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# What in Scripture Speaks To the Ordination of Women?

John Reumann

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## I. ORDINATION<sup>1</sup>

"Ordination," it is well to remember, does not appear, full-blown and in our sense of the term,<sup>2</sup> in the Scriptures.

True, late Judaism had ordinations, originally of pupils by a rabbi (end of first century A. D.), and later limited to centralized officialdom and the patriarch (second to fifth centuries A. D.), modeled after Moses, in the tradition, laying his hands on, and commissioning, Joshua as his successor (Num. 27:18, 23; Deut. 34:9).

Where such "laying on of hands" or

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. Lohse, *Die Ordination im Spätjudentum und im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951); critique by A. A. T. Ehrhardt, "Jewish and Christian Ordination," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5, 2, reprinted in *The Framework of the New Testament Stories* (Univ. of Manchester Press, 1963), pp. 132-50. J. Newman, *Semikhab (Ordination)* (Univ. of Manchester Press, 1950). E. Lohse, "Ordination, II. Im NT," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen; 3rd ed.), Vol. 4 (1960), cols. 1672-73; "rabbi, rabbouni," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer), 6 (1959), pp. 962-66. Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* ("Studies in Biblical Theology," 32; London: SCM, 1961), § 25, pp. 206-10. Heber F. Peacock, "Ordination in the New Testament," *Review and Expositor*, 55 (1958), pp. 262-74. J. Coppens, "Handauflegung," *Biblich-historisches Handwörterbuch*, ed. B. Reicke and L. Rost (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), Vol. 3, esp. cols. 633-35.

<sup>2</sup> On the sense of the term today, cf. H. H. Bagger, "Pastor, Ordination of," in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, ed. J. Bodensieck (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), Vol. 3, pp. 1857-59. That the ministry of today does not exist in the New Testament, cf. Gustav Wingren, *Kyrkans ämbete*, 1958.

ordinations appear in early Christianity (for example, 1 Tim. 4:14), the model was probably the contemporary Jewish one among rabbinic scholars, but it was filled with new content, in particular the imparting of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Hence Jewish and early Christian ordination have been termed not so much a "mother-daughter" relationship as that of two "half-brothers," descended from the Old Testament.<sup>4</sup>

Some references in the New Testament (for example, Acts 13:1-3; 6:6) refer more to a rite of blessing or sending forth of an empowered Christian or an installation than to an ordination. Moreover, there was considerable variation in New Testament practice, even according to our meager records: Paul (in his letters fully acknowledged by a variety of scholars)<sup>5</sup> and John know no rite of ordination; the Pastoral Epistles (treated by some as the work of "later Paulinism"), Acts, and probably Matthew suggest that ordination practices existed in their areas of the church.<sup>6</sup>

A uniform practice, however, akin to what we call ordination is not to be found in early Christianity, let alone a "theology of ordination."

<sup>3</sup> So Lohse, *Die Ordination*, p. 101; Coppens.

<sup>4</sup> So Ehrhardt.

<sup>5</sup> Schweizer, § 7k, p. 101: "for Paul . . . an ordination . . . is impossible."

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Schweizer. That 1 Tim. 6:11-16 is a formulary of ordination paraenesis has been argued by E. Käsemann, in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann* (Berlin, 1954), pp. 261-68, reprinted in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht), Vol. 1 (1960), pp. 101-108.



## II. THE OLD TESTAMENT<sup>7</sup>

In the Old Testament, priesthood and the Levitical offices were open to males only, and only those without physical blemish at that (Lev. 21). Rabbinical ordination in late Judaism did not involve women either.

While the faith of Israel can be said to have been marked by "exclusive masculinism"<sup>8</sup> (for example, circumcision as the rite of entry, no comparable initiation ceremony for women; women regarded as unworthy to study the Law), there were roles that women did play in Israel's life and religion, especially that of prophetess (for example, Miriam; Hulda at 2 Kings 22:14-20; cf. Anna, in Luke 2) and even judge (Deborah), and, according to some references, "ministering at the tent of meeting."<sup>9</sup> But Israel's cult employed no priestesses (in contrast to surrounding nations), and women held a subordinate place in life generally (as in many surrounding cultures).

Reasons have been sought to account for this attitude toward women: (1) the patriarchal society of the period; (2) the notion that women were a source of idolatry; (3) the view that woman's function was to bear sons, not to sacrifice or teach the Law.<sup>10</sup> These explanations hold only in vary-

<sup>7</sup> Old Testament usage is discussed in Russell C. Prohl, *Woman in the Church: A Restudy of Woman's Place in Building the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 36-47. Prohl, a Lutheran clergyman from the Missouri Synod, wrote at Brite College of the Bible, Texas Christian University.

<sup>8</sup> *Concerning the Ordination of Women* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, Department of Faith and Order and Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society, 1964), p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Sam. 2:22 (but this may be a jibe at how lax things had gotten under the sons of Eli, women were serving "at the entrance to the tent of meeting!"); Exod. 38:8. Cf. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 5, 962, n. 97.

<sup>10</sup> *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 31 f.

ing degrees for the New Testament period but do continue to be heard in later centuries.<sup>11</sup>

Probably most influential from the Old Testament in the long run have been the creation story in Genesis 2 (woman created after, out of, and as a helper for man) and the story of "the fall" in Genesis 3 (the woman tempted the man).

While attempts have been made to shape "an Old Testament doctrine of the ministry"<sup>12</sup> for Christians, it is by and large agreed that the New Testament ministry is no continuation of the Old Testament priesthood.<sup>13</sup> Israel provides no answer on the ordination of women to the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ.

## III. THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLD AND THE INTERPRETER TODAY<sup>14</sup>

Early Christianity was influenced by many other factors in the world of the day besides the Old Testament witness and the practices of late Judaism—

<sup>11</sup> For example, Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947), p. 354, disparages woman's tendency to indulge in "nature mysticism."

<sup>12</sup> Horace D. Hummel, "The Holy Ministry from Biblical Perspective," *Lutheran Quarterly*, 18 (1966), pp. 104-119; he notes how little secondary literature exists on the Old Testament and ministry, stresses how much a hermeneutical question is involved, and does not mention the issue of ordaining women. Cf. Raphael Loewe, *The Position of Women in Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1966), written as a supplement for *Women and Holy Orders*. His most striking suggestion: marriage should be a precondition for women ordained! A more positive sketch of the participation of women in the liturgical life of diaspora Judaism is given by J. Massingberd Ford, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians or the First Epistle to the Hebrews?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 28 (1961), pp. 413 f.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Brunner, "The Ministry and the Ministry of Women," *Lutheran World*, 6 (1959), p. 248. (Concordia, 1971).

<sup>14</sup> Literature is extensive on the place of women in antiquity and in early Christianity. A pertinent survey on "the status of women in the New Testament world" is provided by



for example, customs of the Greco-Roman world, philosophical and religious currents of the period, etc. We must remember there is a vast history-of-religions panorama in light of which New Testament Christianity develops. At times the New Testament reflects such factors positively (for example, Paul can use Stoic language and ideas), at times it reacts negatively (Paul rejects pagan practices). The attitude toward women in general is a case in point: at times the New Testament very much exhibits the general pattern of a day when women were not emancipated but in subjection; on other occasions early Christianity is quite epoch-making and liberating in its attitude toward women (she is an equal recipient of salvation with man, both receive the same baptism as the rite of entry, and so forth).

A perennial problem in this history-of-religions and cultural background for any interpreter of Scripture is to determine what is to be regarded as "time-conditioned" from the first-century environment (and therefore no longer binding on all Christians today), and what is permanent "word of the Lord." (For example, the admonition to long hair and a veil on the head for women in church, 1 Cor. 11:2 ff., is scarcely regarded as normative for women today.)

A further problem is the frequent variety in emphases on an issue to be found in the New Testament writings. One passage taken by itself seems to say one thing; another by itself, something else. How is one to assess together what may have been said orig-

Raymond T. Stamm, in "The Status of Women Workers in the Church," *The Lutheran Quarterly*, 10 (1958), pp. 139-45. Further: Johannes Leipoldt, *Die Frau in der Antiken Welt und im Urchristentum* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1954). Connie Parvey, "Ordain Her, Ordain Her Not . . .," *Dialog*, 8, 3 (Summer, 1969), pp. 203-208: Paul said Yes theologically, tended to say No sociologically.

inally in differing situations? To what degree is it necessary to have a "theology of the Gospel" from which the individual voices of the gospels and epistles can be assessed?

Finally, just as the New Testament writers faced problems that are no longer ours in the same way, under influences and environment that no longer hold in our world, so it is also worth noting we often raise questions with which the New Testament witness does not deal and may not be able to answer definitively.

#### IV. THE NEW TESTAMENT WITNESS

Scriptural evidence regarded as pertinent to the question of the ordination of women has, in recent discussions, been employed in two chief ways: in more general, theological arguments, pro and con; and in specific passages, regarded as speaking a definitive word one way or the other. Of course the theological arguments and specific passages often intertwine, and the New Testament passages cited often rest on Old Testament scripture in turn. The first three arguments here seek to deny ordination of women; the fourth is pivotal and has been used by both sides; the final two are presented in favor of ordaining women.

##### A. THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS

1. The "Paternal" argument:<sup>15</sup> God is Father, and Jesus Christ, His

<sup>15</sup> The "Paternal" argument is discussed, and rejected as not significant, in *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 8, 22-24, and 64; Margaret E. Thrall, *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood: A Study of the Biblical Evidence* ("Studies in Ministry and Worship"; London: SCM, 1958), pp. 80 ff.; G. W. H. Lampe, "Church Tradition and the Ordination of Women," *The Expository Times*, 76 (1964-65), pp. 123-25, to which there is a response in the same journal by J. Pretlove, p. 294; and Leonard Hodgson, "Theological Objections to the Ordination of Women," *The Expository Times*, 77 (1965-66), pp. 210-13.



Son, was incarnated as a male. Much is made of the fact that Biblical theology rejects goddesses (Yahweh has no consort); the Son reveals the Father; the Incarnation was a theological principle, not social expediency. Therefore the divine analogy shows that the church's ministry must be male.

But it is countered, this is to make too much of metaphors about God (Yahweh's love can also be described like "a mother's for her child," Deut. 32:18; Is. 46:3; 51:1; Ps. 131:2). It is misused analogy that, if carried to logical conclusion, would exclude women even from membership in the church. And how else could God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled, in that milieu than by sending a man? And He who came is the New Man who foreshadows a new humanity (men and women in Christ).

This "paternal" argument seems never invoked in the Bible or in the earliest centuries.

Occasionally encountered with this argument is one involving the Virgin Mary: while Jesus "had no human father, He has a human mother." Mary provides the model for Christian women: great as she was, she was excluded from priestly functions; it was by John, not Mary, that Jesus was baptized; Mary suggests the vocation of Christian women—to bear children who will be incorporated into the new humanity and thus replenish the body of Christ.<sup>16</sup>

This argument, however, depends on

<sup>16</sup> The Mariological argument has been advanced by E. Mascall, *Theology*, 58 (1955), p. 103, quoted in Thrall, *Ordination of Women*, p. 80; Mrs. F. C. Blomfield, *Wonderful Order* (1955), summarized in Thrall, pp. 82-87; cf. Lampe, "Church Tradition," p. 124. It is usually in (Anglo-)Catholic circles that this approach is found. For a Protestant assessment of recent discussion about Mary, cf. Stephen Benko, *Protestants, Catholics, and Mary* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1968), where it is even discussed whether the historical mother of Jesus became a believer in Christ.

a typological and Mariological outlook where the Virgin is regarded as a "female foundation" of the church. Yet in the New Testament picture she too is part of a fallen humanity, who must receive the Spirit, and she is not exemplified as the model here supposed.<sup>17</sup>

2. The "Apostolicity" argument:<sup>18</sup> Jesus chose only males to be His apostles. For the fact that "the Twelve" were all men and Jesus designated no woman as an apostle, even though women followed Him during His ministry and were witnesses to the resurrection (Mark 16:1 ff., par.; and to be "a witness of His resurrection" was a requirement for being an apostle, Acts 1:22), it has been concluded that Jesus intended the ministry to be exclusively male, and, as God incarnate, "He knew what He was doing."<sup>19</sup>

Quite apart from all discussion of the meaning of "apostolicity" and whether historically "apostle" referred to "the Twelve" or to a larger group (perhaps even including women!),<sup>20</sup> it can be replied that this argument too never appears in the New Testament.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Even the difficult passage at 1 Tim. 2:15 (on which, see below), "woman will be saved through bearing children . . .," does not invoke Mary as model for the church.

<sup>18</sup> The "Apostolicity" argument occurs in many of the same quarters as that involving the divine paternity; for discussion, cf. *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 9, 33-35, 58, 69; Thrall, pp. 87-90; Lampe, pp. 124 f. (reply by Pretlove, p. 294); and Hodgson, pp. 210 f.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Hodgson, p. 210.

<sup>20</sup> The relation of "the Twelve" (in Mark, or Matthew, or 1 Cor. 15:5) to "the apostles" (as developed in Luke-Acts, cf. 1 Cor. 15:7, 9) and the whole question of "apostleship" in early Christianity are too complex, and the literature too extensive, to allow discussion here. However, in Paul, where "the apostles" are a larger group than "the Twelve," it is possible that Junia or Julia (cf. NEB note), mentioned (in some manuscripts) at Rom. 16:7 as "eminent among the apostles," may be a "female *apostolos*."

<sup>21</sup> Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women: A Case Study in Hermeneutic*



Further, how else but by men could Jesus' mission and the promises to Israel have been fulfilled in the first-century world? Can we be sure the historical Jesus deliberately excluded women and that He intended this stance to be determinative for all times? By the same kind of argument, in view of the fact that He apparently chose only Jews as disciples and apostles, it could be concluded that no Gentile ought to be a minister in His church!

Sometimes as part of the concatenation with these first two arguments there appears a related emphasis on the femininity of the church, in contrast to God the Father, who sent His Son, who, in turn, sent forth only a male apostolic ministry: the ministry must be male, but there are certain qualities of femininity that characterize the church. The picture is aided by New Testament descriptions of the church as the "bride" of Christ. Thus one can construct a series of equations: as Christ is to the church, His bride, so is the minister (Christ's representative) to the congregation, the household to the household. Christ's representative must be male, like his Lord; a woman cannot rule the household. Indeed, she is incapable of receiving the indelible, sacramental character of holy orders, it is sometimes added by those who employ this argument.<sup>22</sup>

*tics*, trans. Emilie T. Sander ("Facet Books, Biblical Series," 15; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), pp. 38 f., who notes also that nowhere in the New Testament is there any reference either to "the exclusively male character of the first celebration of the Last Supper."

<sup>22</sup> For the argument, cf., for example, Harald Riesenfeld, "The Ministry in the New Testament," in *The Root of the Vine: Essays in Biblical Theology*, ed. Anton Fridrichsen and other members of Uppsala University (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1953), especially pp. 123-27 ("... self-evident to the early Christian mind that the officer presiding over the assembled congregation, and therefore at the Eucharist, should be a male"), or P.-Y. Émery, "Féminité de l'Église et féminité dans

The "femininity" argument suffers from the weaknesses, noted above, of argument from metaphorical language and analogy. It depends on a view of "church" where clergy rule over a lower order, "congregation," and assumes a sacramentalist concept of ordination strange to the Lutheran tradition and apparently a notion of ontological incapacity in women (see 3 below) so that "apostolic succession" will not "take."

3. As already suggested, the "paternal" and "apostolicity" arguments sometimes are related to an assumed biological, spiritual, and even theological inferiority in women<sup>23</sup> compared with men, so that ontologically

*l'Église*," *Études Théologiques et Religieuses*, 40 (1965), pp. 90-96 (woman's primary role is that of being a reminder of all the hidden realities when men, owing to their rationalistic inclinations, easily slight or forget them; summary in *New Testament Abstracts*, 10 [1965-66], number 649). It is also treated by Hodgson, pp. 212 f.

This argument appeared to some extent in the debate in the Church of Sweden in the 1950s over the ordination of women. The 1951 statement by seven university teachers of New Testament, for example, held that "the minister represents Christ in the liturgy, and Christ cannot be represented by a woman," to which Nygren replied, "Christ is present in the service of the church . . . and does not need any re-presentation" (Sten Rodhe, "The Controversy over the Ordination of Women in Sweden," *Lutheran World*, 4 [1957-58], pp. 394, 399).

<sup>23</sup> On the "inferiority of women" argument, cf. *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 58 and 61, where present-day theologians of the Orthodox Church allude to "the period when women are 'impure'" (Lev. 12; 15:19 ff.) and cite canons "prohibiting women-priests, based on this point of view," and even forbidding women to participate in the sacraments or enter church during this period (cf. the custom of "churching" a mother, forty days after childbirth, also); hence the view that "biological rhythms fluctuate more in women than in men" (p. 61), and that since "spiritual life" and "sacramental vocation" are conditioned by "bodily functions," women are not meant, by their very nature physically, to be able to become priests, but are to fit "a more maternal rhythm" (F. C. Blomfield, as cited in Thrall, p. 102; the argument discussed and rejected, pp. 102-104).



and in terms of sacramental receptiveness they are not up to "that eminence of degree that is signified by priesthood" (Aquinas). This view of women sometimes roots in Old Testament ordinances; it has been expressed by ecclesiastical canons in the patristic period and finds reflection in statements by theologians in contemporary discussion.

It must be asked, however, whether this assumed inferiority reflects an "order of creation"—or "the order of a particular economic and social system in one part of the world in one period of its history,"<sup>24</sup> a view no longer defensible in light of further biological and psychological knowledge and later sociological developments. The "church tradition" on the role of women in ministry may simply reflect the haphazard customs of the past and personal prejudices of patristic misogynists and their later heirs. Much of this line of argument was long before the "post-Pill era," antiquated by modern emancipation, whereby women share educational and political rights with men. What is of theological significance in it is better expressed by the next argument, more deeply embedded in Scripture.

4. The most impressive general argument from Biblical theology against the ordination of women is that of subordination:<sup>25</sup> by the very

<sup>24</sup> One can readily see a clear tendentiousness in a characterization of women such as that offered by the church father Epiphanius: they are "a feeble race, untrustworthy, and of mediocre intelligence" (as quoted by Lampe, p. 124), but a not too different argument, though less crassly put, can appear in current discussions; for example, J. J. Von Allmen, *Pauline Teaching on Marriage* (London: Faith Press, 1963), p. 13, n. 5: "a person's sex theologically conditions his or her place in the church," and that is the reason, rather than any prejudices of the time, why "there are ministries which the New Testament does not consider as being open to a woman." Peter Brunner, p. 272, points to "the theological doctrine of the sexual difference between man and woman" so that there is "conflict between being 'pastor' and being 'woman.'"

"orders of creation" and from the time of the very first man and woman, woman has been subject to man, and even the New Testament does not change this ordinance of creation; rather, Paul reiterates it, and early Christian ethics employ the theme "Be subject . . ." in addressing women.

Genesis 2 is often a starting point: man was created first (2:7), woman was created from man (2:22) and for man (2:18).<sup>26</sup> The narrative about the expulsion from the garden in Genesis 3 expresses woman's subordination more forcefully: because she gave the fruit of the forbidden tree to her husband, she was told, "Your husband . . . shall rule over you" (3:16). (Hence, some say, the inferior position of women in Israel, and even the claim that since the fall woman has had no direct relationship to God.) That this subordination of woman to man is not erased in the New Testament is seen in the type of hierarchy Paul sketches at 1 Corinthians 11 ("the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God," v. 3; at vv. 8-9 he reflects Genesis 2, "man was not made from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man"). Further-

<sup>25</sup> The "Subordination" argument is especially stressed by Fritz Zerbst, *The Office of Woman in the Church: A Study in Practical Theology*, trans. A. G. Merckens (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), pp. 69-81. The most impressive counterstatement, turning Gen. 1 (and Gal. 3:28) against Gen. 2-3, is M. E. Thrall's *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood* (summary in *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 25-27, 30, with objections considered on p. 27; and in Stendahl, pp. viii, 28-32; cf. p. 39, n. 37, where Stendahl voices disagreement on some points). Miss Thrall's argument is rejected by Peter Brunner, p. 264. "Subordination" in its varying meanings in the Pauline epistles is studied by Else Kähler, *Die Frau in den paulinischen Briefen* (Zurich: Gotthelf Verlag, 1960), briefly summarized in Stendahl, pp. 28 f., n. 29.

<sup>26</sup> Gen. 2:18, 20. 'ezer in Old Testament usually means "super-ordinate," not "sub-ordinate."



more, the New Testament *Haustafeln* are built around the theme of "subordination," specifically "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22), though it is now emphasized that husbands are not merely to rule (as "the head of the wife") but are to love their wives "as Christ loved the church" (5:25). In 1 Timothy 2 it is the "submissiveness" of woman that underlies what is said about woman not teaching or having authority over men.

It is this argument of the Biblical subordination of woman to man that has proven decisive in the opinion of many discussing the ordination of women. Thus, among Lutherans, Peter Brunner (the reason behind Paul's position is "the express will of God who demands such subordination"), and Fritz Zerbst (it is not the nature of the office of the ministry which excludes woman from ordination, but the nature of woman.)<sup>27</sup>

Of course, it has been claimed that what the Old Testament says on subordination, and even the Pauline expressions of it, are simply reflections of an outmoded way of looking at women in an ancient, male-dominated society.<sup>28</sup> One can note that "subjection" (not only of wives to husbands, but of slaves to masters, subjects to the state, and so forth) was simply a commonplace in the ethics of the first century, non-Christian as well as Christian.

<sup>27</sup> Zerbst, p. 105, cited in *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, p. 26, and in Thrall, p. 94. For Lutheran discussions, it is significant that it is on the basis of the Confessions that Zerbst reaches his conclusion that there is nothing in the nature of the office of preaching and administration of the sacraments to exclude women from that office.

<sup>28</sup> D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), pp. 222 f.: "I myself have no doubt that the subordination of women is socially conditioned. . . . St. Paul would have employed different analogies if he had lived in a different civilization." Whiteley admits, however, that while the subordination of women in Col. 3:18 f. may be called functional, 1 Corinthians seems to make it a matter of status.

But the most important assault on this argument of "subordination" based on "orders of creation" in Biblical theology has been launched not by repudiating Biblical material as "the product of a past age" but by looking more fully at the Biblical material itself, so that the "subordination" argument is turned to undergird the case for ordaining women. With regard to Genesis 2, it is pointed out that this chapter is really a second telling of the creation story, the initial account coming in Genesis 1,<sup>29</sup> where woman is not a subordinate derivative of man, but rather they both are created together by God ("male and female He created them," 1:27), and they are given dominion together over the earth (1:28 ff.). True, from Genesis 2-3 on, woman has been subordinate to man, but with the coming of Christ, there is now a new situation: man and woman have direct and equal access to God and salvation through Christ; man and woman enter a new relationship "in Christ," both by the same sacrament of baptism. There is a new creation, where man and woman fulfill the intent of God's original creation—in Genesis 1! Therefore, "in Christ" the subordination of Genesis 2-3 is reversed, and there is a change back to the situation of Genesis 1, where man and woman stand side by side, together. Admittedly, Paul may at times still, in specific, practical issues, reflect his rabbinical background or react to current conditions, but he more significantly envisions that "in Christ" (and that means, above all, in the body of Christ, the church) there is no longer "Jew or Greek," "slave or free," "male or female"—all are one, emancipated for freedom, in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:28, cf. 5:1). The church is the place where, above all, man and woman should be equal

<sup>29</sup> That Gen. 1 is assigned to the Priestly writer and Gen. 2 to the J source may help explain the differences in the two accounts, but is not necessary to the argument here.



before God.<sup>30</sup>

This pivotal argument on "subordination" has been presented in some detail precisely because it is the most significant theological one out of Scripture on both sides. And it has been variously interpreted.<sup>31</sup> If woman is irrevocably subordinate to man on the basis of what God established in creation, then it is hard to see how the church can consider ordaining women; if, on the other hand, the church of Christ is precisely where God's original will in creation breaks through afresh, then the church may have to draw implications about ministry that even Paul in his day never worked out. The question is not only "what is the real 'ordinance of creation,' Gen. 1 or 2?" but eschatologically, "what is the relationship of the new situation in Christ to the 'old age'?"

<sup>30</sup> Stendahl, pp. 28 ff., emphasizes how, though the point was grounded in creation (Gen. 2) for early Christianity that woman was to be subordinate to her husband in the home and subordinate to male teachers in church, "in Christ" that "order of creation" has been transcended, so that there is now full religious equality, even in the *Haustafeln* or "tables of household duties" (cf. 1 Peter 3:7, "joint heirs of the grace of life"), and even when Paul reflects the traditional pattern, as in 1 Cor. 11, he transforms it—"man is not independent of woman . . . in the Lord, for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman," 11:11 f.).

<sup>31</sup> "Two very different approaches can be found in two books by Lutherans. . . . Both base their study upon the Bible, using the same quotations from Genesis and Paul, but each comes out with different conclusions. Dr. Zerbst makes the more traditional conclusion that in the order of Creation there is a basic inequality between man and woman, that woman is under subjection. . . . [Russell C. Prohl, *Woman in the Church: A Restudy of Woman's Place in Building the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 35, 47] concludes that 'there is no law of creation which makes women in general subordinate to men in general. . . . it is not true, as many believe, that the Bible subordinates woman as a sex to man as a sex. . . .' *Report on Women in the Ministry* (mimeographed; Geneva: World Council of Churches, Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society, May, 1958), p. 2.

Two things need to be added about "subordination":

(1) Paul plainly reflects a "theology of subordination" not only with regard to man and woman but also with regard to God and Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). It may be helpful to add that in his Christology this subordination is "functional," but it is subordination nonetheless (1 Cor. 15:24-28, at the end "the Son Himself will also be subjected to [God]"). However, later, orthodox Christology did not hesitate to overlook this subordination of the Son to the Father, so as to declare Him "of one substance with the Father," co-equal, and so forth. If Pauline subordinationalism has been reassessed in Christology, ought it not also to be in anthropology?

(2) The New Testament texts taken to demonstrate the subordination of women to men seem in every case actually to refer not to women and men generally but to wives and their husbands. "Woman" means "wife," and sometimes before "man" (= husband) the adjective "one's own" appears; thus at 1 Corinthians 14, the command "the woman should keep silence in the churches" (v. 34) is explained by (v. 35) "let them ask their husbands at home." The references are thus not to society in general or to the church's ministry but to the home and family relation. This point has been recognized as decisive in several recent studies on the ordination of women to the ministry.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> So Prohl, summarized in *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, p. 28; hence Prohl's conclusion cited in the previous note. He holds there is a hierarchical order of creation that holds in the family but not in the church. André Dumas, in *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, p. 29, reverses this, however, to claim that for Paul reciprocity holds in the family but hierarchy in the church! A recent Roman Catholic study, however, concludes for Prohl's position: "the New Testament texts generally adduced to support the impossibility of ordaining women are almost certainly concerned with the relationship of wives to husbands." John O'Rourke,



In opposition to the "paternal" and "apostolic" and "inferiority of women" arguments, two further arguments have been adduced by those who see the ordination of woman as not contradicting Scripture but actually according with it, both of them arguments to an extent involved in this discussion on "subordination."

5. The "*imago*" argument:<sup>33</sup> men and women are created in the image of God (*imago dei*) and are therefore of equal dignity and worth before Him. An argument from creation is here involved ("God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them," Gen. 1:27). But it also involves the new creation since—a point not always recognized—in the Old Testament references (chiefly in the Priestly source) the image of God is not something lost after the fall (Gen. 5:1, 3; 9:6) but something man retains, whereas in the New Testament only Jesus Christ is the image of God—men are conformed to this image only when they are created anew "in Christ" (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4, Col. 1:15, on Christ; 1 Cor. 15:49, Rom. 8:29). Here baptism renews them "after the image of the Creator" (Col. 3:9 f.; Eph. 4:24), so that there is a new situation "in Christ" in the church, where accord-

"Women and the Reception of Orders," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, 38 (1968), p. 295. (Summary in *New Testament Abstracts* 13 [1968-69], no. 368).

The word *idios* ("one's own" [husband, wife]) occurs frequently in these passages (1 Cor. 14:35; Eph. 5:22, and so forth). Paul's aim was to maintain conventions in the family, in the face of contemporary misunderstandings about Christianity, not to give rules for church government or the sexes in society in general.

<sup>33</sup> The "*imago*" argument is presented in *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 6 and 24 ff. On "*imago dei*" see, in addition to standard Bible dictionary articles, C. F. D. Moule, *Man and Nature in the New Testament* ("Facet Books, Biblical Series," 17; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. viii-xvii and the literature cited on p. 24. See Prohl, pp. 36 f.

ingly "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised . . . slave, free man"—or Gal. 3:28 adds, "male or female." Thus, in partaking of the *imago*, women acquire equal status before God, with men.

The objections by those who oppose the ordination of women to this use of the "*imago*" argument can take the form of denying that women received the *imago* as men did at creation (Gen. 2; only in a derived sense), or of holding that Christians have not yet eschatologically attained to the image of God, or of insisting that the image refers only to "spiritual" matters and not to equality in such things as the church's ministry.

6. The "all members are ministers" argument:<sup>34</sup> The whole body of Christ is called to witness to Christ and serve

<sup>34</sup> The "all members are ministers" argument can be examined in *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 6 and 15-17. The *locus classicus* at 1 Peter 2:4-10 for "the priesthood of all believers" has recently been re-examined by John H. Elliott in *The Elect and the Holy* ("Supplements to Novum Testamentum," 12; Leiden: Brill, 1966), with the conclusion that Exodus 19:6 ("you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests") is not employed here, or elsewhere, in support of, or in polemic against, the Levitical priesthood, or in connection with Christ's priesthood (never mentioned in 1 Peter), but to describe, in cultic terms, the mission of the church in the world on the basis of election. The church is thus not in 1 Peter presented as a neo-Levitical community—where women would be barred from the ministry; in the *Haustafeln* of 1 Peter, women, though described as "the weaker sex," are now "joint heirs of the grace of life" (3:7). Cf. Schweizer, *Church Order*, pp. 110-12. For recent discussion in Germany over the relation of the pastoral office to the general priesthood, cf. Gerhard Heintze, "Allgemeines Priestertum und besonderes Amt," *Evangelische Theologie*, 23 (1963), pp. 617-46, where the attempt of Joachim Heubach, in *Die Ordination zum Amt der Kirche* ("Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Luthertums," 2; Berlin, 1956), to outline a *theologia ordinationis*, is discussed (pp. 636-38 with regard to New Testament material; p. 639, on the effort to exclude women from "public" proclamation, while allowing them to teach catechetical classes, and so forth, without realizing how the concept of "public" has changed, for example, since Luther's day).



in His name; all members—male and female—have a ministry. Sometimes this argument invokes the “priesthood of all believers” theme: there is a “royal priesthood” of all baptized believers (1 Peter 2:9). This argument differs from the previous one in that it derives not from creation but, in *Heilsgeschichte*, from baptism, which is the ordination of each believer, no distinctions made because of sex, nationality, or condition of servitude (1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:9-11; Gal. 3:27-28). In thus admitting women fully to membership, early Christianity was doing something different than Israel had: women share in the ministry.

It may be replied, however, that from this general ministry or “priesthood of all believers,” a special, ordained ministry is to be distinguished, and from that ministry women, for reasons noted above, are excluded.

## B. SPECIFIC PASSAGES

Against this background five passages frequently invoked in the arguments above can now be noted. The first is the crucial New Testament one cited for ordaining women; the other four are often cited to show the New Testament forbids such ordinations. Inevitably a great deal depends on how the verses are arranged and the assumptions with which they are approached. They are here taken up in the most likely chronological sequence in which they were written (a sequence that holds whether or not some of the documents are assigned to Paul himself, or his helpers or pupils), and the effort is to examine the context, and not just set forth isolated verses as “eternal laws.”

### 1. Galatians 3:27-28,

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.<sup>35</sup>

In his “Epistle of Freedom” against the Judaizers, Paul here holds that the law of Moses has been transcended in Christ at three crucial boundary lines: those between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, and between male and female. The thought is in sharp contrast to contemporary prayers and maxims among Jews and Gentiles where men gave thanks that they were not unbelievers or uncivilized, not a woman, not a slave.<sup>36</sup>

Here a new concept for women is set forth. The setting or basis is sacramental (baptism, to “put on” Christ). The implications drawn in the three sets of terms (“neither . . . nor”) are echoed at 1 Cor. 12:13, Rom. 10:12, Col. 3:11, though only here is “male and female” specifically mentioned.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> In addition to commentaries, cf. *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 49-51; Stamm, p. 154; and especially Stendahl, pp. 32-35, who treats the passage as “the ‘breakthrough’” (p. 5, n. 4, cites literature where his position is disputed). Secondary literature, especially in German, from 1900 to the 1940s, is conveniently summarized in Zerbst, pp. 14-30; writers of that period in favor of ordaining women often stressed Gal. 3:28 (Bäumer, Zscharnack, H. Jordan, M. Dibelius); to Zerbst’s bibliography, add J. M. Robbins, “St. Paul and the Ministry of Women,” *The Expository Times*, 46 (1934-35), pp. 185-88. Also, *Women and Holy Orders: Being the Report of a Commission Appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York*. (London: Church Information Office, 1966), p. 12; B. Gärtner, “Das Amt der Mann und die Frau,” in *In Signo Crucis* (Uppsala, 1963); G. Krodel, “Forms and Functions of Ministries in the New Testament,” *Dialog*, 8, 3 (Summer, 1969), pp. 191-202.

<sup>36</sup> A. Oepke, “gynē,” in the *Kittel Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), Vol. 1 (1964), p. 777.

<sup>37</sup> 1 Cor. 12:13 may omit “male and female” because the “breakthrough” had already been achieved at Corinth; in fact, women prophesying in church was a problem there, which Paul takes up at 1 Cor. 11:2 ff. and 14:34 (see below). Rom. 10:9 (in the context of ch. 9—11, Christ and Israel) mentions only “Jew and Greek.” Col. 3:11 brings in “barbarian, Scythian” instead, breaking the pattern of contrasting pairs (cf. E. Lohse, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon*



That phrase, however, is a technical one, interrupting the flow of the Greek and meant to recall Gen. 1:27. The "Christ event" means age-old barriers are overcome; beyond even the division into male and female, God's original will of "all one" in His image is reestablished "in Christ." Women, like men, have experienced the Gospel of grace.

Accordingly, this revolutionary insight has been hailed by more than one writer on the ordination of women as "the breakthrough," setting forth the possibility—which, however, the Pauline church, in his day, did not fully realize—that women too are to witness to the gospel of grace and minister in its name.

Those who oppose ordaining women seek to blunt the effect of Gal. 3:28 by maintaining it refers only to salvation, not to social life,<sup>38</sup> or that such an "eschatological breakthrough" leads to Montanism, *Schwärmerei*, liberalism, and so forth—such a "realized eschatology," it is said, ignores the unfulfilled futurist aspects that are ["Meyers Kommentar," KEK IX/2; Göttingen, 1968], pp. 207 f.).

<sup>38</sup> Ragnar Bring, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Eric Wahlstrom (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961), pp. 184-86, points to how the passage has been interpreted in two different directions: so as to lead to the abolition of social differences mentioned in the verse, or to retain differences in social life while applying the verse with reference to God, righteousness, and salvation. For the latter position, cf. the reply of Bishop Malmström in the Swedish debate, reported by Rodhe, *Lutheran World*, 4 (1957-58), p. 401, or the commentary by H. Schlier in the Meyer series, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen, 1951), p. 130, n. 5: one must be guarded in drawing direct consequences for the ordering of ecclesiastical or political life; ecclesiastical office does not depend on baptism but on "being sent" (commentary written in 1949 before Schlier entered the Catholic Church). Peter Brunner, p. 255, following Zerbst, rejects the "eschatological breakthrough" argument as leading to *Schwärmerei*, though he does hold that "one of the fundamental insights of the Lutheran Reformation" was that "the order of the church cannot stand in contradiction to her Gospel."

also part of Paul's views: believers are not yet fully "in Christ."

2. 1 Cor. 11:2-16,

I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. But any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil. For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. (For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.) That is why a woman ought to have a veil (Greek: authority) on her head, because of the angels. (Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.) Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her for a covering. If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Besides the commentaries of C. K. Barrett (Harper series, 1968); J. Héring (1949; Eng. tr., London: Epworth, 1962); H. Lietzmann ("Handbuch zum Neuen Testament," 9, 1931), with supplementary notes by W. G. Kümmel, 1949; J. Weiss ("Meyer KEK," 1910); and F. W. Grosheide ("New International Commentary," 1953); among others, see John C. Hurd Jr., *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (New York: Seabury, 1965), pp. 90 f., 182-86; and in the literature already cited,



This somewhat obscure passage occurs in a section where Paul is correcting the Corinthian Christians about sacramental excesses (chapters 8–10, their confidence in sacramental security when faced by the problem of "meats offered to idols"; ch. 11:17 ff., abuses at the Lord's Supper). The passage is also part of a discussion on problems in worship running on through chapter 14. This section seems inserted here because in this matter Paul can praise the Corinthians somewhat (v. 2 "I commend you," cf. v. 17 "I do not commend you"). It is loosely tied to the context in that 10:31-33 ("all to the glory of God, giving no offense, trying to please all men, to

save men") could stand over the discussion of veiling.

It is clear that in the congregation at Corinth women were prophesying and praying (vv. 5, 13),<sup>40</sup> presumably in public at the congregational assemblies (cf. v. 18; 14:26). Paul does not rebuke this expression of the gift of the Spirit they have received, but he does stress that women, in so doing, ought to have a veil on their head.

The arguments Paul uses to show it is wrong for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered come from a variety of sources: the "subordination" argument (v. 3, where the key word is "head"), subordinating, however, probably of wives to husbands, not

*Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 45-47; Thrall, pp. 66-76; Kähler, pp. 43-70; Zerbst, pp. 31-45; Prohl, pp. 24-30.

A very particular type of treatment is given by Abel Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry in the New Temple: A Study with Special Reference to Mt. 19. 3-12 and 1. Cor. 11. 3-16* ("Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis," 24; Lund, 1965), especially pp. 153-86. (On the general background and interests of some Swedish exegetes of the "Uppsala School," some of whose concerns were noted above in discussion of the debate in the Church of Sweden, cf. A. Rask, "Le ministere néotestamentaire et l'exégèse suédoise," *Istina*, 7 (1960), pp. 205-32, summary in *New Testament Abstracts*, 6 [1961-62], number 286—cultic, hierarchical concept of the ministry, a ministry instituted by Jesus Himself). On much of Isaksson's theorizing, reviewers have been unconvinced—for example, that Jesus and Paul shared a view that disciples were to abide by rules originally laid down for priests at the temple; that Jesus' teachings on marriage and divorce were inspired by Ezek. 44:22, rather than Gen. 1—2; and thus that the "exception clause" at Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 ("except for unchastity") referred originally to a woman who had lost her virginity prior to marriage and that such a ("divorced") woman could not marry a priest (that is, a disciple of Jesus; cf. pp. 146 ff.). Reviews: J. Fitzmyer, *Theological Studies*, 27 (1966), pp. 451-54; G. Dellings, *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 92 (1967), cols. 276 f.; and J. M. Ford, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 18 (1967), pp. 197-200 (= *New Testament Abstracts*, 11, numbers 702r, 804r; and 12, 162r). Madelein Boucher, "Some Unexplained Parallels to 1 Cor. 11:11-12 and Gal. 3:28: The New Testament on the Role of

Women," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 31 (1969), pp. 50-58. S. Aalen, "A Rabbinic Formula in 1 Cor. 14:34," *Studia Evangelica* II, ed. F. L. Cross (Texte und Untersuchungen, 87, Berlin, 1964), pp. 513-25.

More sound, however, is Isaksson's view that 11:2-16 treats married prophetesses who speak under the Spirit at cultic gatherings and constitute a (possibly ordained!) part of the ministry at Corinth. Isaksson interprets the details to show that these women, in a congregation rich in the gifts of the Spirit, spoke prophecies mediated by angels, wearing some sort of emblem or band on the head as authority, long hair put up on the head as a sign of authority instead of a prophet's cloak (the veil is a sign of a prophetess, Ezek. 13:17-23), all with the authorization of the church there and the consent of the husband of each prophetess. Paul insists only that these prophetesses "appear in accordance with the directives Paul has given here," which are those in effect throughout the churches. M. B. Hansen basically agrees, in a review article in *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift*, 29 (1966), pp. 91-107 (= *New Testament Abstracts*, 11, 804r), but interprets these Corinthian prophetesses to be acting wrongly, as if the life of the community were already in the kingdom-to-come; Paul rebukes this eschatological miscalculation by stressing "the traditions" and that the old order is not yet abrogated.

<sup>40</sup> For what it is worth, the Augsburg Confession, Art. 28, cites 11:5 (that women cover their heads in the assembly, though the fact they pray or prophesy is not mentioned) and alludes to 1 Cor. 14:30 as examples of "good order" (Tappert edition, p. 90), but 1 Cor. 14:34 f., is never mentioned in the 16th-century confessional writings (so Peter Brunner, p. 248).



women generally to men;<sup>41</sup> an argument from social custom (shorn hair is a disgrace), reenforced by an appeal to what nature teaches (vv. 14 f.), and appeal to Genesis 2 (vv. 7 ff.). There is also appeal to what has been dubbed "the ecumenical argument" (what the other "churches of God" do, v. 16).<sup>42</sup>

Many details remain obscure for us or at least debated ("the woman ought to have a veil on her head because of the angels").<sup>43</sup> The section has been termed a "limping argument."<sup>44</sup> Paul

himself merely asks the Corinthians to "judge for yourselves" (v. 13) and scarcely dictates an answer, though his own preference—that Christian women have their head covered as in Judaism, so as to prevent slander against the Christian movement for libertinism and thus give no offense—is clear.

While the passage seeks to "maintain traditions," its most important emphasis, especially if a literal subordination of woman to man and of Christ to God is not made central

<sup>41</sup> 11:3 is a keystone in the "subordination" argument discussed above. Cf. Riesenfeld, p. 125, on "the hierarchy of representation": in the sequence "God—Christ—man—woman," each of the last three is charged with representing the superior to the inferior; thus a male ministry must represent God and Christ to women. So also von Allmen, pp. 39 ff., on "the 'man-as-captain-of-the-woman' idea" (p. 41); or Héring's remark in his commentary, "woman has no *raison d'être* in herself" (p. 106, as cited in von Allmen, p. 41, n. 20).

A particularly strong form of statement appears in the Kittel *Theological Dictionary* article on "head" (*kephalē*, vol. 3, pp. 679 f.) when Schlier takes the statement ontologically ("the origin and *raison d'être* of woman are to be found in man. . . she points to man, and only with and through him to God. . . Not merely as a Christian, nor historically, but ontologically and by nature woman lives of man and for him. . . *Kephalē* implies one who stands over another in the sense of being the ground of his being. . . It would be for Paul an abandonment of the foundations of creation if charismatically gifted women . . . were to pray or prophesy with their heads uncovered like men").

A similar view is upheld by Peter Brunner: "we have to do here with something which is central to the faith. . . the concept of subordination" (p. 263). 11:8 shows that man is both the head and the ruler of woman (never the reverse), and there can be no eschatological transformation of this structure, which is "in effect in the Christian church until the Last Judgment" (p. 268), even though in the world nowadays a Christian woman might be permitted to serve as a judge in a secular court over men. Brunner applies the *kephalē*-structure even to unmarried women who have no husband as "head." A pastor represents Christ, a woman cannot represent Him (p. 271).

To Brunner (and Schlier, recalling a time

when he served on a committee discussing the office of *Vikarin* in the Confessing Church), cf. the reply by Anna Paulsen, *Lutheran World*, 7 (1960), pp. 231 f., and the arguments of Miss Thrall, pp. 66-76. The latter holds that a woman may (contrary to the hierarchy-of-representation principle) mediate the Christ-relationship to the husband in some cases (for example, 1 Cor 7:14, "the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife"). This is denied by von Allmen (pp. 42 f., n. 23): "Nowhere in the New Testament is there to be found the least religious sublimation of the uterine complex"; woman is not "a mediatrix between God and man"—or at least if she is, it is as a Christian, not as a woman (which—one may reply to von Allmen—is the point involved seemingly in 1 Cor. 11, the prophetesses function as Christians who have the Spirit, not because they are women but, in that day, in spite of it!).

*Concerning the Ordination of Women*, p. 46, terms 11:3 not a ladder but an abiding social fact that is put into a new light.

Isaksson (p. 165, n. 2) sees here no reference to an "order of creation" nor to men and women in general, but simply a reference to husband and wife: the husband is his wife's lord. Hence the Corinthian prophetesses spoke in public only with their husband's consent. O'Rourke is typical of many exegetes who see 11:3 ff. as referring to married women only (pp. 292 f.: ". . . wives just because they are Christians are not to act in socially unacceptable ways").

<sup>42</sup> The term is Peter Brunner's (p. 262).

<sup>43</sup> Among interpretations: women wore veils as a sign of the husband's authority; or as a protection against (evil) angels; or in view of the presence of angels at the church's worship; or to prevent reflecting the husband's glory at a time when only God's glory should be reflected; or because angels have spoken to her (cf. Isaksson, pp. 177 ff.).

<sup>44</sup> Stamm, p. 148.



(v. 3), is perhaps the aside in vv. 11-12, that "in the Lord" (that is, "in Christ" and the Christian community) man and woman are not independent, nor is it simply that woman is made for man, but there is an interdependence—perhaps one dare say, an equals-relationship. "In the Lord" is a new order—even women prophesy—though here too rules are needed.<sup>45</sup>

3. 1 Cor. 14:33b-36,

As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?<sup>46</sup>

In a long section of problems of worship at the congregational assem-

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Kähler, pp. 66 f.: (1) the passage recognizes the place of the woman who prays or prophesies; (2) propriety is involved; the woman cannot just do as the man of the day does, but must wear a veil; (3) mutual dependence of man and woman is stressed; there are differences that come from God, providing boundaries, but the one also supplements the other. Vv. 11-12 is the high point of the section.

<sup>46</sup> In addition to commentaries mentioned for 1 Cor. 11, and *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 47 f.; Thrall, pp. 76-79; Kähler, pp. 71-83; Zerbst, pp. 45-51, see especially the monograph on this passage by Gottfried Fitzer, *Das Weib Schweige in der Gemeinde: Über den unapostolischen Charakter der mulier-taceat-Verse in 1. Korinther 14* ("Theologische Existenz Heute," 110; Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1963), which concludes for the interpolation of the verse under the influences of "early Catholicism" at the end of the first century A. D. (when office-bearers were being regarded as priests, the Communion service as a sacrifice, and women were becoming passive observers at the liturgy, and women generally were being regarded as inferior and responsible for sin), on the basis of textual historical-critical, and theological reasons. The verses contradict 11:5—cf. K. Heim, *Die Gemeinde des Auferstandenen* (Munich, 1949), pp. 204 f. Krodol, p. 199: probably an interpolation.

bly at Corinth (11:2—14:40), particularly involving the gifts of the Spirit in which the Corinthians reveled, this unit comes between a larger passage on instructions about the congregation at worship (especially prophesying)—the emphasis is on order ("God is not a God of confusion but of peace," v. 32)—and a closing passage on prophets and those inspired (14:37-40; final emphasis: things done "decently and in order").

Paul's emphatic statement, "the women should keep silence in the churches" (v. 34), is presented as an "ecumenical" rule ("as in all the churches," 33b), undergirded by the subordination principle (v. 34) and appeal to the Law (evidently Gen. 3:16, the man "shall rule over" the woman; Prohl, after considering Gen. 3:16 on the wives of the patriarchs, Numbers 30:8, Eccl. 7:26, 28; Is. 3:12, and so forth, decides for the Sixth Commandment, pp. 39-46). Women "are not permitted to speak"; anything they desire to know, "they should ask their husbands at home" (35a); for them to speak in church is "shameful" (35b). The unit concludes with a sober, almost ironic exclamation: "Did God's word go forth from you in Corinth?" (some feel the implication is, "No, it went forth from Jerusalem," but Paul certainly held that "Jerusalem could err too"); "Are you the only people God's word reached?" (No, there are other congregations; the "ecumenical" rule is to be followed, and not just Corinthian practice). Apparently women were speaking at Corinthian assemblies. The passage seems to demand their silence.

On the basis of this apparently definitive ruling, *Mulier taceat in ecclesia*, women have by some been forbidden ordination, the right to vote in congregation meetings, and even to teach in parochial schools.

Attempts have been made to brush the words aside as mere cultural accommodations to the day, no more



valid for us than Paul's opinions on clothes or hairstyles.

However, for anyone who takes the passage seriously the exegetical difficulty is the relation to 11:2-16. There Paul allowed woman prophets to pray and prophesy; here he forbids them to speak. Although solutions have been sought by claiming that (1) chapters 11 and 14 come from different letters, Paul having changed his mind in between, or that (2) chapter 11 refers to a simple house meeting of a part of the congregation, while chapter 14 has in mind liturgical gatherings of the entire community,<sup>47</sup> Barrett is probably correct that "only two possibilities are worthy of serious consideration": (3) that the verses incorporate a later insertion,<sup>48</sup> a marginal gloss made in the spirit of 1 Tim. 2:11-12—a view for which there is no manuscript evidence (though some manuscripts place vv. 34-35 after v. 40), but a view that has been supported by a number of exegetes on the basis primarily that Paul could not have thus contradicted ch. 11; (4) that Paul, in seeking to regulate some of the feminist pressures at Corinth, was

<sup>47</sup> In the recent literature, the first view has been argued by Schmidhals, and the second view by P. Bachmann's commentary (1936) and Grosheide.

<sup>48</sup> So Fitzer, with reasons detailed; the view goes back at least as far as J. S. Semler, and has been held, for example, by J. Weiss; Leipoldt, pp. 190 f.; Oepke, in the *Kittel Theological Dictionary*, 1, p. 787 ("perhaps"); and Barrett, p. 333 (but "not certain"). Thrall, 76 ff., thinks the simpler solution is to regard the verses as authentic but out of context. Zerbst, pp. 50 f., does not feel this solution merits "earnest consideration." E. Schweizer, *Church Order*, p. 203, n. 783: "presumably a marginal gloss," comparing the addition at 7:5 of "fasting" (so KJV, not in RSV). V. P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (New York: Abingdon, 1968), pp. 70 f., n. 4. In this case, the "ecumenical words," "as in all the churches of the saints" are not part of the interpolation but go with v. 33a, as in the NEB footnote. S. Aalen, "A Rabbinic Formula in I Cor. 14, 34," *Studia Evangelica II*, ed. F. L. Cross (Texte und Untersuchungen, 87, Berlin, 1964), pp. 513-25.

willing in ch. 11 to allow women under the Spirit to speak, but in ch. 14 he states his own preference, that women be silent.<sup>49</sup>

If the last mentioned view is followed, one is then faced with an appeal here to the Law in a way that is not generally characteristic of Paul, and above all the probability that here "woman/women" does not refer to women in general but to wives (cf. v. 35, they are to ask their husbands: v. 34 therefore, "let your wives [*gynaikes* can be so translated; some mss. add "your"] keep silence during service"). Wives are not to interrupt with questions but should ask their husbands at home.<sup>50</sup>

Because of this likely limitation to wives (not a general rule for women), the puzzling relation to 1 Cor. 11 (and Gal. 3:28), and the possibility involved of interpolation (in the opinion of some), this verse today makes a much less certain basis for forbidding ordination of women than it often has seemed in past usage.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> So Lietzmann; cf. Barrett. Some argue that "to speak" here is to be distinguished from "pray" and "prophesy" in ch. 11. Zerbst, pp. 50 ff., allows this as a possibility. Cf. also D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul*, pp. 223-25.

<sup>50</sup> So, for example, *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 47 ff., where to the sort of statement P. Brunner makes (that "Paul bids the women to keep completely still in the assemblies of the congregation"), pp. 260 f., it is objected that in our churches today women are scarcely kept completely still. So also O'Rourke, pp. 291 f., for example.

<sup>51</sup> Kümmel, p. 190, quotes Dibelius' comment: "The juxtaposition of the two chapters demonstrates at the least that this command to silence is not an order for every situation and for all times, for it is limited even in the same letter by adjacent material in ch. 11." The phrase in v. 37, "a command from the Lord," is not to be referred to vv. 33b-36, as if a saying of Jesus were involved; it may refer to v. 38, a sentence of "holy law" from the early Christian community, or to the whole chapter—or (so Barrett) "command" may be a later insertion (cf. the manuscript evidence) and Paul's point that he speaks with the "mind of Christ."



4. Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord." Cf. 1 Peter 3:1, "Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands. . . ." <sup>52</sup>

In each case, these verses are part of a "subjection" code of relationships: like slaves to master, wives are to submit to, be subject to their husbands. Eph. 5:23 adds the sort of hierarchy already discussed: as Christ is the head of the church, the husband is head of the wife. The use of these verses in the debate has already been amply discussed under the "subordination" argument. <sup>53</sup>

That some critics think Ephesians may not be by Paul himself but by some pupil is beside the point. Even if not Paul's own composition, Ephesians is still part of the New Testament.

But even if Ephesians is Paul's own letter, the material in this section is part of a *Haustafeln* type of morality, organized under the theme "be subject . . .," a morality found also in 1 Peter and elsewhere, indeed which could be a part of a catechetical form taken over by the early church from society of the day generally.

The most serious objection to the use of these verses in the discussion on ordination is the fact that they concern the marriage relationship, not the church's ministry. <sup>54</sup>

#### 5. 1 Timothy 2:11-14

Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

Yet woman will be saved through

<sup>52</sup> On Eph. 5 and 1 Peter 3, see commentaries, especially that by E. G. Selwyn on 1 Peter; also *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 43 f., and Kähler, pp. 88-140.

<sup>53</sup> Nygren cited this argument in his speech against the government bill on ordaining women in Sweden; Rodhe, *Lutheran World*, 4 (1957-58), p. 400.

<sup>54</sup> So, for example, O'Rourke.

bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty. <sup>55</sup>

The section from 2:8 to 2:15 mixes advice on prayer with general ethical admonitions. From the context about prayer (vv. 1, 8), it has been assumed that what is said about women refers to worship at church services; hence vv. 11-14 are often cited in discussions as forbidding the ordination of women.

At 2:8 the desire is expressed that "prayers should be said by the men of the congregation" (NEB), lifting up "holy hands" (cultic expression, here interpreted ethically, "without anger or quarreling"). It has been conjectured that the old Jewish custom, where only men recited prayers at synagogue, was breaking down by the time of 1 Timothy (hence the statement in vv. 11-14), as already it had been changed by "a new spirit of emancipation . . . spreading in the young Christian congregations," for example at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:2 ff.). <sup>56</sup> Vv. 9-10 take what were apparently general rules of the day in Jewish and Christian ethical instruction ("women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly, not with [jewels]" but with "good deeds"; cf. 1 Peter 3:3 f.) and apply the admonitions especially to prayer meetings—the point, some think, so that female charms will not disturb the (male) worshipers.

Vv. 11-12 then take up what may have been a "burning issue" <sup>57</sup> in congregations: the role of women at

<sup>55</sup> On 1 Tim. 2:11-14, cf. *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 51-55; Thrall, pp. 76-79; Kähler, pp. 146-61; Zerbst, pp. 51-56; Peter Brunner, pp. 259 f.; and, among the commentaries, J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* ("Harper's series," 1963); Hans Conzelmann, revision of Martin Dibelius ("Handbuch zum Neuen Testament," 13; 4th ed. rev., 1966). *New Testament Abstracts* 13, 994.

<sup>56</sup> So Kelly, pp. 65 f.

<sup>57</sup> Kelly, p. 67.



the church assemblies, against a Jewish synagog background of traditional silence by women and a tendency for Christian women to pray and prophesy under the Spirit, at least in certain quarters.

The clear answer comes in two parallel sentences, the one which helps interpret the other:

let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness;

I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men, she is to keep silent.

The chiasmic order stresses that (1) woman is to be/learn "in silence"; (2) "submissiveness" (*hypotagē*) means subordination to what the men teach in the assembly, not domineering them.

Two reasons support this position: (1) an argument from the chronological order of creation in Gen. 2—woman was the second, not the first, to be created; (2) Eve was the gullible one in Gen. 3; she, not Adam, was deceived and fell into sin—thus woman was first in sin and, the implication is, can't be trusted to teach.<sup>58</sup> Here Genesis 3, the fall story, plays a part as in no previous reference.

Génesis 3:16 (pain in childbearing, the husband shall rule over the wife) seemingly stands behind the much-debated meaning of v. 15; woman, who was created second but fell first, nevertheless, though she is not to teach, has a proper role, motherhood, and will be saved, if she continues in the char-

<sup>58</sup> The view is found in late Judaism: "from a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die" (Sirach 25:24). While the idea appears in Paul's undisputed letters at 2 Cor. 11:3 ("the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning"), Paul is explicit that the entry of sin is through Adam (5:12 ff.), and Adam is not exonerated at the expense of Eve. Zerbst notes (and rejects) the unwarranted deductions sometimes made about women on the basis of this verse at 2:14, for example, "the great guilt and sinfulness of woman and her moral and religious inferiority is also for Paul an article of faith" (pp. 54 f.).

acteristic Christian virtues of faith and love and holiness (cf. v. 8), with modesty (v. 9), the "good deeds," such "as befits women who profess religion" (v. 10).<sup>59</sup>

The passage is sometimes "handled" by calling it "non-Pauline," but that scarcely solves the problem for anyone who makes the New Testament normative, for it is still in the canon.<sup>60</sup> If written by Paul himself, however, the section is usually placed late in his career and exhibits features of "Early Catholicism."<sup>61</sup>

Another approach is to point to the different environment from ours today found in this passage, and to argue that any literal application, as the author intended, would preclude any role for women in church: if 2:11-12 forbids their ordination, it also precludes their praying, prophesying, perhaps even singing or speaking liturgical responses and teaching males. At the least one must grant that the Jewish synagogal attitude toward women of the early Christian period, here imported into a "church order," has scarcely been universally observed in worship, church schools, and so forth.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> We pass over the debate as to whether v. 15 means childbearing only or also child-rearing as the role laid down for woman. Kelly rightly rejects interpretations that see a reference here to Mary and the birth of a Savior in v. 15, or a general truth that "women will get safely through childbearing if. . ." (Moffatt). That only Christian mothers are referred to in the "if" clause, cf. Conzelmann, pp. 39 f.

<sup>60</sup> So Stamm, rightly, p. 156.

<sup>61</sup> Features of "*Frühkatholizismus*": growth of (hierarchical) orders and structures in the church, which is becoming institutionalized; a "bourgeois morality"; eschatology becomes conventionalized; justification may be paid lip service as a slogan, but it is no longer understood or made central as in Romans; growth of "church law" and legalism. Note the phrase "by good deeds" (v. 10), on which see Conzelmann, p. 38 (good deeds are regarded in the Pastorals as a sign of true Christianity, whereas the genuine letters of Paul know only the singular and in a different sense).



A more serious stumbling block to employing this passage to settle negatively the ordination-of-women question is the likelihood that, in the opinion of many exegetes, the verses refer to the relation of wife to husbands, not of women to men in general, something noted in other passages.<sup>63</sup> Only when read in the light of the traditionalist interpretation of 1 Cor. 14:34 does this verse clearly refer to the role of women in church, and the immediate context, especially v. 15, suggests the general place of women in nature and society, not in the "order of salvation."<sup>64</sup>

The acid test of the correctness of the view that any teaching ministry was apostolically forbidden to women in the early church is whether or not women did so teach. Apparently in gnostic Christian circles they did (perhaps in reaction to Jewish custom), and also among the opponents in the church against whom the Pastorals are addressed (cf. 2 Tim. 3:6); more important, in the later tradition about Paul, Thecla appears as a teacher and preacher; above all, quite apart from any "ordained prophetesses" at Corinth (1 Cor. 11) or in Ephesus (hinted at in this passage), there is the reference at Acts 18:26 to how Priscilla and Aquila (note the order) took Apollos in hand at Ephesus and "expounded to him the way of God more accurately."<sup>65</sup> (See below, V.)

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Stamm, pp. 156 f. "Women do teach in our church schools. . . . Yet the writer of 1 Tim. 2:12 would call this a breaking of the Scripture."

<sup>63</sup> So O'Rourke, for example, p. 294.

<sup>64</sup> While some see here part of the repudiation by the Pastorals of the antireligious asceticism of the gnostic opponents, Kähler sees v. 15 reflecting "a powerful 'natural theology'" (p. 158), and most commentators take pains to show that the passage is not expounding "salvation via childbearing." It has been claimed, reading the passage in light of 1 Cor. 11, that the entire chapter reflects the hierarchical subordination of 11:3, viz., God (2:3), Christ (2:5), man (2:8), woman (2:9)!

Finally, setting aside all debate over authorship, "early catholic" influences, Jewish customs, actual practice in the early church, and granting that 2 Tim. 2:11-12 applies to women in the church, one is still faced in Lutheran theology with the "canon within the canon" principle: shall these verses be read "evangelically" or "legally,"<sup>66</sup> shall they be appraised in relation to the Gospel (with its implications of emancipation) or as on a par with every other verse and theme in the New Testament?

[At the consultation on "The Ordination of Women in Light of Church and Ministry," held at Dubuque, Iowa, Sept. 20-22, 1969, it was requested that three additional passages be mentioned in connection with the New Testament evidence. All three concern the theme of "leaders" or "Kephale structure" and relate to the subordination argument (above, IV. A. 4); they can be appended to the list of specific passages discussed above in IV. B. as passages 6, 7, and 8. They do not seem usually to have been cited in articles and books on the subject.]

#### 6. Hebrews 13:7, 17:

Remember your leaders (*Hegoumenoi*), those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. . . . Obey

<sup>65</sup> For details, cf. the excursus in Conzelmann, p. 40; for Thecla, cf. *Acts of Paul*, chapters 37, 39, 41, 43. Zerbst, pp. 52 f., allows that even in 1 Tim. 2 women may have been allowed to teach in the quiet of the family circle, or, following Schlatter, that they might speak in the congregation when they again became calm after an experience of the Spirit (in this case, 1 Tim. modifies 1 Cor. 14), and that women should be under the same condition as men: to pray "without anger" (v 8); Zerbst criticizes Schlatter's exegesis and stresses subordination.

<sup>66</sup> *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, p. 53. An additional question raised there is whether the treatment of the Old Testament given in vv. 13-14 can be regarded as a right use of Scripture today, especially for building doctrines.



your leaders (*begoumenoi*) and submit (*hypeikete*) to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. . . .

Cf. v. 24, "greet all your leaders."

These verses appear in the final chapter of admonitions in Hebrews (perhaps an appendage to an earlier homily). 13:7 and 17 fit closely together as the beginning and ending of a distinct section structured about obedience to, and imitation of, "leaders" (founding fathers, perhaps martyrs, now recalled by a second generation of Christians, v. 7; and present-day leaders who have authority as proclaimers of the Word and as *Seelsorger*, vv. 7, 17, 24). Such leaders stand in contrast to "strange teachings" that lead astray (v. 9). Especially stressed against such teachings are sound Christology (v. 8), suffering (of Jesus, v. 12), sacrifice (that is, confession of God's name, and praise for Him), and sharing (doing good).

There is used here a term for "leaders" not found elsewhere in the New Testament (but cf. Luke 22:26 and Acts 15:22) but which occurs in 1 Clement and Hermas. This term *begoumenos* derives from the Hellenistic political world, perhaps through Hellenistic Judaism, with possible Hebrew roots, but is vague in meaning. "Submit" is not the usual Greek word *hypotassomai* and is found in the New Testament only here. "As men who will have to give account . . ." is a masculine participle (which could cover a mixed group) and tells us nothing further definitive about the group. Recall, however, the suggestion that Priscilla (and Aquila) wrote Hebrews (an interesting though unlikely guess, which would make this the only New Testament document with a woman as authoress or coauthor—most recently advanced by Ruth Hoppin, *Priscilla, Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and Other Essays* [New York: Exposition Press, 1969]).

Who these leaders were we do not know (Michel, *Meyer Kommentar*, p. 488). The admonition to obey leaders is common in early Christian ethical instruction (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Clem. 1:3, 21:6; Didache 4:1, 15:2), much like the attitude toward the teacher in the synagog (Windisch, *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*, pp. 119 f.). In Hebrews, with its theme of the people of God in pilgrimage, there is no stress on human priesthood or hierarchy of offices (contrast 1 Clement); suffering and service characterize all God's people, every one of whom possesses the Spirit; there is a ministry of teaching, based on spiritual growth, and an orientation that "combats the institutional church" (E. Schweizer, *Church Order*, pp. 114-16).

While the passage is one with others in enjoining obedience to leaders whose proclamation, life, pastoral care, and witness rate due respect, we must be careful not to read into Hebrews other patterns of hierarchy or ministry (as Austin Farrer does, in *The Apostolic Ministry*, p. 156, who supposes Hebrews was addressed only to "elders," with "laity" thought of merely incidentally). The pilgrim people of God seems here more like a "charismatic democracy" than a body dominated by hierarchical orders.

7. 1 Peter 5:1, 5:

I exhort the elders (*presbyteroi*) among you, as a fellow elder . . . , tend the flock of God. . . . Likewise you that are younger, be subject to the elders (*hypotagete presbyterois*). Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. . . .

In the concluding exhortations of this epistle Peter addresses first the elders (vv. 1-4), then the younger members of the church (v. 5a), then all members (5b-9) (cf. G. Bornkamm, "presbys," *Kittel Theological Dictionary*, 6, pp. 665 f.). Some commentators have attempted to see a



technical use of *presbyteroi* in v. 5, just as in v. 1, for office-bearers (so Moffatt, = *diakonoi*; Windisch, the younger = the "sheep" or laity), but most exegetes, while allowing an official connotation in v. 1, see v. 5 as merely a reference to those older in years (so Selwyn, Beare, E. Schweizer; cf. 1 Tim. 5:1; Acts 5:6, 10). Thus, Beck renders, "you young people, submit to those who are older." On this interpretation, young people are being told to be subject to the older people, as wives are to husbands, slaves to masters, and so forth, a pattern in early Christian catechetical material (cf. Selwyn, *1 Peter*, pp. 435-37).

The term "elder" derives from the synagog and from civil corporations in the Hellenistic world. It is undefined in 1 Peter, probably including "all who have any kind of authorized pastoral office and function" (Selwyn, p. 227). Envisioned is a college of presbyters, its exact scope not spelled out. Peter himself is described merely as a "fellow elder" (v. 1, *sympresbyteros*, a term coined for the occasion perhaps). There is no bishop in 1 Peter, Christ being *episkopos* (2:25). The presbyterate here has a "patriarchal character;" it shepherds, but is not in 1 Peter called "the guardian of the apostolic tradition against error" as in the Pastorals (Bornkamm). Like Hebrews, 1 Peter is oriented to the "people of God" theme, and Schweizer sees "no distinction between clergy and laity" in the epistle (*Church Order*, p. 112).

Results: again, a passage urging due submission to pastoral leaders, but with no definition of office, no hierarchy, but a clear "people of God" emphasis.

#### 8. 1 Timothy 3:1-5:

The saying is sure: If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospita-

ble, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive (*en hypotagē*) and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?

This famous passage, introduced by the formula "*Pistos ho logos*" (unless the reference to "the saying" points back to the previous section in 2:11-14, treated above; the formula also occurs at 1:15 and 4:9), lists qualifications for the office of *episkopos*. 3:8-13 goes on in a similar way, listing qualities needed in those who seek to be deacons. 1 Timothy (and the Pastorals generally) reflects a church "that has established itself in the world and is taking over ordinary Hellenistic ethics" (E. Schweizer, *Church Order*, p. 77). Structurally, the church of 1 Timothy has "the office of bishop" (3:1) and "deacons" (3:8), with presbyters also mentioned (5:17). Many exegetes, however, identify the *episkopoi* or overseers with the *presbyteroi* or "elders," the deacons being a second group distinct from them in the Pastorals. Here in 3:1-7 we have a list of qualifications for the *episkopos* (vv. 6-7 add that he ought not to be a recent convert, but a man well thought of by outsiders, and so forth).

It is well known that the fifteen requisites for the *episkopos* in this list are remarkably mundane and negative (for example, "no drunkard"). One might assume that such minimal demands would hold for all church members. Further, some details are notoriously hard to define (does "the husband of one wife" mean he must be married, or that he not have two wives, or that he cannot remarry if his first wife dies?). It is also well known that the requirements are parallel in many ways to lists that circulated in the Hellenistic world of requirements for



a good general, and so forth. Some think that 1 Timothy simply incorporates here such a list from the secular world, with a few "Christian touches" (B. S. Easton, Dibelius, and so forth; J. N. D. Kelly in his commentary admits the parallels but calls this history-of-religions aspect "greatly exaggerated," p. 74). The fact that such parallels do exist in secular lists may account for the variant reading in v. 1 in some Greek manuscripts: "this is a human (or 'popular') saying," as if the scribes recognized how prosaic it is.

At the Dubuque conference, the list of qualifications here was taken up and emphasized by some participants in light of the "*Kephale* principle," that man is the head of the woman, seen reflected in 1 Timothy 2:11, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness" (discussed above). This relation of man to woman was urged as an eternal and abiding feature (an "order of creation") especially incumbent on the church to preserve. At 3:4, the point was stressed, one requirement for a bishop (that is, pastor) is that he "manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive. . . ." The passage goes on, "If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?" The same point is urged for deacons, "Let them manage their children and their households well" (3:12), and there is clearly in the chapter a connection between "a man's household" (vv. 4, 5) and the household of God (v. 15), the church (vv. 5, 15). The conclusion drawn was that there is a parallel between ruling a family and ruling the church. "Rule" is involved in both, and just as man, the head of woman, must rule in the family, so also in the church. Ergo, no female clergy, who might rule over men.

To this position, exception was taken by others. Do we regard 1 Timothy 3:1 ff. as a list of requirements for ordination for all time? (If so, how do

we interpret "the husband of one wife"? Does "managing his own household well, keeping submissive his children" demand he be a married man, with children, who are properly obedient? *Cui bono?*) There was objection to absolutizing such a list. It was pointed out that a logical corollary to the "*Kephale* argument" is that the church should then today crusade for the subordination of women in society generally, not merely in the church, since this subordination to man, the head, comes from creation's structure and seemingly should apply to all of society. Our Christian duty would be to repeal the 19th Amendment.

Against such a view, exegetically, apart from the question of universalizing what may have been merely an *ad hoc* list of suggested minimums for local leaders in a particular situation, the chief difficulties are (1) the Hellenistic background to the list and (2) the reference to "the women" in v. 11. Addressing the first difficulty, if much of the list of requirements is but a commonplace in Hellenistic thought, should we make it eternal and abiding rules for the church? That point applies even to the analogy seen between the church and the family. To place family, city-state, and cosmos in parallel was common in Stoic thought (cf. Dibelius-Conzelmann). Is this argument from Stoic thought to be decisive for church structure today? (If so, can we determine a family pattern implicit in creation itself, unchanging, that applies to the church?) Now to the second difficulty: both the requirements for the bishop and for the deacon include the stipulation "managing their children and their households well" (3:4 f., 12), but inserted into the section on deacons is a verse on "the women." We have already noted the possibility that, while this verse (3:11) might refer to the wives of the deacons, it may also (more likely) refer to deaconesses (wives of



*episkopoi* are not singled out for similar mention; cf. section V above, note 4; Guthrie's commentary, in the Tynedale series, 1957, p. 85, speaks of "a new class" here beside the deacons; Kelly translates, "women deacons"). If such is the reference, then the author of 1 Timothy rejected any connection between a "*Kephale* structure" (which would prohibit women from such an office, apparently; the Pastorals never use *kephalē*) and his passing analogy involving home and church; perhaps he did not know the *Kephale* structure as we term it. But he did know of a situation where women had some sort of ministry, and so the theological argument we have heard advanced may be contrary to actual practice in the Pastorals.

In short: if one assumes the *Kephale* structure as abiding truth in Biblical theology (so that woman is submissive to man as part of the God-given order of creation and cannot "rule" over him, which ministry would seem to involve) and hence that this *Kephale* structure is something that it is the church's task to uphold, then such passages as those three just discussed do undergird the need for women to remain respectfully under their male leaders. But there seems too much evidence that the early church, with its eschatological consciousness of the Spirit's presence as a token of the New Age, did not opt just for retaining such structures, but at times—in spite of its historical circumstances, in a culture where the role of women in society was often severely limited—allowed women in ministry roles, as foretaste of the new creation "in Christ" or fulfillment of God's original will for male and female in Genesis 1.

## V. WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF THE EARLY CHURCH<sup>67</sup>

Quite apart from arguments over

<sup>67</sup> Summaries are provided in *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 17-21; Zerbst, pp. 82-94 (with succeeding periods treated

possible New Testament reasons permitting or forbidding the ordination of women to the ministry, there is the historical question of whether women engaged in types of ministry in the early church. Unfortunately, the picture suffers from the same paucity of evidence that makes discussions about the ministry of men in the early church often unclear, at least in detail.

Of course it can be argued, somewhat dogmatically, that "ordination of women would be incompatible with New Testament thought"<sup>68</sup> and therefore could not have happened except among heretics, but that already prejudices what should be a descriptive, historical question.<sup>69</sup>

The facts seem to be that women with Jesus are mentioned as ministering to Him during His lifetime and at His death (for example, Luke 8:3;

pp. 94-103); and Oepke, "*gynē*," in the *Kittel Theological Dictionary*, 1, pp. 787-89; further references in these treatments, as well as in Zerbst, pp. 14 ff., on monographs on the topic early in the present century. C. H. Turner, "Ministries of Women in the Primitive Church; Widow, Deaconess, and Virgin," in *Catholic and Apostolic*, ed. H. N. Bate (London: Mowbray, 1931), pp. 316-51. J. Danielou, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church* (London: Faith Press, 1961). See also commentaries on specific verses cited, and Bible dictionaries and treatments of "ministry," many of which are cited in Schweizer, *Church Order*. Some of the pertinent, recent literature in periodicals is cited below. *Women and Holy Orders*, pp. 14-16. Prohl, pp. 73-76.

<sup>68</sup> Thus the 1951 statement of New Testament teachers in Sweden, in response to the exegetical treatment by Erik Sjöberg in the report of the official government committee, cited in Stendahl, p. 7; cf. Rodhe's summary, *Lutheran World*, 4 (1957-58), pp. 393 f.

<sup>69</sup> Thus, for example, von Allmen, p. 43, n. 23: "each time these ministries to which women are ordained include the regular administration of the sacraments, one is falling into heresy." Or was the "restriction on the participation of women in church services," inherited from Judaism, one of the factors, Stamm asks, p. 149, "that led to the development of the heresies"? On the "heresy" argument, cf. Thrall, p. 113, and *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 35 f.



Mark 15:41), but they are not called disciples, let alone "apostles." "The Twelve" do not include any women, nor do the Lucan apostle lists, though in the broader sense of *apostle* the term may be applied to a woman once (Rom. 16:7).<sup>70</sup> Prophetesses have been mentioned (1 Cor. 11; Acts 21:9), perhaps "ordained" (at Corinth), certainly speaking in the Lord's name under the Spirit to the community.

Originally a charismatic function, the "deaconess" type of ministry that Phoebe exercised (Rom. 16:1) probably only later became an office, but perhaps already by the time 1 Tim. 3:8 ff. was written such "female deacons" existed (3:11, "the women" in parallel to "deacons" at 3:8, may refer to "deaconesses" as in the NEB note, or, as in RSV and NEB text to the wives of deacons).<sup>71</sup> The same difficulty for interpretation that arises in this last passage also appears in later references to *presbytera*, *presbyterissa*, or *episcopa*: is a female presbyter or bishop involved, or the wife of a man holding that office?<sup>72</sup> There are also "conse-

crated widows" (1 Tim. 5:3 ff.), the exact status and function of whom, especially in relation to "official deaconesses" (as at 3:11), is debated. Finally, there are women mentioned by name who played leadership roles—Lydia (Acts 16), Priscilla (see above; conjectured by Harnack to have written Hebrews), or (outside the New Testament) Thecla.

The evidence is far from clear, falling somewhere between what partisans on both sides of the ordination-of-women question sometimes claim. It has been claimed, for example, that women in the New Testament period performed some offices of service but had nothing to do with sacraments<sup>73</sup>—but then, how much do we know about the administration of sacraments by any "clergy" in the New Testament period? On the other hand: a picture of three charismatic orders of women (deaconesses, "virgins," widows) alongside three ordained orders of men (deacons, elders, bishops),<sup>74</sup> set apart from the "laity,"

an order of women priests; they denote "the wives (and mothers) of priests and bishops, especially when they divorced so their husbands could enter the monastery" (p. 57, cf. 58, 63). Others take such terms differently. For citations, cf. the entries in *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961-68), for example, p. 358; *s.v. diakonos* C.; or G. Uhlhorn, *Christian Charity in the Ancient Church* (New York: Scribner's, 1883), pp. 170 ff., and A. Ehrhardt, *The Framework of the New Testament Stories* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 308 f. (*venerabilis femina episcopa*).

<sup>73</sup> So G. G. Blum, "Das Amt der Frau im Neuen Testament," *Novum Testamentum*, 7 (1964), pp. 142-61 (summary in *New Testament Abstracts*, 9, Number 1060), who holds the early church made a deliberate decision, which should hold good today as well, not to ordain women. Stendahl, p. 40, counters that "the New Testament knows of no special argumentation about the ministry when it comes to the role of women in the church"—it speaks of her subordination in creation, but does not make special statements here about the sacraments.

<sup>74</sup> So Dale Moody, "Charismatic and Of-

<sup>70</sup> The possibility was noted above. Pro: C. H. Dodd, *Romans* ("Moffatt Commentary," 1932), p. 239, "Chrysostom. . . saw no difficulty in a woman-apostle; nor need we." Prohl, p. 72. Con: O. Michel, *Römer* ("Meyer" KEK series, 1966), pp. 379 f., the feminine form "Julia" or "Junia" is "not to be thought of." Rengstorf, "apostolos," Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, 1, 421: against *shaliab* background and legal view of women in Judaism, a woman "apostle" is not to be expected—a legal self-contradiction. Cf. also p. 431.

<sup>71</sup> On deaconesses, cf. the article in Kittel on *diakonos*, 2, p. 93; A. Kalsbach, "Die altkirchliche Einrichtung der Diakonissen," *Römische Quartalschrift*, Beiheft 22 (1926). At 1 Tim. 3:8 ff., Oepke decides for "official deaconesses" (*Theological Dictionary*, 1, p. 788), rather than a deacon's wife; so also O'Rourke, p. 294 ("official functions in the Church, . . . not necessarily . . . a sacramental Order"); Schweizer, *Church Order*, p. 86, n. 334; Conzelmann leaves the matter open. Krodell, deaconesses rather than deacons' wives. (*Dialog*, p. 201, n. 105)

<sup>72</sup> N. Chitescu, writing as a Roumanian Orthodox theologian, in *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, denies such titles justify



seems likewise to force the evidence into too smooth a composite picture.

It is worth noting that subsequent decrees and statements on ministry do not appeal, in many cases, to the New Testament texts prominent in modern debate which we have examined, to exclude ordination of women.<sup>75</sup>

## VI. THE HERMENEUTICAL QUESTION

The historical evidence being as incomplete as it is, and the exegesis of the individual verses and the force of the arguments from Biblical theology being as controverted as we have seen, it is apparent that the whole question is basically one of hermeneutics:<sup>76</sup> how do you interpret and apply

cial Ministries: A Study of the New Testament Concept," *Interpretation*, 19 (1965), pp. 169-81. (Summary in *New Testament Abstracts*, 10, number 283.)

<sup>75</sup> O'Rourke, p. 296: "prescinding from a possible definitive statement of the magisterium there does not seem present anything which would militate against woman's being advanced to lower Orders, specifically to the diaconate. . . ." Decrees like that of Gelasius I (A. D. 494; Denzinger no. 1839) are discussed, with the notation that no appeal is made in these decrees to New Testament texts. Another recent Roman Catholic analysis is found in P. Grelot, *Le ministère de la Nouvelle Alliance* (Paris: Cerf, 1967), where ordination of women is specifically discussed. For Lutherans, similarly, the absence of confessional statements based on Scripture is noted by Peter Brunner, p. 248 (cf. 253), "the confessional standards of the Evangelical Lutheran Church . . . do not express themselves on the problem of the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry," and neither 1 Cor. 14: 34 ff. nor 1 Tim. 2:11 are cited. Canons to which the Eastern Orthodox appeal are given in *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 57-60, 63; Anglican, p. 69. Though Miss Thrall thought it necessary to argue (p. 113) that "if the ordination of women can be justified on the biblical bases . . . the evidence of tradition during the first three centuries should not be regarded as a decisive argument against it," it now appears that the tradition embodied in canons, decrees, and confessional writings is not so limiting, at least for some Roman Catholics and Lutherans, as her comment supposed.

the Scripture?

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 historical criticism

<sup>76</sup> Hence Stendahl's subtitle, "A Case Study in Hermeneutics." Opinions on the basis of the historical and exegetical evidence vary from declarations that the Bible forbids ordaining women to Schweizer's judgment that "no ministry in the New Testament is forbidden to any member of the Church" (*Church Order*, p. 203). Hence the judgment, "Most churches do not believe they can get any direct guidance from the Bible on the matter, the pertinent passages being interpreted very differently" (S. Rodhe, *Lutheran World*, 5, 1958-59), p. 398. So also the view expressed by J. R. Nelson, "Styles of Service in the New Testament and Now," *Theology Today*, 22 (1965), pp. 84-102, that the New Testament does not answer our questions here; "restorationism" of supposed New Testament practices would be impossible (even if we knew those practices); the best we can gain from the New Testament is an insight into the diversity of ministries then which contributed to the upbuilding of the church.

The article on "Woman's Place in the Church" by three women, in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, 3, p. 2497 a, states that "the problem seems to be one of Bible interpretation" and asks "must the passages cited above be applied literally to our times or do we have to take into account the difference in woman's sociological position today and two thousand years ago and then seek to discover the actual meaning of the message for today?" That implies, though, that the problem is caused only by "modern change," when in reality there is a problem already in the diversity of the Biblical data and the question of what shall be central in interpreting Scripture. It is also a misleading truism to point out that in time of emergencies, theological objections fade! While many turns in the development of ordination and customs about the ministry have doubtless been caused by practical necessity (for example, the decline of a female diaconate in the fourth century because of the growth of the practice of infant baptism meant it was no longer necessary to have deaconesses to baptize female adults), we are suggesting there is a hermeneutical aspect that ought to be involved in our decision—not just a series of pragmatic factors. On the hermeneutical question here, cf. Stendahl, pp. ix-xii and 8 ff.



Reumann: What in Scripture Speaks to the Ordination of Women?

is applied, some of these texts most frequently cited against ordaining women can be excluded (as glosses) or demoted in value (as deutero-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.<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, the Biblical evidence, it must be added, is not the whole story on what the mind of the church has been on the subject through the ages. Inevitably, there was development—of ordination practice—and definition—of woman's role in the church—through later centuries. It must also be recognized that the later traditions obscure as well as develop New Testament insights on such questions. Today one finds oneself compelled to take into consideration also a host of other factors besides the Biblical and historical factors.

For a church, however, that regards Scripture as normative, the real problem it faces in using Scripture, if that usage is to be serious but not simply literalistic, is hermeneutical. On a Scriptural basis ordination of women has been both blocked and held up as an open possibility—depending on whether certain texts are read as determinative, forbidding the possibility, or others are made guiding expressions of the Gospel overshadowing the others. Does a central Gospel or do individual texts—and, if so, which ones and how interpreted—prevail in reaching a decision?<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> This is true even if the Pastorals be accounted deutero-Pauline; 1 Cor. 11 and 14:34 must still be brought into harmony. Lampe, p. 124, comments, "To cite Gal. 3:28 against I Corinthians and the Pastorals is not to play off one proof-text against another. As Luther found with the texts on justification, there are Scriptural passages which unmistakably express the fundamental implications of the gospel itself, and this is one of them."

<sup>78</sup> Compare the attempt at summation and drawing the consequences in *Concerning the Ordination of Women*, pp. 37-39, 55 f.: no

## VII. THE ESCHATOLOGICAL QUESTION

At several points it has been suggested that the meaning of key texts depends on the eschatological stance involved. If the new age has come, then the old order is changed, and "in Christ" the new obtains. If, on the other hand, we are still in the old order or not fully in Christ in the new, then the orders of creation still hold, at least in some respects.

There is no question but that for Paul and the New Testament God was at work in Christ; the new has come; the old, passed away (2 Cor. 5:17 ff.). But in spite of interpretations that stress this aspect of fulfillment or "realized eschatology," it is also true that, for Paul especially, all is not yet fulfilled; Christians have not fully entered into the new age, they have not yet completely arrived. At Corinth it may precisely have been the eschatological miscalculation of the gnostic opponents to have assumed they "already reigned" with Christ (1 Cor. 4:8). Paul himself had eschatological reservations, all has not yet come.

In the church today, therefore, with regard to its preaching and worship life, with regard to the ministry, is the situation to be seen fundamentally in terms of the new and fulfillment, or by reference to the old and creation? Paul's use of Genesis categories scarcely answers that question in unambiguous terms: he sees a "new creation" in Christ, yet he can invoke the order of the original cre-

Biblical basis exists for rejecting the ordination of women; building up the body of Christ as a regulative criterion, with a view to the church's mission; that "the relationship of man and woman in the N. T. is everywhere grafted into the manifold relationships of the body of Christ" is also binding on us; today's rising demand for partnership between men and women; in light of all this, "does the admission of women to full service in the Church help in its edification and in the fulfillment of its mission to the world?"



ation as a restraint on going too far too fast.

First Corinthians 11, on this reading, turns out to be the key passage: Paul allows women to pray and prophesy in church, because it is a prompting of the Spirit that moves them; this overcomes all the inclinations from his Jewish heritage; at the same time he regulates this ministry, like all gifts of the Spirit, so that it will really build up the body of Christ, the people of God, and not cause offense at the wrong points. That in Paul's day and environment!

It follows that in our vastly changed day and generation the ordination of women is often culturally more easy and obvious than in Paul's, and that Biblically there is a case for allowing it.<sup>79</sup> Church leaders must ask whether the movement toward it is a prompting of the Spirit or whether one should continue to cling to the old and to the traditions long established. If they conclude for the work of the Spirit in drawing women into

the ministry, these leaders still have the duty of regulating it, for the edification of the church and its mission, for the sake of good order, and to show that, while the new has dawned for believers, all is not yet the fullness of the Kingdom.

It remains to add that if this eschatological argument is given proper weight, it should provide an answer to the proposal sometimes made that women ought to have a fuller ministry in the church but not at the Eucharist. The answer is to reject such a solution, for if there is any one place where the church most perceives the presence of the new age, the forgiveness, the eschatological rejoicing her Lord has brought, it is at the Lord's Supper. It follows that here, if anywhere, there should be neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but "all in one—in Christ."<sup>80</sup>

Philadelphia, Pa.

<sup>79</sup> J. Leipoldt, *Die Frau in der antiken Welt und im Urchristentum*, pp. 234 f.: the general New Testament picture is clear—women were not minimized or undervalued. But current customs and conditions had to be obeyed. Yet times have changed. Today who would insist that women be veiled at church services? "Every age has the duty to draw out of the basic principles of the Gospel the consequences that correspond to the times. In the case of the question of women, the decisive thing is the principle that before God man and woman are alike Paul formulated that in a classic way (Gal. 3:28). But it was impossible in the ancient world to realize this; the whole contemporary social order stood in the way; one had to be satisfied with partial fulfillment. In the present it is especially pressing to take up the task again of whether a further fulfilling is commanded."

<sup>80</sup> Many writers have recognized this eschatological aspect and the role of the Spirit in opening new possibilities. Thus Stendahl, pp. 36 f.: we know we are not yet in the Kingdom, but we need to see Paul's bold vision. E. Schweizer, *Church Order*, p. 204: it is God's Spirit who marks out in freedom the pattern that church order afterwards recognizes; it is therefore functional, regulative, serving, but not constitutive, and that is what is decisive. The Spirit, which ever could be counted on in new situations (cf. Acts 15:28; 1 Cor. 7:40), may be calling for new patterns today. Hence the church is to stay "open to God's active intervention," allowing for new ministries and new persons given grace for existing ministries. Against such a view, von Allmen warns, p. 15, "Do not make the Holy Spirit an excuse for turning everything upside-down."