‘mine’ but the Father’s and by the Father’s authority (Jn 7:16–17). Yet the Son is one with the Father as ‘true God of true God’ (Nicene Creed; cf. Jn 1:1–14; 12:45; 14:10–11).<sup>48</sup>

None of this, of course, is “subordinationism” — that heresy that deems the Son of God lesser than God the Father as to His being. The incarnate Son is not ontologically less or in any way inferior to the Father according to his divinity, but is functionally subordinate in relation to the Father in the economic operation of the Trinity. As the creeds confess, He is equal to the Father with Whom He is one God with the Holy Spirit (“God of God”), even as He does the will of the Father who sends Him (John 6:38–39).

On the other hand, the rejection of headship and subordination — in the Church and in the Holy Trinity — is seriously concerning for a couple reasons. First, such objections to subordination disregard what is clearly biblical teaching,

<sup>48</sup> Adam D. Hensley, ‘Divine blessing and order in marriage and the church,’ *Lutheran Theological Journal* 54, no. 1 (May 2020): 43–59 (here 49).

and thus a major problem for confessional churches for whom the Scriptures are *norma normans* for all matters of faith, doctrine, and life. Second, behind such rejection one often finds an “egalitarian” notion of the Holy Trinity in which the divine persons are functionally interchangeable and indistinguishable as to role, even if such views nominally differentiate between the divine persons by retaining the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.<sup>49</sup>

John W. Kleinig summarizes this point best and shows its importance for the faith and life of the Church when he states:

Thus neither the Father, nor the Spirit, functions as the mediator between God and us. The order of relations in the Trinity determines how all three persons work together with each other in dealing with us. That order sets the pattern for the operation of the Trinitarian dynamic in the life and work of the church.<sup>50</sup>

Kleinig then explains in broad outline how this Trinitarian “order of relations” “sets the pattern” in the Church according to the Scriptures. When describing the exalted Son’s prophetic office according to His threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King, for example, he writes:

The exalted Son of God occupies a prophetic office that did not end with His ascension (Heb 1:1–4). He is still the Father’s spokesman, His mouthpiece. He does not speak His own word, but He utters the powerful, life-giving, judging and saving Word of the Father who sent Him (John 3:34–35; 5:19–30; 7:16; 8:26–28, 38, 40; 12:49; 14:10, 24; 16:12–15). Jesus does not speak on His own authority, but on the authority of the Father (7:16–18; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10). By speaking the word of the Father, He does His Father’s will and performs His work (John 14:10; cf. 5:19–23, 30, 36). He says what the Father commands Him to say, and does what the Father commands Him to do (John 12:49). He passes on the life-giving Word of the Father to the apostles, so that they, in turn, can speak that life-giving Word to others (John 17:8, 14–21) ... [T]his prophetic work did not end with His ascension, for by His return to the Father He included His apostles and their successors in His own prophetic ministry (John 14:10–14).<sup>51</sup>

Headship and subordination are thus inherent to the ministry and life of the Church just as they are inherent to the relationship of the Father and Son within the Holy Trinity, from which it takes its proper nature rather than fallen human analogues.<sup>52</sup>

## ***b. Created Order (in God’s Image): Headship and Subordination in the Human Community (Marriage and the Church)***

### **i. Summary**

Already we have observed how, in the various New Testament texts discussed above, St. Paul makes explicit the pattern and order of headship and subordination already implicit in and inherent to God’s creation and ordering of the human community in Genesis 1–3. From its early chapters through to the apostolic instruction of the Epistles, then, the Bible speaks with one voice about the divinely created order between male and female in marriage and the Church. This he summarized

<sup>49</sup> John W. Kleinig, “The Ordination of Women and the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity,” *Lutheran Theological Review* 10 (1997/98): 48–56 (here 54–55), summarizes the point succinctly:

The ordination of women uncouples this link between the order of the Holy Trinity and the order of the Christian congregation. On the one hand, it is associated with the deconstruction of the Holy Trinity with the rejection of the Father’s headship and the Son’s subordination to the Father. It involves the subsequent reconstruction of the Holy Trinity as an egalitarian community of interchangeable persons. On the other hand, it leads to the loss of spiritual authority by the leaders of the church and delivers the church to the tyranny of fashion, the clash of opinions, and the self-assertive exercise of unauthorized power.

<sup>50</sup> John W. Kleinig, “The Subordination of the Exalted Son to the Father,” *Lutheran Theological Review* 18 (2005–06): 41–52 (here 44).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>52</sup> The NT does not warrant the system of “eternal functional subordination” espoused by Grudem and Ware, whose eternal “authority-obedience” construct distorts the order of relations between the Persons of the Trinity with its connotations of supremacy and authority of the Father over the Son and its disconnection from the sacramental life of the church (e.g., Wayne Grudem, *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism: Biblical Responses to the Key Questions* [Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2006], 233; Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, & Relevance* [Wheaton, IL: Crossways Books, 2005], 21).

most clearly in the 1 Cor. 11:3 taxonomy (Father→Son→Man→Wife), applying it in the Church by enjoining women to embrace their vocation as learners and disciples alongside their fellow laymen as they participate in the Christian congregation (1 Cor. 14:34–35; 1 Tim. 2:11–14). St. Paul also teaches how the divinely created order between male and female applies to the estate of marriage, which we have addressed briefly above and to which we will attend more fully momentarily. First, however, it is important to address some recurrent misunderstandings of headship and subordination that obscure the biblical teaching.

## ii. Identifying Some Recurrent Distortions in the Debate

“Headship” and “subordination” have drawn much criticism in the Western world. The modern imagination — in the West, at least — has been conditioned to hearing these matters negatively. The picture is very different, however, when we understand headship and subordination *biblically*, showing us instead what high and holy callings God's people, both men and women, have in marriage and the Church.<sup>53</sup>

A couple points of clarification are, therefore, important. First, in the above texts, St. Paul does not insist that every woman is subordinate to every man in all circumstances indiscriminately. This is often the caricature, or working assumption, of those who find these verses problematic. The New Testament, however, applies male-female differentiated headship and subordination vocationally within marriage (esp. Eph. 5:22–33)<sup>54</sup> and in the Church (esp. 1 Cor. 14:34–35).<sup>55</sup> Both spheres, in fact, come into view in 1 Cor. 14:34–35, where he redirects the public “weighing of prophecies” not permitted for women in public worship to the private/household sphere where they may interrogate (ἐπερωτάω) “their own men” as much as they like (1 Cor. 14:35). Thus, when we compare New Testament teaching on the spheres of marriage and the Church, headship and subordination does not look exactly the same in each estate.

Second, and most importantly, St. Paul does not take the “schema” of headship and subordination from worldly or cultural analogues. Rather, he draws on the pattern of headship and subordination between the Father and the Son within the Trinity (1 Cor. 15:27–28) and the pattern of Christ and the Church as Divine Bridegroom and Holy Bride (Eph. 5:25–30). He thus calls men and women to live as God created and ordered them within their particular vocation and station in marriage and the Church, practicing the headship and subordination to which God calls them. Anything else (e.g., self-serving or abuse within marriage, viewing headship as “superior,” assuming headship and subordination mean inequality, power games, etc.) distorts the true, biblical picture of headship and subordination. God calls His human creatures to live in His image, not their own! Nor should God's human creatures assume that He is just like them, fallen as we are (Is. 55:8–9; Hos. 11:9).

It would be difficult to understate the importance of this. Picking up where the earlier quote (cited above) left off:

[W]hen in chs. 11–14 Paul applies such taxonomical language to man and woman in the estates of marriage and of the church, then, there is no insinuation of woman's inferiority as though she were a lesser being. Such notions are only possible if we import them at the outset from the tragic distortions around us or from our own distorted notions of hierarchy. But male and female are created in *God's* image, not the other way around. Such human

<sup>53</sup> As Kleinig, “Ordered Community,” 205, states, the apostles' teaching on subordination inverted ancient social values (as it still does today) and epitomizes “the ideal state for the Christian:”

In their epistles St. Paul and St Peter promote a kind of revolutionary subordination that involves a complete reversal of social values. In the ancient world the ideal person was an independent man, with economic resources and political clout, a self-sufficient autonomous person. Yet in the church this is reversed. There the ideal human being is a dependent person, someone who is subordinate and reliant on others, such as a wife or a child or a servant. Thus the church is the bride of Christ; all Christians are children of God and servants of Christ. The ideal state for the Christian is now no longer to be a master, with legally assured status, wealth and power, but to be a servant, free from enslavement to social status, wealth and power (1 Pet 2:16). Subordination has therefore become the normal condition in the church. All Christians are subordinate to Christ (Eph 5:21, 23), to God the Father (Heb 12:9; Jas 4:7), and to the orders that God has established (1 Pet 2:13). So, every Christian is in subordination to someone else. All are under headship and authority. None are self-sufficient and autonomous.

<sup>54</sup> Also Col. 3:18–19; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1–7.

<sup>55</sup> For a fuller discussion of the Apostle's teaching on how God orders Christians' lives in the different estates, see Kleinig, “Ordered Community.”

distortions therefore do not set the pattern. Rather, the perfect union, love, and order between *the Father and the Son within the Trinity* give headship and subordination their proper character in marriage and the church.<sup>56</sup>

Pagan theological thought runs in the other, “upward” direction, making the gods in human images and yielding its many male and female deities in the process. Really all humanistic thinking runs in this upward direction as it imagines God to be “like us” and “in our image.” The point here is that it is just as erroneous — just as pagan — when we allow corrupted human analogues to inform our understanding of headship and subordination and assume this is how it is with God. Similarly erroneous is to reject headship and subordination in the Trinity (1 Cor. 15:27–28) based on such false understandings and to project “upwards” our own egalitarian notions onto the Trinity instead. Yet such upward projection is a deeply embedded habit of mind for us fallen creatures, and it is impossible to escape without the Holy Spirit’s illumination through Scripture, which reveals to us the “otherness” of the uncreated God and calls us to live as His creatures made in His image. Indeed, the Bible does this from the outset: Gen. 1:27 runs downward, teaching that God created mankind in His image and not the other way around. Only by looking at the Triune God may we know the true character of headship and subordination as God orders it.

### iii. Man and Woman in Marriage as Types of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5)

Accordingly, St. Paul patterns the headship and subordination to which he calls husbands and wives on the self-sacrificial love of Christ for His Bride, the Church, and her selfless subordination to Him by which she receives good things from God. This downward, “in the image of God” pattern is seen clearly in St. Paul’s teaching in Eph. 5:22–32, where he calls on husbands to love their wives as (ὡς) Christ loved the Church, since a husband is the head (κεφαλή) of his wife as (ὡς) Christ is the head of the Church (recall also 1 Cor. 11:3). Similarly, “as (ὡς) the Church subordinates herself to Christ, so also (οὕτως καὶ) should wives [subordinate themselves] to their husbands in everything” (Eph. 5:24). Again, his instructions here show that Christ’s love for the Church as her head is the true analogue and pattern for husbandly headship and love, which in turn gives witness (albeit imperfectly since we are sinners) to God’s uniting Himself to His human creatures through the incarnation of Christ and our baptismal union with Him:

Husbands, love your wives, as (ὡς) Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way (οὕτως) husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. (Eph 5:24–30 [ESV])

Again, the comparison consistently runs downward, not upward (as though the relationship between Christ and the Church were merely likened to human marriage). St. Paul then quotes Gen 2:24, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” But rather than apply it to Christian husbands and wives as one might expect him to do given his hortatory purposes in Ephesians 5, St. Paul applies this “great mystery” (μυστήριον ... μέγα) to “Christ and the Church” (v. 32). The real mystery is that we have communion with God because Christ, God made flesh, has become “one flesh” with His Bride, the Church, of which we are members! Only after this does He apply it to Christian husbands and wives by extension (v. 33), the comparison again running downward.

This downward direction of comparison is important for other reasons too. Since it is not upward, St. Paul’s teaching does not give us license to ascribe male-female sexuality to God as paganism does to its gods, since humanity is made in God’s image, not the other way around. Moreover, St. Paul makes clear that, in Christ, the Son of God was incarnate as a man. To return once more to 1 Cor. 11:3, Christ is the head of man and a man the head of his wife, just as the Father is the head of

<sup>56</sup> Hensley, “Divine blessing and order in marriage and the church,” 49.

Christ. The “headship taxonomy” thus runs Father→Son→husband→wife, a wife being in no way inferior to her husband just as the Son is in no way inferior to the Father!

Moreover, in 1 Cor. 11:7 this same taxonomy also runs the other upward direction but to a different purpose. There St. Paul declares that woman is “the glory [δόξα] of man,” and man is “the image and glory [εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα] of God” (Christ being the image of the invisible God [Col. 1:15]).<sup>57</sup> The distinct, complementary vocations of both husband and wife in marriage are, then, glorious in the biblical revelatory sense of the term. The vocation of husband reveals and makes known the self-sacrificial Lordship of Christ, the Divine Husband, who in turn reveals and makes known the Father (John 1:14; 14:6–10). The vocation of wife reveals and makes known the joyful subordination of the Church to Christ as His Bride, through which she faithfully receives God's good gifts from her Lord. As types of Christ and the Church, then, husband and wife post-shadow these just as Adam and Eve foreshadow them.

As noted briefly earlier, this is relevant to the question of whether women are eligible for the pastoral office. The estate of the Church is where the risen and ascended Christ is Himself present to proclaim the Father's Word and preside at the Holy Supper — the foretaste of the Feast to come — as Bridegroom to His Bride the Church. Accordingly, the pastor does not represent himself but Christ, the Bridegroom, for which reason also his masculinity is no matter of indifference.

#### 4. Creation and New Creation (and Gal. 3:28): The Church as the Restoration of Created Order

##### a. Galatians 3:28

Finally, something must be said about Gal. 3:28, since advocates of the ordination of women have often appealed to this text as though it overruled the male-female distinction or introduced a new order to be manifested in the Church as the “new creation.”<sup>58</sup>

This way of interpreting Gal. 3:28 takes it out of its context, however. The issue facing St. Paul in Galatia was the Judaizers' insistence that men be circumcised if they were to receive the Holy Spirit as heirs of God.<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, he says, “there is neither male nor female” because circumcision only applied to men. Judaism knew no female circumcision, only male. The Galatians were denying uncircumcised men their true status as heirs to God's promises unless circumcised, calling into question the sufficiency of their baptism to make them children of God. Ironically, although proponents of women's ordination appeal to Gal. 3:28 to promote the inclusion of women to the pastoral office, it is really about the inclusion of uncircumcised men in the baptized community of the Church.

Most importantly for our purposes, then, in Gal. 3:28 St. Paul is not talking about how the Church and family are ordered but about Christians' common baptismal identity, as the preceding verse makes clear. In v. 27, he says, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, when he does talk about the ordering of the Church and invokes such distinctions as we find in Gal 3:28, he never includes “male and female.” 1 Corinthians 12:12–13 on the Spirit's ordering of the Body of Christ with its many members — central to the 1 Corinthians 11–14 unit noted earlier — is a prime example:

<sup>57</sup> Here we could also add John 1:14 where the Evangelist declares, “We have seen his glory [δόξα], glory [δόξα] as of the only Son from the Father,” thus completing the taxonomy of “glory” in this (reverse) direction: wife→husband→Son→Father.

<sup>58</sup> Such reading of Gal. 3:28 was popularized by the influential work of Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women* (Facet Books; Biblical Series 15; Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1966).

<sup>59</sup> For a full discussion of Gal. 3:28, see John W. Kleinig, “Galatians 3:26–29” (paper for the Lutheran Church of Australia's Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations, 2004; available <https://www.johnkleinig.com/articles-essays>).

<sup>60</sup> Kleinig, “Ordered Community,” 205, writes:

Through baptism and union with Christ each Christian has gained the same royal status and worth. All the saints share the same status as Christ the Son because they are all ‘sons’ of the heavenly king and co-heirs with him Gal 3:26–4:7).



For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (vv. 12–13; ESV)

St. Paul names these other differentiated pairings — Jew/Gentile and slave/free — to proclaim the unity of the body of Christ's different members (cf. vv. 14–17) but also to underscore God's ordering the body as He has determined (vv. 11, 18, 24, 28–29).<sup>61</sup> Such distinctions do not affect the Spirit's ordering of the body of Christ as the “male/female” distinction does, however, as chapter 14 shows (and indeed chapter 11 before it). The ethnic distinction between Jew and Greek has been overcome in Christ, who “has broken down ... the dividing wall of hostility” between circumcised and uncircumcised (Eph. 2:14), which is also the key point about which St. Paul was writing in his letter to the Galatians, as just noted. This ethnic distinction was important under the old covenant as God made Himself personally and locally present in the world through His “son” Israel as His “kingdom of priests and holy nation” (Gen. 17:1–14; Ex. 4:22; 19:5–6). But now Christ the Son is our great High Priest and King through whom all have the same access to the Father (John 14:6; Heb. 1:1–4). Similarly, although the societal/political differentiation between slave/free informed the ordering of ancient households, it has no bearing on the Spirit's ordering of the household of God, the Church.

The male/female differentiation fundamentally differs from both of these, however, since it is founded in God's creation of humanity (Gen. 1:27). Since it is foundational to the right ordering of people in marriage and the Church, then, it is also unsurprising that this distinction finds no mention in 1 Cor. 12:13 or anywhere else. St. Paul is not making the (narrower) point that baptism, not male circumcision, makes men and women Christians as he does in Galatians.<sup>62</sup> On the contrary, as noted above, God creates us male human beings or female human beings. We do not cease to be male and female under the new covenant, and this created distinction does not become a matter of indifference within God's ordering of marriage and the Church; rather, God redeems men and women, restoring them and ordering them aright in Christ.

### **b. The 1 Corinthians 11–14 Unit**

This omission is especially significant in the context of 1 Corinthians 12–14 and indeed the larger unit of chapters 11–14. Not only does this larger unit begin and end with his instructions about women, chapter 14 is climactic for both units as St. Paul buttresses his commands there with appeals to an unprecedented number of authorities.

Woven into the numerous authorities to which he appeals in 1 Corinthians 14 is the appeal to created order via “the law,” as seen above. The other authorities are worth noting for our purposes, too, for a couple reasons. First, they demonstrate how forcefully the Apostle insists that women are not publicly to weigh matters of “prophecy” among his apostolic instructions on right order (1 Cor. 14:40).

<sup>61</sup> The connection between God's ordering the body in chapter 12 and His ordering of men and women in the Church in chapter 14 is clear for a couple other reasons, in addition to the fact that these chapters “bookend” the rhetorical unit of chapters 12–14. First, St. Paul's rhetorical questions in 12:29, “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Etc.” pre-empt 14:26 where St. Paul begins his instructions about tongues, public prophecy, and women's involvement. In 14:26 he describes the Corinthian situation in which everyone lays claim to all gifts whether God has actually apportioned them or not: “What then brothers? When you gather together *each* has a psalm, *has* a teaching, *has* a revelation, *has* a tongue, *has* an interpretation ...” (repeating the redundant *has* [ἔχει] to underscore the point). The rhetorical questions of 12:29 make it plain, however, that not all gifts are given to each! Second, when in chapter 12 St. Paul lists the gifts that the Spirit apportions, he follows up “prophecy” (προφητεία) with “the ability to distinguish/weigh spirits” (διακρίσεις πνευμάτων). This terminology is echoed clearly in chapter 14, where St. Paul both places a limit on how many “prophets” (προφῆται) may speak (two or three) and stipulates that such prophetic utterances be weighed by “the others” (οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν) (12:29).

Herein lies an important functional distinction by which St. Paul orders the disordered Corinthian church, expressed also in v. 32's axiom that “the spirits of prophets (πνεύματα προφητῶν) to prophets (προφῆταις) subject themselves (ὑποτάσσεται)” (v. 32). Indeed, St. Paul distinguishes functionally between general “prophetic” speech and “prophecy” that weighs/discerns/sifts what is said and to which true prophets ought willingly subordinate themselves. When St. Paul commands the women not speak but be subordinate (ὑποτασσέσθωσαν) in vv. 34–35, then, it is with respect to prophetic speech that functionally weighs or judges general prophecy. Far from imposing a blanket silence on all speaking (a *reductio ad absurdum* argument often heard in the debate), St. Paul enjoins the women to subordinate themselves and what they say to the judgment of those who weigh all “prophecy” in the Christian congregation and not undertake such doctrinal oversight (to use the Lutheran term) themselves. He is therefore also calling them to the proper, subordinate disposition of all true prophets just described in 14:32. See further Hensley, “σιγάω, λαλέω, and ὑποτάσσω.”

<sup>62</sup> Galatians 3:28 is unique among such texts where St. Paul nullifies these kinds of distinctions (cf. also Col. 3:11 and Rom. 10:12).

Second, some of them demonstrate the points made variously above. For example, St. Paul first premises his commands in v. 34 on the practice of “all the churches of the saints” (Ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων), announcing at the outset that his commands to the Corinthians are no local measure even as the specific problems that occasioned these commands were local to Corinth. In so ordering the Corinthian church, St. Paul appeals, rather, to what is true of the Church everywhere, God’s “new creation” throughout the world. Second, as noted earlier he uses the divine passive, “they are not permitted to speak” (1 Cor. 14:34); that is, God does not allow them to speak. The same God thus orders His human creatures throughout Genesis 1–3, 1 Corinthians 12, and 1 Timothy 2 (besides the many other places in Scripture where God orders the lives of His people). Third, he calls on all who consider themselves “prophets” or “spiritual” to acknowledge (ἐπιγινώσκέτω) that “the things I write (ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν) are the Lord’s command” (1 Cor. 14:37). Two points are especially significant here. The definite plural (“the things”) shows that the Lord’s command is not reduceable to the singular “love command” in 1 Cor. 14:1 — or any one imperative verb — but identifies all St. Paul’s collective instructions just “written” as “the Lord’s command.”<sup>63</sup> Further, he recalls the terms he used in 14:32 to describe true prophets: “the spirits of prophets to prophets subordinate themselves.” By doing so, St. Paul calls all the Corinthians — especially those who claim special insight into these matters — to subordinate themselves to the prophetic (and apostolic) judgment that he himself has just rendered (14:37). On the flipside, anyone who does not acknowledge (ἀγνοεῖ) the things he has written as the Lord’s command “is disregarded/ignored [ἀγνοεῖται]” (14:38).

## 5. Conclusion

St. Paul’s instruction concerning men and women in public worship prohibits a woman from “teaching or exercising authority over a man” (1 Tim. 2:12) and publicly “weighing prophecy” (1 Cor. 14:34), core functions of the pastoral office in overseeing God’s household, the Church (1 Tim. 3:1–5). In both texts the Apostle’s commands are not local measures premised on changing cultural values or religious ones now “overcome” in the Church as “new creation.” Rather, St. Paul bases them on the created order God established between man and woman in the beginning, drawing on the early chapters of Genesis. On the other hand, Gal. 3:28’s “neither male nor female” serves St. Paul’s teaching that baptism is sufficient to make a person a child of God and heir of His promises. It does not repudiate the created distinction between male and female or render it a matter of indifference for divine order in the Church.

Today the Church receives this teaching in the face of opposing cultural forces, widespread confusion about “male and female,” and a neo-Gnostic rejection of the body and sexual differentiation as divinely created gifts that define us as human beings. This should not surprise us, for the New Testament is often countercultural in its teaching. Yet the Church rejoices to receive the teaching of her Lord in everything (Eph. 5:24), saying with St. Peter, “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). For the Lord orders the lives of His people in order that they may receive His blessings and good gifts. This goes especially for the Church, where the Gospel is proclaimed and enacted. There, through those whom He has authorized to teach, preach, and administer the Sacraments publicly, the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, is personally present among His people, bringing the Father’s life-giving Word and Holy Absolution to them (Matt. 16:19; 26:26–29; 28:19–20; John 20:21–23; 1 Cor. 11:23–25; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Tim. 4:11ff; 6:2ff; 2 Tim. 4:2–5; et al.; AC V, XIV).

<sup>63</sup> Contra “A theological basis for the ordination of women and men: background to the draft doctrinal statement,” 5, which claims: “The command of the Lord’ (1 Cor. 14:37) is Jesus’ love command,” that is, “the expansive love command that constantly gives rise to fresh initiatives that nurture the church’s internal growth and promote its external expansion.”

# Women's Ordination

## Government and Culture Ruling in the Place of Christ and His Apostles

*Rev. Dr. David P. Scaer*

Thank you for inviting me to participate in the discussion as a confessional Lutheran church body like the Lutheran Church in Korea faces the problem of the ordination of women as pastors. I have divided this presentation into two parts: (1) the current state of feminism of which the ordination of women is a part, as well as how and why Lutheran churches came to ordain women pastors, and (2) the ministry of Jesus in choosing only men to be apostles.

### **The How and Why of the Ordination of Women**

Few teachings and practices are as divisive among Lutherans as the ordination of women as pastors, a practice that has opened the door in all churches to other practices (e.g., whether the church may bless same-sex marriages, as is being proposed by Catholic bishops in Belgium). A fundamental problem is whether God can be spoken of in feminine terms in our prayers and preaching. If so, then the first person of the Trinity can be understood and addressed not only as “Father” but also as “Father-Mother,” which is already happening. So in the Lord’s Prayer, “our Father” can then be replaced by “our Father-Mother,” and the name of God revealed by Jesus as “Father-Son-Holy Spirit” finds a substitute in “God-Christ-Spirit,” and so the ordination of women has already led to a different understanding of God than what is revealed in the Scriptures.

The ordination of women has no support in the tradition of church practice going back to apostolic times. There were simply no women pastors or priests. Lutherans ordaining women as pastors is of very recent origin with the first woman ordained in the 1950s. At that time, Lutheran churches throughout the world did not know of the practice, and much effort had to be expended to convince parishioners that this was an acceptable practice. When it was first instituted, it was ignored and resisted by the people, but it is now commonplace. By any definition, the ordination of women was an innovation doing away with nearly 2,000 years of church practice, and the innovation came with serious consequences regarding how we think of God and how men and women relate to one another. It is a repudiation of Genesis 1–3 of how God created Adam and Eve and how they are related to one another. At the time the institution of the practice in Lutheran churches was up for discussion, the well-known confessional Lutheran scholar Peter Brunner of Heidelberg University predicted with accuracy that, should women be ordained as pastors, how we understood God would be permanently and drastically changed, and year after year he has been proven to be right.

The current major proponent of ordaining women is the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The ordination of women has become the new orthodoxy and replaced the older view that only men, but certainly not all men, can serve in the ministry. The LWF presumes that its member churches ordain women or that they soon will. It is no longer a topic of discussion in

the LWF, which can now be headed by a woman, but it is assumed that the ordination of women is now necessary practice. In the pastoral epistles, Paul laid down certain specifications for pastors, one of which is that they had to be men. Women could not be given this office. The feminism that has taken over some Lutheran churches has not only led to ordaining women and a different understanding of God, but arguments used to allow the ordination of women have also been used to allow the ordination of homosexuals and lesbians and even placed them in places of church leadership. Women serve as bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), its subsidiary synods, the state-related churches of Scandinavia and Germany and can even serve as president of the LWF. The code for this is the LGBTQ+ movement. Sexual orientation is no longer a factor in who may become a pastor.

Approaching 87 years of age, I will be so bold as to present myself as a chronological gauge of how things have changed in the life of one person. I was born in 1936, and until I was in my mid-twenties, no women served as pastors in any of the mainline churches, including the Reformed, Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican communions. Pentecostals and other fringe groups who did not have a carefully outlined doctrine of the ministry allowed women to preach, as both men and women in their assemblies could claim that they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Anyone claiming to be moved by the Holy Spirit could speak at will during the church service, as was the case in Corinth. Charismatic groups in the apostolic and post-apostolic churches allowed women to preach, a practice that was condemned. It was not a matter of disorganization in having two or more persons preaching at the same time. Rather, it was against what God established in Genesis: that Adam was the preacher and Eve was the congregation.

Today things are drastically different from the time of my youth, and the change has come with equally drastic speed. The collateral damage in feminizing our practice and doctrine has been catastrophic. When I was ordained into the ministry, no one in any Lutheran church in America thought of ordaining women, unless it was those who were keeping their intentions private. Now at the conclusion of my ministry of 60 years, the tables are turned, and in some seminaries, women constitute the majority of entering students. We are not far off from the time when they will constitute the majority of clergy. All of these developments can be supported by neither the Scriptures nor the nearly two millennia history of the church. Jesus taught men and women, but He prepared only men — the twelve disciples — and not all men to be His apostles.

## How Did It Happen?

The practice of ordaining women did not come about by a congregation, a group of congregations like a synod or some theologian looking into the tradition of the ancient church and finding something in it that previous generations overlooked. Ordaining women also did not come about by biblical research. It was not a Luther-like experience by which his reading of Romans and Galatians proved that Roman Catholic practice — such as the idea that selling indulgences or paying for masses could free the dead from the pangs of purgatory — stood at odds with the biblical doctrine of justification by grace. Even though Lutherans were and are very careful to show that what they believe is derived from the Scriptures, Melancthon in the Augsburg Confession carefully demonstrated that what the Lutherans taught about justification was within the universal, that is, catholic tradition of the church and that they quoted the church fathers to prove it. Just as there is no biblical support for women pastors in the Scriptures, there is also no support in the nearly 2,000-year history of the church. Neither was anything written in any of the Lutheran Confessions or in the writings of the 16th and 17th orthodox Lutheran dogmatists that women should be ordained.

In terms of how the church measures time, the impetus for the ordination of women is recent; not even sixty years have passed since the first woman was ordained, and women thus began serving as preachers and the leaders of the liturgy in Lutheran congregations. But ordaining one woman opened the flood gates, and where once no women were ordained, it is now common practice in all the mainline churches, except the churches of the International Lutheran Conference (ILC),

the Eastern Orthodox churches and perhaps the Southern Baptists. Momentum in the Catholic Church, especially in Europe, has been building.

For those who are closer to 90 years of age rather than they are to 80, it is almost as if the ordination of women happened yesterday, and in a way, it did. Within cultural environments in which all occupations are open to women, the practice has spread like wildfire. If a woman can run for president and serve as vice-president of the United States and its Supreme Court, there can be little reason that she cannot be a pastor, so the reasoning goes. It is now so widespread among Lutheran churches and other mainline Protestant churches — such as the Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians — that the churches in the ILC that do not have women clergy are seen as out of step with the times. Those who manufacture ecclesiastical attire for the clergy have accommodated themselves to the time. Look at their catalogs, and you will find women dressed in cassocks, chasubles and copes. Look at any church painting before the 20th century, and you will find only men in ecclesiastical garb. Again, let it be said that at the present time, the number of women students studying for the ministry in seminaries of the mainline churches equals or exceeds the number of men enrolled. Should these statistics remain constant, the number of women in the ministry will eventually exceed that of men.

### **Details on How It Happened**

All this began when legislation was passed by the left-leaning Socialist governments at a time when the principle of equality was in the political air. In 1938, the Swedish parliament passed a law allowing that women be ordained, but giving congregations the right to reject them. About twenty years later, the parliament insisted that the congregations accept women pastors that the church authorities assigned to them. This was not something the people in the congregations asked to have. (Let it be noted that since its founding, the ELCA had a modified episcopal structure in that the regional bishops appointed pastors for its congregations, which had the right to reject the nomination of the bishop twice, and then the congregation had to accept the third nominee, who was often a woman, which for reasons of conscience the congregation did not want.) Again it must be said that the practice of ordaining women did not arise from congregations, churches conventions, synods, conferences of pastors or theological faculties themselves, but it came from parliaments or other legislative bodies whose members were chosen by a political party and who were not necessarily Lutheran or even Christian. Only later did Lutheran synods in America follow suit, since they saw themselves as part of the same fellowship.

This arrangement in Europe between the civil rulers and the church goes back 1,700 years when kings, princes and towns who were financially supporting the church took upon themselves certain prerogatives in how the church should conduct its affairs, ones that in the New Testament belonged instead to the people and their pastors. Rulers involved themselves in who should serve as priests and bishops and how the liturgy should be worded. (An aside: Pope Francis has given the right to the Communist government to nominate bishops in China.) Until Constantine became the emperor of the Roman Empire, Christianity was an illegal religion. This was because, unlike other religions, it did not allow Christians to worship the emperor as divine. In Rome, the worship of the emperor was like the pledge of allegiance that was required of all citizens, but that respect also required acknowledging the emperor was God. Without himself at first being baptized, Constantine legalized Christianity, and it was soon afterward made the official religion of the empire. Constantine became instrumental in building churches, appointing bishops and summoning church councils, such as the Council of Nicea that formulated the core of our Nicene Creed. The Roman Empire embraced an area of land roughly coterminous with modern Europe, and about 100 years after Rome fell to the barbarians, it was reconstituted in the year 800 as the Holy Roman Empire. There, its emperor and his vassal kings and princes assumed rights to how the church was to be administered and bishops appointed. Only those baptized as Christians could be citizens of the empire, an arrangement that is still called Constantinian Christianity.

This was the world in which the Luther lived and in which his Reformation took place. Luther's famous "here I stand" confession was made before Emperor Charles V and the members of the parliament that constituted the empire in 1517.

His followers presented the Augsburg Confession to the same group in 1530. In the 1555 Peace of Augsburg, princes and certain cities were allowed to make their territories Lutheran, while some remained Catholic. The situation was similar in England and Scandinavia, and as was often the case, kings used the bishops to further their own interests. This would have devastating consequences for Lutherans. In 1617, Lutheranism came close to being abolished in Brandenburg, of what is now northeastern Germany and eastern Poland, when the Prince Elector chose to exercise his right over the church and attempted to merge Lutheran congregations with the Reformed but failed.

Two centuries later, his successor Frederick the Great, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the Reformation in 1817–1830, succeeded in merging the majority Lutheran population with the minority Reformed population into one church. It was known as the Evangelical Church, and its hymns and liturgical forms compromised Lutheran doctrines, especially the Lutheran understanding of the Lord's Supper as Christ's body and blood. Because of his aggressive political agenda, Frederick the Great absorbed many of the smaller principalities into what is now the modern nation of Germany, and the Lutheranism that emerged in the Reformation was so compromised that it never regained its Reformation status. Even today non-Catholic Germans call themselves *evangelisch*, which is more like our word "Protestant." The word *Lutherisch* is virtually an unknown word to many Germans.

The ordination of women finds its roots in the Age of the Enlightenment when the rights of kings and the church were denigrated, and modern democratic ideas were born, as was evident in the French Revolution and that climaxed in the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. In subsequent years, the authority that kings had in religious matters slipped into the hands of elected parliaments, whose members were more and more committed to establishing democratic principles with regard to how the churches in their countries should be organized and worship. After World War I, democracy was in the air, and governments fell into the hands of Socialist, left-leaning politicians whose sense of equality led them to pass laws allowing women to serve as pastors along with men.

### **Government and Culture's Incursion into the Church**

Thus, in any discussion about whether women should be ordained as pastors in churches that do not have the practice now, it is fundamental to consider that the decision to ordain them was made not on the basis of biblical study and theological principles. It was made by governments that were influenced by the principles set forth in the Age of Enlightenment and perfected in World War I, decisions in which the power of monarchs gave way to so-called democratic principles exercised by elected parliaments. In hindsight, in a world in which all were considered equal, it is evident that the ordination of women pastors would be inevitable. Since its origins and mandates came from the government, the practice was as unacceptable then as it is now. In reviewing the acceptability of ordination of women, we are accommodating an issue raised by the government and not by the church. Then, we can only respond that Caesar has no rights in the church, but for the sake of those churches who have adopted the practice, we still have to respond to what has no support in the Bible, in the history of the church from the apostolic period to the present, and especially in the Lutheran Confessions and its dogmaticians.

The first legislative action allowing women pastors was made by the Norwegian parliament in 1938, which had previously been a part of the kingdom of Denmark. Before that, Norway had been part of Sweden, so the people had a heightened sense of their independence. For nearly 20 years, Norwegian congregations were given the right to reject women who were appointed by their bishops to be pastors. This right was taken away in 1956. Even then, the people resisted, and the first ordinations of women in a Lutheran church happened five years later in 1961. It is remarkable that for nearly a quarter century, the people resisted accepting a woman pastor.

Eventually, however, their resistance fell, and soon women pastors were allowed in Denmark and Sweden and (not surprisingly) by the Communist-led governments of the German Democratic Republic (DDR) and Czechoslovakia. Lutheran synods in America would soon follow suit. In the 1950s, the seminaries that would later constitute the ELCA began

admitting women into the regular academic programs leading to certification for the ministry and ordination. It happened that upon their graduation seminary faculty members who favored the ordination of women took the opportunity to propose their ordination. The first was the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and was soon followed by the Lutheran Church in American (LCA), both churches that would eventually constitute the ELCA. Each synod took up the measure at their respective 1970 plenary conventions and endorsed it. As the press reported that there was little or no theological discussion at the ALC convention, nearly half of the delegates — a five-to-four margin — opposed it, much closer than was anticipated. At future conventions, there was no opposition. At its 1969 and 1971 conventions, the LCMS expressed its opposition on the grounds that it was not biblical.

Opposition to ordaining pastors in Europe has come to an end long ago with the deaths of Bishop Bo Giertz of Sweden as well as Bishop Hermann Dietzfelbinger of Bavaria, who stood against his own church convention. Opposition to ordaining women in the ELCA is nihil. In Sweden, those opposing the ordination of women were at first allowed into the ministry without endorsing the practice, but now those who oppose the ordination of women are required to be ordained in the same church services in which women candidates are also ordained, thus compromising their belief that only men should be ordained. As mentioned, in the LWF, the ordination of women is presumed. It is now established dogma and not open for reevaluation.

Here in America the government exercises no control over who may be ordained, but the overarching culture in which we live sees fewer and fewer differences between men and women, and their functions are regarded as interchangeable. Soon may come the day when the churches that do not give women the same advantages given men, such as ordination, will be financially punished by the government in losing their tax exemption. Since the ordination began as a government action and not a church decision, there are no agreed upon reasons for its practice. Some scholars are up front in acknowledging that Paul was against the practice. But in our context, what Paul or any other biblical writer has to say about the place of women serving in the church and their relationship to men or other women no longer matters. His condemnations of homosexual relationships are also brushed aside. In response, we say that in his opposition to women preachers, Paul was going against the prevailing Greco-Roman culture in which women had prominent parts in religious life, particularly in Rome, where they served as vestal virgins and occupied a status of honor next to the emperor himself and with him were highly revered. As such, one can speculate with good reason that women who served as priests in the pagan religion could perform a similar service in the church.

There is no one reason offered for women being ordained, and the one reason they take from Paul — that there is no difference between men and women — is unsatisfactory, since this passage in Galatians does not address the Office of the Ministry. At the present time, gender equality has morphed into gender interchangeability, and so biblical and theological reasons for the practice no longer have to be offered. If men can become women and women can become men, any prohibition against ordaining women has no meaning.

### **Biblical Evidence: Jesus Establishes the Ministry**

Many dismiss as irrelevant the passages found in Paul's epistles that disallow the practice of women's ordination. 1 Timothy was not written by him, so some modern commentators claim, and so what he says in 2:12 — that a woman should not teach — has no authority for the church. They also say that 1 Cor. 14:33–37 was not part of the original epistle but was inserted later, even though there is no manuscript evidence for such a view. More honest are those who acknowledge that Paul opposed women ministers but assert that what he said is no longer valid for us. Thus, it is no longer only governments in Europe, but also the overwhelming force of culture exercised on church life in America and abroad, that requires their churches to ordain women. Likewise, it was not unexpected that practicing lesbians and homosexuals are now being ordained and that Lutheran churches that ordain women pastors will soon bless same-sex marriages. In some churches, this is already being done, and the ELCA is expected to take this route at its next national convention.

The world in which Jesus lived was shaped by the Old Testament in which women did not serve as priests in the temple, and after the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., they did not serve as rabbis. Under the influence of Christian churches that ordain women, women now serve as rabbis in liberal and some conservative, but not orthodox, synagogues. There is no Hebrew word for "priestess." Women who were preaching in Corinth and other New Testament churches (e.g., those churches that were entrusted to Timothy's care) were doing so in those churches that had a majority Gentile membership, since it was common among the pagans. It was not found in congregations whose membership was predominantly Jewish, like those in Jerusalem.

One must also look at how Jesus established the ministry. While Jesus called men, women and children to faith, including the most recently born infants, He appointed specific men as apostles (Matt. 10:1–2). In reading the gospels, it soon becomes obvious that women are more likely to be presented as paragons of faith than are the men. Those who are chosen by Jesus as disciples, who were to be His apostles, are often pictured as weak in faith and at first do not understand what He is saying, even when He was speaking of His resurrection.

Take Mary, the mother of Jesus, as an example of faith. She immediately accepts her role to become the mother of God, and when she tells Joseph, he does not believe her and contemplates divorcing her until he is convinced by the angel of the Lord. Later, while the disciples flee from Jesus at His trial and crucifixion, the women, including his mother, remain at His side until His death and follow His body to the tomb. While the disciples remain behind locked doors because of the fear of Jews, the women venture out at sundown on Saturday to buy ointments to complete His burial. Then they make their way through the darkness of the early morning of the third day to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, only to find His body missing. In so doing, they become the first witnesses of His resurrection.

If faith and the intensification of commitment are the only qualifications for the apostleship and then subsequently for the ministry, Jesus should have chosen the women as apostles, but He did not. Each of the gospels, and I will choose Matthew, makes a clear distinction between the disciples or apostles and the other followers of Jesus. They are the ones to whom Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1–2). They are listed by name in Matt. 10:1–2, where their obligations are set down. The disciples are the ones who are told by the women to meet Jesus in Galilee where they are commissioned as apostles (Matt. 28:7, 10, 16–20).

This argument that the ministry is given to the apostles can also be traced in the other gospels. Take, for example, John 21 in which Jesus sets aside Peter and the other disciples for the ministry. What is striking in Mark is that Jesus gave special instruction to the disciples that He did not give to the people: "With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything" (Mark 4:33–34). Churches who ordain women can no longer consider themselves apostolic churches because they have no support for doing this. They are contravening Paul's admonition that they should not let women preach, and equally important, they are not following the example of Jesus, who in establishing the ministry in the apostles chose only men.

What is often overlooked in the discussion of the ordination of women pastors is the Genesis accounts of creation and the fall into sin (Gen. 3:1–2), which Paul establishes as the reason that women should not preach, that is, be ordained as pastors (1 Tim. 2:12–14). In the original creation, there was no division between what was religious and what was secular, what we Lutherans would call the two kingdoms. In their ordinary existence, Adam and Eve were God's creation, and in every moment of their lives, they were to acknowledge Him as their creator. In this arrangement, Adam was to be the preacher and Eve the congregation. Her first step in the wrong direction was engaging in a conversation with the serpent, for which she was not equipped. It was to Adam and not to her that God spoke, and so qualified him as a preacher. What she knew of the conversation between Adam and God was second hand. She was not chosen as the spokesman of that first community of man and woman, and so she was not equipped to speak about it. That might be the reason that Paul said that she was deceived.



The ordination of women is only the tip of a larger iceberg. Underneath the iceberg are different understandings of God and human beings, and this has led to seeing differences between male and female as expendable. Some churches have gone beyond ordaining women to ordaining practicing homosexuals, lesbians and transsexuals. If what Paul says about women not preaching was applicable only in his cultural context, then what he says about other things in other places is not applicable to our situation. The authority of the Scriptures has been comprised and its inspiration denied.

### **Church Tradition**

Before a church adopts any new practice, it should look at and assess what the church has done in previous years and even centuries. The unanimous church tradition from the days of apostles until the late 1930s is that only men qualified by other pastors can be ordained as pastors. There is no restriction on the blessings with hands in any number of situations, such as confirmation, marriage and at the beds of the sick and dying. Such was the ministry of Jesus who laid His hands on the sick, and we should do it also. The laying on of hands in the rite of ordination, however, is another matter, since Paul says that we should do it with caution (1 Tim. 5:22). He also said women cannot teach, and since apostolic time the church has understood this to mean that they cannot be ordained as pastors. We are not the first to face the ordination of women. Sometime in the second century, the pseudepigraphal document known as the Acts of Paul and Thecla surfaced as reputedly coming from Paul. Because of its claim to be written by Paul, its content had to be evaluated before it could be recognized as canonical and binding with the same authority as other documents claiming to be of apostolic origin. Apostolic origin determines a document's biblical authority. Since it presented Paul as having women baptize and preach, a right that Paul specifically denied to them in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy (i.e., documents that were recognized as authentic), it was rejected as forgery. In the third century, a heretical group known as the Montanists, who claimed special revelations from the Holy Spirit, also allowed for women preachers. They were not unlike today's Pentecostals in claiming that the Holy Spirit gave direct revelations to believers that took precedence over anything the Scriptures had to say.

Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox communion, which constitute about three quarters of Christendom, do not ordain women. Some Catholics are advocating for it, however, under pressure and influence of an ever-increasing feminist culture. Such mainline churches as the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Episcopalians and the United Church of Christ already ordain women, and even a conservative group like the Southern Baptists are under feminist influences to ordain them in the future. Any church that ordains women no longer stands in the apostolic tradition since what they do contradicts what Paul said and how Jesus and the apostles conducted their ministries.

This means that the churches that comprise the ILC remain in the apostolic, catholic tradition in that they teach and practice what was commonly and universally believed and practiced without coming up with innovations in doctrine and practice. This is precisely the way in which the Lutherans presented themselves in 1530 to the emperor and the Roman Church of that day in the Augsburg Confession. No better model is laid out before us than the one set forth by the Augsburg Confession in which every doctrine taught by the Lutherans and their practice not only had biblical support but had precedence in the Early Church fathers and later church theologians. Such support for the ordination of women is completely lacking.

At an LWF-sponsored conference of women clergy, Nigerian theology lecturer Hauwa Hazael Madi said, "Man or woman, both have a common value, both were created in the image of God." Having a common value is true enough in speaking how we, men and women, stand before God in being judged as sinners and being judged as righteous in Christ, but it is not true in how we were created and for what functions we were created. Adam possessed the image of God directly from Him in His creation, and in her being taken out of the side of Adam, Eve possessed the image of God from him and through him. This meant that Adam and Eve possessed a common humanity, but not in a way that there were two human races, one male and one female. There was only one "mankind" or "humankind," but man and woman each had and continue to have separate functions that are derived from how each was created and what each was to do. Fathers are not and cannot

become mothers, and mothers are not and cannot become fathers. Their functions are not interchangeable; men cannot become women, and women cannot become men.

Every church service is a replication of how God created man and woman in Genesis. When a woman leads the worshiping congregation and preaches, the original order — set down in Genesis 2 and restored and reflected in the imagery of Christ and His church — is disrupted, and the Gospel of salvation is compromised. Left unchecked, it eventually deteriorates to the point that another entirely different gospel is put in its place. This can be a slow, deteriorating process, but its conclusion is that differences between men and women no longer matter. In the case of the United Church of Christ (UCC), this sexual confusion presents itself as the gospel. Plymouth Congregational Church, the local UCC church in Fort Wayne, Ind., says of itself, “As a progressive Christian community, we understand the gospel as calling us to affirm LGBTQ people, work for justice and peace, care for the planet, and partner with others here and around the world in mission.” There you have it.

## Women's Ordination<sup>64</sup> and the Doctrine of Scripture

*Rev. Dr. Roland Ziegler*

Thank you for the invitation to participate in this consultation. I was asked to present a paper on women's ordination and the Third Article and "the Spirit's gift of the Holy Scriptures as inspired, inerrant, and authoritative for all doctrine and living, as it bears on women's ordination."

The thesis of this paper is: The acceptance of women's ordination is based on a false understanding of Scripture and ultimately leads to a destruction of the authority of Scripture. An acceptance of Scripture as plenary verbally inspired, on the other hand, is ultimately incompatible with women's ordination.

In the debate on women's ordination, one point of view is that there are good Christians who are committed to Scripture and uphold the authority of Scripture on both sides. They still disagree because they have different hermeneutics. I have heard that in discussions, and the feeling at the end was, "Well, it is a hermenutical question." This seemed to be the stalemate. As the discussion in some Lutheran churches shows, the discussion on women's ordination can go on for decades without a solution.<sup>65</sup> Neither side can convince the other. How is such a situation to be interpreted? Does it mean that the Word of God cannot settle this question? Is the difference incompatible views of hermeneutics? Or is the difference not only a hermeneutical one, but fundamentally one of the doctrine of Scripture?

In this paper, I will first look at proponents of women's ordination and how they describe the hermeneutical issues related to this question. I will give a summary of a Lutheran hermeneutic that upholds the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Finally, I will address, in short, the hermeneutical issues raised by proponents of women's ordination.

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<sup>64</sup> The form of an oral presentation has been maintained; a few footnotes have been added. I have used in this presentation passages of an unpublished paper of mine, "Hermeneutics in the ILC."

<sup>65</sup> E.g., in the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand. A collection of resources of the debate on women's ordination in the LCANZ can be found at <https://alc.edu.au/research/lutheran-theological-journal/themes/lcanz-and-the-issue-of-ordination-of-men-only-or-of-women-and-men/>. For the discussion in the Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church) in Germany since 1999, see the collection of documents at <https://www.selk.de/index.php/ordination-von-frauen>.

## The Hermeneutical Question Pertaining to Women's Ordination<sup>66</sup>

In 1963, a group of Lutheran pastors in Germany sent out a manifesto against women's ordination. Bishop Lilje of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover wrote in his answer to them, "He who believes that this use of Scripture is possible has left the foundation of the interpretation of Scripture according to the Reformation."<sup>67</sup> Here the dissent on women's ordination is clearly described as a hermeneutical one. The same observation was made in the discussions in the United States. When the churches of the Lutheran Council in the USA (LCUSA) discussed women's ordination around 1970, "The Lutheran churches in their study of the biblical passages concerning women stumbled into significant disagreement over the biblical passages in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, and in the letter to the Ephesians, that told women to be silent, to obey, to refrain from any teaching role. But in conducting the study, and in commending the matter to the churches, Reumann and his committee determined that differences among Lutherans were hermeneutical and not exegetical."<sup>68</sup> But what were these hermeneutical issues? John Reumann summarizes them thus:<sup>69</sup>

If one argues by proof texts, certain individual verses seem to exclude women from ordination — and from engaging in many functions in which they commonly participate in our churches nowadays. If a rigorous criticism is applied, some of these texts most frequently cited against ordaining women can be excluded (as glosses) or demoted in value (as deuterio-Pauline). If the entire mass of biblical evidence is considered, it is possible that there are seemingly conflicting views, even in the verses claiming to be from the same writer, Paul.

Besides these biblical issues, Reumann also wants the history of the church to be taken into consideration, and today "one finds oneself compelled to take into consideration also a host of other factors besides the biblical and historical factors."<sup>70</sup> What the "other factors" are, Reumann does not specify. Is that where sociological questions enter the hermeneutical endeavor? Reumann mentions a last point pertaining to hermeneutics: "Does a central gospel or do individual texts — and if so, which ones and how interpreted — prevail in reaching a decision?" For Reumann, the hermeneutical questions are the following: (1) Is it legitimate to argue from "proof texts" or individual passages? (2) Is it legitimate to exclude certain parts of the canonical Scriptures as glosses? (3) Is it legitimate to entertain the possibility of contradictions in Scripture and even in one author? (4) Can the "central gospel" have the last word against an "individual passage" that contradicts that gospel?

An essay, published originally in Swedish, by the Swedish-American Lutheran exegete Krister Stendahl, who played an important role in the discussions on women's ordination in Sweden and in North America, was translated as "The Bible and the Role of Women" with a new subtitle, "A Case Study in Hermeneutics."<sup>71</sup> For him, the exegetical result is that the New Testament, when speaking about the role of women in the church, is using only one argument: "We have found that when

<sup>66</sup> Of course, the discussion on women's ordination started earlier than that in Germany, but I will not deal with the early history in this presentation. During World War II, there was an extensive discussion, cf. Dagmar Herbrecht, *Emanzipation oder Anpassung. Argumentationswege der Theologinnen im Streit um die Frauenordination in der Bekenntnenden Kirche* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000) and Dagmar Herbrecht, Ilse Härter, Hannelore Erhart (ed.), *Der Streit um die Frauenordination in der Bekenntnenden Kirche. Quellentexte zu ihrer Geschichte im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997). For the discussion in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria cf. Auguste Zeiß-Horbach, *Evangelische Kirche und Frauenordination. Der Beitrag der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern zur deutschlandweiten Diskussion im 20. Jahrhundert*. Historisch-theologische Genderforschung; vol. 8 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017). The authors and editors wrote from a pro-women's ordination perspective. The source volume (Dagmar Herbrecht, Ilse Härter, Hannelore Erhart (ed.), *Der Streit um die Frauenordination in der Bekenntnenden Kirche. Quellentexte zu ihrer Geschichte im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997) contains interesting texts by Peter Brunner and Heinrich Schlier that make the case against women's ordination (e.g. p. 117–131; 170–180).

<sup>67</sup> "Wer diese Verwendung Heiliger Schrift für möglich hält, hat den Boden reformatorischer Schriftauslegung verlassen." Quoted in: Dietrich Kuessner, *Die Braunschweiger Landeskirche in the 70er Jahren und ihr Landesbischof Gerhard Heintze* (Wendeburg: Verlag Uwe Krebs), 2014, 42.

<sup>68</sup> Maria Erling, "The Americanization of American Lutheranism: Democratization of Authority and the Ordination of Women," Part I [29], <http://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/186>.

<sup>69</sup> John Reumann, *Ministries Examined: Laity, Clergy, Women, and Bishops in a Time of Change* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 98–99.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>71</sup> Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women. A Case Study in Hermeneutics*, 4th printing (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974 [c. 1966]).

a reason is given, it is always by reference to the subordinate position of women in the order of creation.”<sup>72</sup> This subordinate position concerns not only the church — it is not even church specific — but is a structure in church and society. Thus, the emancipation of women is just as against the New Testament as women’s ordination. For Stendahl, there is a “straight” path for the church: “One can maintain that *every* form of emancipation is foreign to the biblical view. ... Then the question of ordination of women would not arise. Such a view is consistent and honest ... The question is whether it is truly biblical or whether it is merely an attempt to play ‘First-Century Bible Land.’”<sup>73</sup> Here his criticism of the Scandinavian exegesis of his time, which he calls “realistic exegesis,” enters. “When the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (school of history of religion, RZ) helped us to accept the primitive, the Semitic, the collective, the cultic, the eschatological in the New Testament, realistic biblical study was seen to strengthen the respect for a vigorous and colorful orthodoxy or neo-orthodoxy.” But the problem of such a school of interpretation that is strictly descriptive may lead to a new biblicism if the hermeneutical question is not raised. “As a hermeneutical principle it may lead to a denial of history as God’s history. For it is highly doubtful that God wants us to play ‘First-Century Semites.’”<sup>74</sup> This critique of “realistic exegesis” frames his rejection of the option simply to follow or imitate the New Testament, since repristination is not an option for him. Rather, one should accept emancipation of women “with enthusiasm.” “It could be argued that such an attitude is quite in accordance with our obedience to the Bible, provided that those elements in its witness which point beyond what was actualized in the first century are permitted their full and creative force.”<sup>75</sup> Taken with the remark before, this probably means that women’s emancipation is “God’s history.” Thus, the hermeneutical issue is: (1) In what way is the worldview of the New Testament binding on the present church? (2) In what way is a rejection of modern developments a rejection of “God’s history”? (3) In what way should the church develop elements of the biblical tradition that are in harmony with present societal development and reject those who are not in harmony with society?

The German Lutheran theologian Jürgen Roloff states in his commentary on 1 Timothy: “The admission of women to the office is founded finally on a fundamental *hermeneutical decision*, which therefore cannot be shared by representatives of a strict biblicism.”<sup>76</sup> Roloff can endorse women’s ordination because he thinks that the argumentation in 1 Timothy 2 following Jewish exegesis of Genesis 2 and 3 is “artificial and problematic.” However, the decisive point is that *Sachkritik* has to be exercised, not at least because of the reception history of the text in centuries of Christian history that led to the discrimination and marginalization of women in the church.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, this *Sachkritik* is not simply motivated by social issues; it is founded on the total witness of the New Testament and how it talks about the dignity of women and the position of women in the church. Since this text wants to be an interpretation of the Gospel, it has to be evaluated by the Gospel and has to be judged as lacking and also as a wrong interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3.<sup>78</sup> The hermeneutical issues raised by Roloff are thus: (1) Is the interpretation of the Old Testament by the New Testament authoritative on the church? (2) Should the New Testament writings be evaluated by the Gospel and the overall witness of the New Testament, and, if there is a contradiction between the Gospel and statements in the New Testaments, do those statements need to be critically evaluated (i.e., eliminated)?

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>76</sup> Jürgen Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus* (Zürich: Benziger, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 146.

<sup>77</sup> The German word *Sachkritik* means “criticism of subject matter.” It is formed in analogy to *Textkritik* (textual criticism) and *Formkritik* (form criticism) and means that as a final step in the interpretation of Scripture beyond literary tools the content of Scripture has to be evaluated concerning its truth by an overarching criterion. Theologians of the Lutheran tradition will mostly use Gospel as this criterion.

<sup>78</sup> Roloff, 147.

In 1992, the Theological Commission of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) published a document entitled “Women’s Ordination and Episcopal Office.”<sup>79</sup> The context was the election of the first female bishop in a Lutheran church in Germany.<sup>80</sup> It stated, “A critique of women’s ordination on principle leaves the ground of the doctrine valid in the evangelical church.” What are, in short, the arguments for such a statement, which Reinhard Slenczka compared to the “anathema” of the ancient councils?<sup>81</sup>

(1) Those who base their opposition to women’s ordination on 1 Cor. 14:33ff; 1 Tim. 2:11; and the passages about the subordination of women are accused of proof texting and reading them in isolation. Rather, these texts should be read in their difference and their time-bound character. “In the Bible, there is no consistent doctrine of the office nor a dogma concerning the role of women that transcends time.”<sup>82</sup> (2) One has to understand the Bible from its center, which is the salvific deed of Christ. Since men and women have the same position in creation and redemption, a text like 1 Tim. 2:8–15 is part of the history of reception that departs from the original meaning of Genesis 1–3.<sup>83</sup> (3) The way Jesus dealt with women shows this egalitarian understanding of the relationship between men and women. (4) The same egalitarianism is shown in the reception of the Spirit by men and women in Acts. (5) In Paul’s writing, men and women participate in the new creation without distinction (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:28); women have functions in the congregation that are not limited to service to women and children (Phil. 4:2; Rom. 16:1ff).

In short, the document uses *Sachkritik* and historically relativizes certain biblical statements and mandates as time-bound to not only justify the ordination of women as pastors and bishops, but also to accuse the opponents of heresy.

## A Hermeneutic That Affirms the Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scriptures

What does a hermeneutic look like that affirms the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture? In this section, I want to draw on the writings of Robert Preus, professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and also president of Concordia Theological Seminary. Preus published extensively during the controversies on the doctrine of Scripture and on the correct interpretation of Scripture in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod during the 1960s and 1970s. His writings are still helpful. In his Reformation lectures given in 1973 — 50 years ago — titled, “How Is the Lutheran Church to Interpret and Use the Old and New Testament?” he identifies six hermeneutical principles that underlie the exegesis of classical Lutheranism as we find it in the Book of Concord.<sup>84</sup>

(1) The first is the “principle of divine origin.” Holy Scripture is the Word of God. Thus the Confessions base their teaching on “God’s Word as the eternal truth” (FC SD Binding Summary, 13; KW, 529; cf. also LC IV, 57; V, 76).<sup>85</sup> (2) The second is the “unity principle.” Since the Scriptures have one and the same divine author and come from the Holy Spirit, there is also a unity in “testifying to one God and Christ, presenting one unified Gospel and *doctrina coelestis* [heavenly doctrine].”<sup>86</sup> This means that the New Testament sheds light on the Old, the Old Testament on the New, and there is a harmony of content. This unity leads to an analogical exegesis, in which one theme can be traced throughout the Scriptures. One

<sup>79</sup> *Frauenordination und Bischofsamt. Eine Stellungnahme der Kammer für Theologie*. EKD-Texte, 44 (Hannover: EKD, 1992).

<sup>80</sup> When Maria Jepsen was elected bishop of Hamburg, this was actually also the first female Lutheran bishop in any Lutheran church in the world.

<sup>81</sup> Reinhard Slenczka, “Ist die Kritik an der Frauenordination eine kirchentrennende Irrlehre? Dogmatische Erwägungen zu einer Erklärung des Rates der EKD vom 28. Juli 1992,” *Neues und Altes. Ausgewählte Aufsätze, Vorträge und Gutachten*. Vol. 3: Dogmatische Gutachten und aktuelle Stellungnahmen (Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Verlag, 2000), 198.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. The irony of this statement is that the document argues for an egalitarian view of the relationship of men and women as biblical and thus claims a biblical view of men and women that is true at all times.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Preus, “How Is the Lutheran Church to Interpret and Use the Old and New Testament?” *Doctrine Is Life: The Essays of Robert D. Preus on Scripture*. Klemet I. Preus, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 179–214.

<sup>85</sup> “KW” refers to *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

<sup>86</sup> Preus, 187.

example is the discussion of flesh and spirit in the regenerate man to the law in FC SD VI, where passages from the Old Testament and New Testament are used.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Ap IV shows that the doctrine of justification by faith is not only a Pauline doctrine, but a doctrine in all of Scripture. The analogical exegesis means also that statements that seem contradictory are reconciled (e.g., the question if Christians are allowed to take an oath) (LC I,65; cf. Matt. 5:33–37; 26:63–64; Gal. 1: 20; 1 Cor. 1:24). Analogical exegesis also allows to relate the articles to each other and affirm their unity: “All Christian theology is a unit, and therefore the articles of faith, drawn inductively from Scripture, are organically related.”<sup>88</sup> To read the Scriptures as a unit does not mean that one neglects the literal sense. The unity principle means that “Scripture does not teach contradictory theologies, but one Gospel.”<sup>89</sup>

(3) The third principle is the *Hauptartikel* principle.<sup>90</sup> The chief article can be called justification by faith (or Christ the Savior as He is apprehended by faith) and “functions theologically in assessing the church’s doctrine and practice and hermeneutically in assessing the church’s understanding and reading of the sacred Scriptures.”<sup>91</sup> This principle does not contradict the historical-exegetical method the Confessions use, since it is never used to go against the literal meaning of the text. The chief article is drawn from Scripture (cf. Melancthon, Ap IV, 117: “Up to this point, in order to make the matter very clear, we have demonstrated fully enough both from the testimonies of Scripture and from arguments derived from the Scripture that by faith alone we obtain the forgiveness of sin on account of Christ and by faith alone we are justified” (KW, 139). Closely related to this principle is the distinction between Law and Gospel. That the entire Scripture should be divided as Law and Gospel means that the Scriptures should be understood as “the history of God’s acts and dealings with men in terms of judgment and promise.”<sup>92</sup> Implied in this statement is also that the Gospel is present in the Old Testament and that there is the same way to salvation in the Old and New Testament, namely faith in Christ (Ap IV, 57).

(4) Preus next mentions “Luther’s realist principle,” that is, that for Luther the accounts of Scripture of the deeds of God have a referent in reality, in essence, that theological statements are based on actual acts of God and the narrative of Scripture is not a something like a story invented to transport theological truths.<sup>93</sup> (5) By “the Spirit principle,” Preus means first that the Holy Spirit is the primary author (Ap IV, 107–108) and second that the man needs the Spirit to understand properly and believe the Scriptures (FC SD II, 26). This does not mean that the Spirit is a substitute for careful reading of Scripture. (6) The “eschatological principle” is not so much a principle for the understanding of Scripture, but rather for the right application of Scripture. FC SD XI, 92 states: “However, any interpretation of Scripture that weakens or removes our hope and encouragement is certainly contrary to the will and intent of the Holy Spirit.”

Preus wrote this essay in the context of the controversy on the nature of Scripture and the legitimacy of the use of the historical-critical method. Exegetical methods have advanced, and the historical-critical method is not the only method practiced anymore in mainstream churches. Reader-response criticism or different forms of postmodern exegesis on the one hand and a revival of “theological exegesis” on the other hand have pushed some of the historical-critical questions out of the front row of theological debate. But the proponents of women’s ordination use a historical-critical approach and, therefore, Preus’ article is still pertinent to and helpful for our discussion.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 188.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. 191.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.,194.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 200.

## Individual Issues

The hermeneutic we see in those writing in favor of women's ordination is making certain doctrinal affirmation concerning the Scriptures. First, the Scriptures are not in harmony with themselves, but rather there are tensions and contradictions in them. Second, the interpretation of the Old Testament in the New Testament can be wrong. Third, because there are these tensions, there must be *Sachkritik*: The "Gospel" must and can be used to identify passages that contradict the Gospel that then need to be eliminated. A less radical way is to distinguish between commands that are time-bound and those that are not time-bound in the Scriptures. Finally, the opponents of women's ordination are accused of proof texting.

As we have seen, proponents of women's ordination argue against the binding nature of the 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 by stating that there are different traditions in the Bible. There is, on the one hand, an egalitarian tradition as shown in Jesus' treatment of women, the facts of some women's roles in the Early Church, and, for example, a passage like Gal. 3:28. Such an argument goes against what Robert Preus called the "unity principle," founded on the conviction that the entire Scriptures come from God and have, therefore, a unity of author, purpose, and teaching. As confessional Lutherans, we should, therefore, reject any approach to exegesis that does not uphold the theological unity of the Scriptures. In the controversies in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the 1960s and 1970s, the Synod in convention adopted A Statement of Scriptural Principles.<sup>94</sup>

In regard to the question if it is legitimate to entertain the possibility of contradictions in Scripture and even in one author, A Statement denies this. "We reject the view that Holy Scripture, both within and between its various books and authors, presents us with conflicting or contradictory teachings and theologies. We regard this view not only as violating the Scripture's own understanding of itself but also as making it impossible for the church to have and confess a unified theological position that is truly Biblical and evangelical."<sup>95</sup>

This does not end the discussion, of course. The unity of Scripture is confessed, but it also needs to be shown that there are no competing theologies and anthropologies in Scripture. This cannot be done in detail in this presentation, so a few remarks need to suffice. It is true that Jesus treated women in a way that was unusual for the first century and that Jesus never made any demeaning statements on women as one can find them in the culture of His day. But that does not mean that He was an egalitarian. He called on only men as apostles and sent out only men to be preachers (Matt. 10:1–4; Matt. 28:16–20; Acts 1:8). Consequently, it was also a man, Matthias, who was chosen to be the 12th apostle (Acts 1:21). Neither is Gal. 3:28 the great charter of egalitarianism. Unless one is willing to say that Gal. 3:28 means that the male-female distinction is completely extinguished in the church with the consequence that same-sex relations are fine — a view that is incompatible with Rom. 1:26–27 — the distinction between men and women remains, and, therefore, the text talks about a unity of Christians in Christ, a unity that transcends the distinction of Greek/Jew, slave/free, and male/female, even though Christians remain either Greek or Jew, slave or free, male or female. This unity in Christ does not efface all distinctions and order in society or in the church.

When the interpretation of the Old Testament in the New Testament is rejected as false, then again the unity of Scripture is denied. Whoever thinks that Paul's interpretation of Genesis in 1 Cor. 11:7–8 and 1 Tim. 2:12 is false claims to be a better exegete not only than Paul but the Holy Spirit who inspired him. Therefore, A Statement's "interpretation of the Old Testament by the New Testament authority on the church" discusses this question in the context of the understanding of prophecy in the Old Testament and answers affirmatively the question when it rejects the view "[t]hat the New Testament statements about Old Testament texts and events do not establish their meaning."<sup>96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> A *Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* is available at <https://www.lcms.org/doctrine/scripturalprinciples>.

<sup>95</sup> A *Statement IV*, G, p. 34.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, H, p. 36.



Should the New Testament writings be evaluated by the Gospel and the overall witness of the New Testament? What could be more Lutheran than to affirm the centrality of the Gospel as it is also affirmed by Preus? But the proponents of women's ordination have a different understanding of "Gospel" than traditional Lutherans. Their understanding of what "centrality of the Gospel" means is also different from a traditional Lutheran perspective. For them, the Gospel includes the abolition of all created differences in the church. For traditional Lutherans, the Gospel is the free forgiveness of sins through faith alone, without works, on account of the propitiatory death and the glorious resurrection of Christ. An all-male ministry does not in any way negate that justification is by faith alone, nor does it contradict this Gospel. But a "gospel" that requires women's ordination is a different gospel.

Second, behind the argument of this "gospel" as a criterion for truth is again a view of Scripture that denies the theological unity of Scripture. Ultimately, this "gospel," somehow drawn from Scripture but not defined by the whole of Scripture anymore, is so malleable that it can (and has in some quarters) transform into some generic message of inclusivity that no longer justifies the sinner but justifies any sin. The vague "gospel" of inclusivity and the denial of God's Law with the emergence of a perverted moralism are the consequences of the denial of the truth of all Scripture.

Fifty years ago, A Statement explicitly rejected the position that the question of women's ordination should not be decided by Scripture as a whole.<sup>97</sup> When it rejected the opinion that the "gospel" should be the basis of ordaining women and put "gospel" in quotes, it indicated that a gospel that is used in such a way is in some way a distorted form of the Gospel. Implied in such a statement is also the rejection to use the Gospel as a principle from which articles of faith are to be deduced. Therefore, the "gospel" cannot be a criterion to eliminate doctrines or commandments that contemporary man finds outdated.

There are regulations in the New Testament that are given only for a specific context.<sup>98</sup> But neither 1 Cor. 14:33b–28 nor 1 Tim. 2:11–14 are of that kind, as the reasoning for the command shows. When the reason given for a command is the Law, creation, a command of the Lord, then there is no way to construe it as mere contextual command given for a limited time.

If the command is rejected because one does not accept the argumentation, then again one assumes that St. Paul was mistaken and denies his apostolic authority and inspiration. A Statement rejects the opinion "that the Biblical authors accommodated themselves to using and repeating as true the erroneous notions of their day (for example, the claim that Paul's statements on the role of women are not binding today because they are the culturally conditioned result of the apostle's sharing the views of contemporary Judaism as a child of his time)."<sup>99</sup>

Finally, what about that accusation that the opponents of women's ordination practice "proof texting"? If one means by proof texting that verses are ripped out of context and interpreted in an arbitrary way and in a way that contradicts the overarching story of the Bible, then such an accusation is wrong. Much work has been done by theologians to show that the exclusion of women from the pastoral ministry fits the overall narrative and theological gist of Scripture. This can be seen in the extensive discussion of the relation of men and women in the order of creation. Just one example is mentioned here. The document *Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice* by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod places the discussion on women's roles in the church in the framework of the order of creation and the order of redemption.<sup>100</sup> The order of creation means that God "has given to that which has been created a certain definite order which, because it has been created by Him, is the expression of His immutable will. These relationships belong to the very

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 23: It rejects "That the Gospel, rather than Scripture, is the norm for appraising and judging all doctrines and teachers (as, for example, when a decision on the permissibility of ordaining women into the pastoral office is made on the basis of the 'Gospel' rather than on the teaching of Scripture as such)."

<sup>98</sup> E.g., the command to women to cover their heads when they pray or prophesy, cf. AC XXVIII, 53–54.

<sup>99</sup> A Statement IV, F, p. 31.

<sup>100</sup> *Women in the Church. Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice*. A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, September 1985, n.p., n.d., electronically available at <https://www.lcms.org/ctcr/man-and-woman-in-the-church>.

structure of created existence.” The order of redemption “refers to the relationship of the redeemed to God and to each other in the new creation established by Him in Jesus Christ.”<sup>101</sup> The order of redemption does not abolish the order of creation. Hence, Paul can argue with creation and the Law in 1 Cor. 11:7–9; 1 Cor. 14:34; and 1 Tim 2:13–14. Spiritual equality does not preclude subordination (hypotage). Gal. 3:28 speaks about baptism. “However, the oneness of male and female in Christ does not obviate the distinction given in creation. Gal. 3:28 does not mean that the identity of man or woman can be exchanged any more than that Greeks can become Jews or vice versa.”<sup>102</sup> This document implicitly addresses thus the question of proof texting and arguing from individual passages. It does refer to individual passages, but it sees them in a larger biblical context.

All too often “proof texting” is used just a term of abuse for an exegesis one does not like. When doing theology, one has to start with certain Bible passages. We go to the institution narratives when discussing the Lord’s Supper, and we should remember that the accusation of proof texting was used by Zwingli and others in the debates of the 16th century. Doctrine derives from Scripture, and specific doctrines derive from specific Scripture passages. Yes, there is the danger of false exegesis in using verses against their context, but it cannot be wrong to rely on specific verses in an argument. Theologians ought then put the doctrine derived from Scripture in the context of the overall message of Scripture.

## Conclusion

We have seen that hermeneutics and the doctrine of Scripture are not independent. The hermeneutic used by the proponents of women’s ordination as related in this paper is based on a faulty view of Scripture. What is called a hermeneutical question is often really a difference in the view of Scripture. Krister Stendahl wrote at the end of his life, “For me all this did add up to my conviction that the question was one of hermeneutics. To put it sharply: I guess Paul was/would be against it [sc. women’s ordination], but that does not quite settle the matter. His very insight of equal status in Christ, his theological vision that goes against the grain of his own habits of thought, became for me a way toward a hermeneutic ever suspicious of homogenization.”<sup>103</sup> What Stendahl calls a question of hermeneutics is the question of whether God has given us, by inspiration, His Scriptures that are profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16), or if they are a mixture of theological insights and human error, the gold to be distinguished from the dross by the art of the exegete.

In 1978, Bishop Bertil Gärtner and Canon Carl Strandberg of the Church of Sweden summarized the consequences of the introduction of women’s ordination thus:

The Church of Sweden, as all Lutheran Churches, professes that the Scriptures are the highest norm for doctrine and practice. The Scriptures have heretofore been the objective standard against which the subjective religious feelings and ideas of individuals were tested. The ordination of women and the increasing use of non-biblical and even anti-biblical arguments to justify this practice have resulted in a significant loss of authority for the Scriptures as the reliable guide for the life of the Church. Even from fairly respectable quarters in the Church one hears the Scriptures called “a collection of antique writings” and Paul derided as a “woman-hater.” Those who are more theologically schooled usually advocate what is called a dynamic understanding of the Scriptures. What this means in practice is that the biblical traditions must be sorted out on the basis of what seems to accord with current intellectual trends. Here, too, the judgement of the individual and his own response to the things said in the Bible are determinative. The Scriptures are not allowed any real, normative function. The ordination of

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 26–27.

<sup>103</sup> Krister Stendahl, “There Was More to It than I Thought and There Is Even More to Come: Retrospective Prospects,” *Lutheran Women in Ordained Ministry 1070–1995: Reflections and Perspectives*, Gloria E. Bengtson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 140.

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women and the increasing number of women priests in the Church of Sweden have demonstrably resulted in a change in the theological climate and have already had a marked effect on much thinking in the areas of Church, Ministry, and Scripture, putting into question their sacredness and divine origin.<sup>104</sup>

The ordination of women is not a minor point. Nor should any Lutheran church think that after it adopts women's ordination, nothing else will change. Women's ordination is possible in a church after a different view of Scripture has been adopted, a view that will unmoor the church from Scripture. The church lives and is kept on the right path by listening to her Christ. His voice we hear in the Scriptures given by the Holy Spirit. May God grant that to us all.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> <https://womenpriests.org/articles-books/gartner-the-experience-of-the-church-of-sweden/> from Bertil E. Gärtner and Carl Strandberg, "The Experience of the Church of Sweden," *Man, Woman, and Priesthood*, Peter Moore, ed. (London: SPCK, 1978), 123–133.

<sup>105</sup> For further studying a Lutheran perspective, *Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective: A Collection of Essays*, Matthew C. Harrison and John T. Pless, eds. 3rd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012). For an evangelical perspective: Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More than 100 Disputed Questions* (Sisters, Multnomah Publishers, 2004). For a Roman Catholic perspective, Manfred Hauke, *Women in the Priesthood? A Systematic Analysis in the Light of the Order of Creation and Redemption* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988).

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