

## The Ordination of Women

According to the revealed will of God, women cannot occupy the office of the Gospel ministry. It really is straight forward. Where God has spoken, we are to stand as firm as a rock. Thus it is with the inspired apostolic prohibitions found in 1 Cor. 14:33-40 and 1 Tim. 2:11-14. These texts make it impossible to recognise female pastors anywhere within the one, holy, Christian, and apostolic church. A church which ordains women into the public ministry of Word and Sacraments, thereby certifies itself to be un-apostolic and anti-apostolic.

Behind the apostle Paul and his inspired words stands of course the Lord Himself, and it is interesting to note too that despite the prominence, exemplary devotion, and courage of women in His cause and service (Mt. 27:55-56), and despite the temporal priority of women as witnesses to His Resurrection (Mk. 16:1-8; Jn. 20:1ff.), Christ appointed not a single woman as His apostle.

In Jesus, God became a man, not a woman, and those whom Jesus chose to be His chosen apostolate, in, with, and under which our public ministry was divinely instituted, included no women, not even those very near and dear to Him. By His express command, public ministers of the Gospel, that is, those who in this special way “*do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ.... In Christ’s place and stead*,” (AP. VII/VIII.28), must be qualified men, not women.

The main application of 1 Cor. 14:33-40 and 1 Tim. 2:11-14 in the church, is that women are not to exercise those functions in the local congregation which would involve them in the exercise of authority inherent in the authoritative public teaching office (i.e. the office of pastor).

Although the ordination of women was not an issue in Luther’s day, he grasped the theological import of the question more keenly than did some of the later theologians. Luther was well aware of the prominent leadership positions occupied by certain women in the Old Testament, and he taunted the anti-clerical fanatics for having overlooked these examples seemingly favourable to their cause. “But in the New Testament,” he wrote, “the Holy Spirit, speaking through St. Paul, ordained that women should be silent in the churches and assemblies [1 Cor. 14:34], and said that this is the Lord’s commandment.” On the underlying headship/subordination principle Luther wrote: “The gospel, however, does not abrogate this natural law, but confirms it as the ordinance and creation of God.”

Sadly, religion in modern Western society is already a predominantly female affair, and is becoming more so. It is important to understand that the real push for female pastors comes not from any sort of biblical considerations at all, but from a militant, and essentially secular, feminism.

To talk of the New Testament as an intrinsically oppressive text, clearly in order to deny its finality, is to abandon all pretence of Christian exegesis or interpretation. The glib deployment of Gal. 3:28 (there is neither male nor female) against the express apostolic prohibition of female pastors, points

in the same direction, for it logically entails also a total interchangeability of the sexes in marriage - in other words, same sex “marriages”! Some do not hesitate to go to such lengths, and patronisingly dismiss St. Paul’s condemnations of sodomy as the culture-bound judgment of a faithful apostle and a profound interpreter of the central message of the gospel, yet one who was also a fallible and historically-conditioned human being.

To discard at will so crystal-clear a piece of consistent prophetic-apostolic teaching is to throw the whole Bible to the winds, and admitting women to ordination cannot help but reshape the ministry itself and ultimately, theology.