

foot-washing is merely an 'example' (John 13:15). Others have appealed to Luke 10:38-42, where (allegedly) Mary's sitting at Jesus' feet indicates she was training to be a rabbi!

Another approach is to attack the king and queen directly, either by claiming that 1 Cor 14:33-38 and 1 Tim 2:11-15 are not clear, or by claiming they are no longer relevant. I would urge you to check the clarity of the texts for yourself. Don't just accept what some theologian says; theologians often obscure texts that are clear in themselves. And if you still have doubts about the apostle's intentions, then check out the 'castles', 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:6, where Paul takes it for granted that a pastor will be a man, 'the husband of one wife'.

Those who claim that these texts are no longer relevant must prove that 'the command of the Lord', conveyed to us by 'the apostle of Jesus Christ' and backed up by what God said 'in the beginning', is not God's word for us today. Don't be taken in by the notion that we people of the 21st Century are so much more enlightened than our Christian forefathers and mothers, or our cultural situation is so different from theirs. Paul has a sharp word for those in Corinth who thought they could defy God's Word on this issue: 'Was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?' (1 Cor 14:36).

## Let's Stick to the Major Issues

In a set of ten brochures it is impossible to take issue with every argument that has been advanced. One difficulty for those who say 'no' to women's ordination is not the strength, but the inventiveness of the opposing arguments and the determination of their advocates. No sooner is an argument like Gal 3:28 refuted than we find it dusted off and back on the board in another position. Or we find a new argument of no greater weight taking its place. The authors of these brochures have therefore focused on the major issues of the debate, particularly issues of how to interpret the Bible and how to relate biblical teaching to our culture.

It is true that considerable pain is experienced over this matter. Some women feel pain at being excluded from the ordained Office of the Ministry. On the other hand some, like one contributor to these brochures, prefer to remain anonymous rather than be attacked for speaking out against women's ordination. Pain is felt, too, by men sidelined for refusing to go against their consciences.

But the weighing of pain cannot be a factor in the debate. Some pain will always be a by-product of the church's great debates. But the issue itself can come to a God-pleasing resolution only through humble listening and submission to the Word of God.

Pastors are one of God's many gifts to his church (Eph 4:7-11; 1 Cor 12:28). Who are we to query the form in which the Lord has presented his gift?

*Dr Greg Lockwood*  
*Pastor, Lutheran Church of Australia*

## Brochures in this 'Ordained by God' series:

1. *Introducing the Issue*
2. *Let's Be Clear About Pastors*
3. *By Christ's Command*
4. *Church History Teaches*
5. *The Spirit of the World*
6. *For the Sake of the Gospel*
7. *Honouring God's Good Creation*
8. *Keeping Mission Integrity*
9. *Women Speak*
10. *Speaking the Truth in Love*

*Produced and funded by people, lay and ordained, of the Lutheran Church of Australia, Pentecost 2002.*

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# Introducing the Issue





# Introducing the Issue

*For those looking for a clear word of Christian teaching on the question of the ordination of women in the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA).*

This is the first in a series of brochures written to present the clear biblical basis for ordaining only men (suitably trained and called) into the public Office of the Ministry. These brochures were initiated at a retreat for pastors and their families held in Mannum, South Australia, in January, 2001, and respond to the promotion of women's ordination in the LCA.

Many pastors and lay-people feel conscience-bound to oppose women's ordination because of the Lord's commands in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy. While the largest Christian denominations (Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox) do not ordain women, most Lutheran churches do, with some notable exceptions. Of course, what is proper practice in the church of God is not simply a matter of majority vote.

## Array of Evidence

One analogy that may appropriately describe the debate over women's ordination is that of a chess game. One player possesses a full set of pieces - king, queen, castles, bishops, knights, and pawns. Each chess piece represents a Bible passage, many of which come from the pen of our Lord's ambassador, the apostle Paul.

The 'king' is 1 Cor 14:33-38, which includes: 'the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says' (v 34). It also includes: '[this is] the Lord's command' (v 37).

The 'queen' is 1 Tim 2:11-15, which includes: 'I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet'.

These two texts alone should settle the issue. But there are more, beginning with two 'castles', 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:6. Both of these state that a pastor should be 'the husband of one wife'. Disregard modern translations that obscure these texts with renderings like 'married only once' or 'faithful in marriage'. That is *not* what Paul wrote.

Then we have a pair of 'bishops' on the board. A number of texts speak of the man's headship under Christ (always a *loving* headship) within the Christian family and within the church. One bishop is 1 Cor 11:2-16, where St Paul states at the outset: 'I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God' (v 3). The other bishop is Eph 5:21-33, where the apostle urges wives to: 'Submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church' (v 22-23), and urges husbands to: 'Love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her' (v 25).



Supporting these texts are a pair of 'knights'. In Col 3:18 Paul underlines what he wrote to the Ephesians: 'Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them'. No cruel domination here! The husband is to exercise his headship in love. Finally, there is a powerful knight in 1 Peter 3:1-7, where St Peter urges wives to: 'Be subject to your husbands... as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord' (v 1, 6).

Other smaller points ('pawns') could be listed. Indeed, nothing the New Testament says about husband-wife, man-woman relationships within the home and the church conflicts with the powerful texts quoted above. In the face of this array of evidence, it is amazing to read an advocate of women's ordination say that it is the legalistic

interpretation of two verses in two letters written to two ancient congregations which is causing so many people so much pain!

## No Contest

The other player in this unusual chess game keeps placing and re-placing pieces on the board. But you will not find a king, queen, castle, bishop, or knight among them. Consider the text which women's ordination advocates have hailed as the 'breakthrough', Gal 3:28: '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'.

Paul is speaking here of the common status of women and men as 'sons of God through faith' by virtue of baptism. He is not speaking of ordination into the ministry. If Gal 3:28 is used in support of women's ordination, then it can be used just as easily - and it has been used! - to support the ordination of homosexuals ('neither male nor female . . . in Christ Jesus'). Gal 3:28 is no more than a pawn. In fact, it has no right to be on the board at all. Its use violates the principle that we must interpret biblical texts within their context.

The same applies to all the other texts appealed to in support of women's ordination. There have been a host of them. Some examples: Titus 2:3, 'I want older women to teach'. The speaker failed to mention that Paul goes on to say, 'I want older women to teach the young women to love their husbands and children,....[and] to be ...submissive to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be reviled' (Titus 2:3-5). Some have appealed to John 13, where (allegedly) we find an example of 'a command of the Lord' (to wash one another's feet) that we no longer obey; therefore, it is argued, we can sidestep the commands against women's ordination in 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2. But the only time the word 'command' is used in John 13 is Jesus' command to us all that we should love one another (v 34). The

I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. (1 Timothy 2:12)