

John Calvin (died 1564) writes, 'If the woman is under subjection, she is, consequently, prohibited from authority to teach in public'. In his commentary on 1 Timothy, Calvin writes, Paul 'excludes women from the office of teaching, which God has committed to men only'.

What About Phoebe and Junia?

In an attempt to find proof for the ordination of women, some advocates point to Rom 16. Here we read of Phoebe and Junia or Junias.

Phoebe is called a *diakonos*. This word can mean 'helper' or 'deacon'. She is also called a *prostatis*, which means 'helper' or 'leader'. It is argued that Phoebe was a deacon, the leader of the congregation where she served.

This argument is very weak. It is unlikely that Phoebe was a deacon. The first clear reference to women deacons does not emerge until the third century, and then they are seen as an innovation. But even if we were to concede that Phoebe was a deacon, she would not have been the leader of the congregation. That role was given to the 'elder' or 'overseer' (Acts 20:17, 28-31; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:9). She may well have been in charge of social work and prepared women for baptism. In short, even if Phoebe was a deacon, she was not a pastor or priest, or in charge of a congregation.

Well, what about Junia, or is it Junias? It is argued that this person was Junia, a woman apostle. The inference is then drawn that as an apostle she exercised authority in the church.

Again, the argument is very weak. From the Greek form of this name in Rom 16, it is impossible to tell whether this person was a man or a woman. The name could be Junia, a female name, or Junias, a male name. A scholar has researched this name in Greek literature from the time of Christ to the fifth century. He found only two references to this person. The church father, Chrysostom (337-407), thought this person was a woman, whereas the church father, Epiphanius (315-403), thought this person was a man! Indeed, Epiphanius said that Junias became the bishop of Apameia of Syria! Obviously we cannot be sure whether this person was male or female! To go further though, even if this person was Junia, a woman, it is by no means certain that St Paul calls her an

apostle. It is possible that St Paul is recalling her noteworthy service among the apostles, even before St Paul was converted.

But let's suppose that Junia was an apostle. She certainly wasn't an apostle in the same sense as the Twelve, or St Paul himself. The word would have been used in a non-technical way to refer to 'messenger' or 'representative' (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25). She would not have exercised authority over a congregation. Therefore Junia cannot be used to promote the ordination of women.

A Clear Lesson From Church History

The lesson of church history is clear. Only certain males were eligible to be ordained. No exceptions were ever made. No woman, not even the mother of our Lord, was given authority to act as elder or bishop in the church. Over the past 2000 years the church has been faithful to this mandate of Christ. The Lutheran Church of Australia has no authority to change this teaching of Christ, the apostles and the church.

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Brochures in this 'Ordained by God' series:

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Church History Teaches



Church History Teaches

For those looking for guidance from church history on the question of the ordination of women.

A Break With Scripture and the Church

Those who promote the ordination of women are well aware that in achieving their aims they would change the teaching of the church and its interpretation of Scripture, and be out of step with the majority of Christians in the world today.

By what authority can they overturn 2000 years of church history? They find no support from the Old Testament, because no woman was permitted to serve as a priest. And in the New Testament, Jesus called only male apostles. Judas' replacement had to be a male. The injunctions of St Paul exclude women from teaching God's Word in the worship assembly. There is not a single word of Scripture which provides a mandate for the ordination of women.

Before the 20th Century

Before the 20th Century, the Christian church always reserved the Office of the Ministry to males. The only exceptions have been certain heretical sects. The councils of the church, liturgies, constitutions, church orders, patriarchs, popes, bishops and all the church fathers have affirmed women were not to teach in the church or preside over the Lord's Supper. Those who favoured the ordination of women were regarded as heretics and expelled from the church. Nor was the church swayed by social and cultural pressures.

It is instructive to look at some of this evidence. The Didascalia, a liturgy from AD 225, says, 'If it had been necessary that women should teach, then our teacher [Jesus] would have directed them to instruct along with us' (3:6:1-2).

The Apostolic Constitution, AD 400, says, 'We do not allow women to teach... for it is ignorant heathen ungodliness that leads to the ordination of priestesses for female deities, but not the command of Christ' (3:9).

Eight church councils from AD 325 to 533 opposed the ordination of women. These were the Council of Nicaea (AD 325), the Council of Laodicea (circa AD 365), the Council of Saragossa (AD 380), the Council of Nîmes (AD 396), the Council of Chalcedon (AD 431), the Council of Orange (AD 441), the Council of Epaon (AD 517), and the Council of Orleans (AD 533). It is noteworthy that the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, which also gave us the Nicene Creed, was among them.

Church Fathers and Mothers



All the church fathers opposed the ordination of women. These include Ignatius (35-107), Clement of Rome (96), Irenaeus (130-200), Tertullian (160-220), Hippolytus (170-236), Origen (185-254), Epiphanius (315-403), Chrysostom (347-407), Augustine (354-430), and John of Damascus (675-749).

Opposition to the ordination of women by these people was never based on a so-called inferiority of women; it was always based on the Word, Christ's example and the injunctions of the apostles. For example:

- Clement of Rome: 'Jesus himself gave precise instructions to his apostles how other proven men were to take over their duties once they died'.
- Irenaeus condemned women who 'felt themselves driven [by the Holy Spirit] to celebrate the Eucharist'.
- Tertullian said that a woman may not 'claim for herself any functions proper to a man, least of all the priestly office'. He also said that it is heretical (that is, against the teaching of the church) for women to preach.
- Origen said that 1 Cor 14:34 was a command that had to be obeyed.
- Epiphanius: 'Never from the beginning of the world has a woman served God as a priestess'.

- Chrysostom: 'When there is a question of the headship of the church ... let the entire female sex retire... divine law has excluded women from the sanctuary, but they try to thrust themselves into it'.
- Augustine said that to uphold a female priesthood was 'heresy'.

Our church mothers also opposed the ordination of women. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Catherine of Siena (1333-1380) and Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) are just a sample of those who said that a priest must be male.

Luther and the Reformers

Martin Luther (1483-1546) also spoke against the ordination of women. He wrote:

It is, however, true that the Holy Spirit has excepted women, children, and incompetent people from this function, but chooses ... only competent males to fill this office, as one reads here and there in the epistles of St Paul (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6) that a bishop must be pious, able to teach, and the husband of one wife - and in 1 Cor 14:34 he says, 'The women should keep silence in the churches'. In summary, it must be a competent and chosen man. Children, women, and other persons are not qualified for this office (On the Councils and the Church, Luther's Works 41:154-55).

In the New Testament the Holy Spirit, speaking through St Paul, ordained that women should be silent in the churches and assemblies (1 Cor 14:34), and said that this is the Lord's commandment... In the congregations or churches where there is a ministry women are to be silent and not preach (1 Tim 2:12) (*Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers*, Luther's Works 40:390-91).

The Lutheran Confessions assume that the pastor is male. When speaking of bishops they quote from 1 Tim 3:2ff and Titus 1:6 where it is stated a bishop must be 'the husband of one wife' (*Small Catechism, Table of Duties*). The standard word for 'minister' in the confessions is *Pfarrherr* (note the male imagery). The clergy are spiritual 'fathers' (*Large Catechism, The Fourth Commandment*, paragraphs 158-59).

Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. 2 Timothy 1:4