

# **CONTROVERTED MATTERS IN THE LCA DEBATE ON THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN CTICR**

## **Preamble**

The following paper summarising responses from CTICR members when asked to identify the matters still in dispute in the LCA debate on the ordination of women was finalised after a wide-ranging discussion at the plenary meeting on 28 May 2004. It is released to the pastors and people of the LCA for their information, discussion, and above all, as a point of focus for their prayer. The items listed at A1, B2 and A3 are regarded as key issues, and will be given particular attention as the subject of special papers to be published in LTJ and, in summary form, in 'The Lutheran'. The GCC-appointed steering committee is producing a timeline for these publications and their presentation to the whole church for study prior to Synod 2006.

## **A. Exegetical Issues**

1. We do not agree on whether the command for the silence of women and the prohibition of them speaking/teaching in 1 Cor 14:33b-38 and 1 Tim 2:11-15 apply to all churches at all times and places, and how.
2. We do not agree on whether Paul's pronouncement about the Lord's command in 1 Cor 14:37 refers to the prohibition and command in 1 Cor 14:34, and whether his warning in 1 Cor 14:38 applies to those who advocate the ordination of women
3. We do not agree on whether the teaching in Gal 3:26-28 on the equality of women and men before God the Father implies that they are equally eligible for the pastoral ministry.
4. We do not agree on how the teaching in 1 Cor 14:34 and 1 Tim 2:11 on the subordination of women in the church relates to the biblical teaching on the relationship between male and female in creation, headship, the orders of family, state and church, and subordination within the orders.
5. We do not agree on whether Luke 10:38-42; 1 Cor 11:5; and Eph 5:21 can rightly be used to support the ordination of women, and whether 1 Tim 3:2-5; Acts 1:21; Tit 1:5-6 and Eph 5:22-24 can rightly be used, together with 1 Cor 14:33b-38 and 1 Tim 2:11-15, to support the ordination of men only'.

## **B. Hermeneutical Issues**

1. We agree that the Scriptures are the inerrant and authoritative word of God. We do not agree on whether the authority of scripture is called into question if it is held that the words of Paul in 1 Cor 14:33b-38 and 1 Tim 2:11-15 do not prohibit the ordination of women.
2. We agree that the NT was addressed both to its original audiences as well as to the church of all times and at all places. We do not agree on how some of the commands of the Lord and the apostles apply in the church today.
3. We need to explore how to determine whether our presuppositions are consonant with the Scriptures and the teaching of the church.
4. We agree that the writers of the Scriptures were influenced by their cultural context and the culture of their readers; while they at times affirmed what was good in their culture, they also critiqued it and transcended it. We need to explore how a teaching that was seemingly 'conditioned' by the cultural context in the NT is to be understood by us in a changed cultural context.

## C. Theological Issues

1. We agree that by his word Christ has instituted certain acts, such as the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments. We disagree on whether his institution of the apostolic ministry authorises only men to exercise it, and whether ordination of women is an *adiaphoron*, something that has been neither commanded nor forbidden.
2. We agree that marriage, the family and the church are divinely instituted. We disagree on how the order of creation is connected with the order of redemption, and on how these relate to the ordination of women.
3. We agree that while doctrine should not be established by precedent, but on clear words of teaching from Christ and his apostles, precedent may be used to confirm our teaching. We also agree that the Son of God became incarnate as a male person and that he chose men as apostles. We disagree on whether the maleness of Christ needs to be reflected in a male pastorate, and why.
4. We agree that Paul had women as coworkers. We disagree on whether his recognition of women as coworkers, such as Priscilla (Acts 18:26; Rom 16:3), Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2), Junia/s (?) (Rom 16:7), Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2), provides a precedent to support the ordination of women in the LCA.

## D. Historical Issues

1. We agree that there is a long standing teaching tradition in the church of ordaining men only. We disagree on the weight that should be given to its tradition of exegesis and teaching on this, and on whether we isolate ourselves from the church catholic and its tradition if we do ordain women.
2. We agree that we belong to the church catholic and uphold its teaching and practice. We disagree on how we are to determine whether our teaching and practices are catholic. We also disagree on whether the church has failed to draw out the full implications of the gospel by not ordaining women.

## E. Practical Issues

1. We agree that the LCA must be guided by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures, the ecumenical creeds, and the Lutheran Confessions in critiquing and developing its public doctrine. We disagree on how the following should guide us in the interpretation of our experience and in the development of our public doctrine
  - the Theses of Agreement and the Document of Union
  - past synodical decisions
  - the authority of the President
  - the decisions of other Lutheran churches and other confessional churches
2. We agree that while the pastors and presidents of the LCA are responsible for the formulation and teaching of its public doctrine (Apol 28:5,21), the members of the church are responsible for assessing whether their teaching conforms to Scriptures and the Confessions. We disagree on the role of the following in reaching a consensus in doctrinal matters
  - pastors and pastors conferences
  - the President, the College of Presidents
  - synodical conventions

## **Appendices**

We recommend that the following issues be taken off the agenda because they either obscure our discussion or are basically irrelevant to it.

1. The general appeal to culture and to cultural conditioning as a reason to dismiss the relevance of a passage from the Bible
2. The appeal to servanthood as the foundation for ministry and its authority rather than the manner in which it is exercised
3. The appeal to giftedness as the foundation for ministry and the basic qualification for it
4. The implication that the ordering of the ministry is merely a matter of the law
5. The implication that concern for right doctrine and practice promotes a hermeneutic that is driven by the law rather than the gospel
6. The assumption that commands are always to be identified with the teaching of the law
7. The argument that the ordination of women either advances or retards the mission of the church
8. The argument that women are better equipped than men by gender and experience for the office of the ministry

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