

pagan world than the introduction of women priests, with which they were already familiar? I have listened to arguments on St Paul where one classic quotation [Gal 3:28, about male and female being one in Christ] has been wrenched out of context, given a meaning that no previous generation of believers has given it, and seen it used to deny the clear teaching on headship in the rest of St Paul's letters.

I have listened to the doctrine of creation being divided into greater and lesser truths, so that the complementarity of male and female has been debased to a banal interchangeability. I have listened patiently to talk of prayerful, thoughtful majorities when surely our problem is that the minority is also prayerful and thoughtful.

These are not comfortable things to say, but they *must* be said because if the Synod overturns scriptural authority today it will be no good coming back next time and hoping to impose it on other issues. For the church, the authority of the Scriptures and the example of Jesus have always been determinative; I do not believe that this House has the authority to overturn them.

My second concern is the legislation itself. What of those who dissent? It seems strange, does it not, to call 'dissenters' those who faithfully believe what the church has always believed? Bishops and archbishops may give verbal assurances that there will be no persecution against such priests and laypeople, but it is with great sadness that I have to tell the bishops that I have not met one opponent of the measure who believes them. The reasons are simple.

First, no verbal assurance can undo the fact that you are legislating for two classes of Christians; any good intentions that may exist, will wither before the law and practice, as in other provinces [of the Anglican Church]. Second, in many dioceses the spirit of this legislation has been in operation for some years. Orthodox clergy are excluded from appointments and orthodox laity are made to feel excluded from that warm glow of official approval, as if they are suffering from some embarrassing handicap. I have experienced that myself often enough in these corridors.

If the human injustice of this legislation, which eases old men into retirement and condemns others to serve

forever under authorities whose primary qualification is compromise, is disgraceful, it is as nothing beside its theological arrogance and blasphemy. The legislation clearly instructs the Lord God Almighty whom he may raise up to lead the church. The Holy Spirit will be told, 'You may choose anyone you want so long as it is one of us'. A church that denies the sovereignty of God is no longer a church. The fruits of this debate are not the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

What of tomorrow? If you wake in the morning having voted 'yes', you'll know that you have voted for a church irreconcilably divided, for whom the revealed truth of God is no longer authoritative. If you vote 'no', you will wake to tears and a healing ministry, but above all to the possibility of a renewed New Testament church, for all of us could then be united in encouraging, training and funding the ministry of priest, deacon, teacher, prophet, healer, administrator, spiritual director - all promised by the Holy Spirit.

I urge the Synod to vote for the authority of the Word of God, for the unity of Christ's church and against this ruinous legislation.

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

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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*

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## Women Speak





# Women Speak

## A Personal View

I'm happy that I have the opportunity as a woman to share my thoughts on women's ordination. No one is bereft of gifts, and we are expected to use them. But the gift of the Office of the Ministry is given by God, not to women, but to men. The gifts given to women, however, are many and varied and no woman needs to lack a fulfilling ministry in whatever stage of life she is in.

In Titus 2:3ff for example, Paul speaks of older women having ministry with younger women. Proverbs 31:10-31 also gives a vivid description of a vibrant woman with character, capabilities and vocation. Such a woman is made strong by wisdom and grace and the fear of God, and by coming under the authority of her husband.

1 Cor 11:3 says, 'The head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God'. This creational order functions for our good and the proper outworking of God's plan. The woman who submits to the authority of her husband at home (Eph 5:22) and who does not seek 'to teach or to have authority over men' in the church (1 Tim 2:11-12), has the freedom to live fully up to her potential since she is secure under Christ's authority.

Passages such as 1 Cor 14:33-34,37 and 1 Tim 2:11-12 speak of the subordination, *not the inferiority* of women in the church, and Titus 1:5-6 and 1 Tim 3:1-2 tell me that the Office of the Ministry is to be filled by a man. Since we are also told not to 'lord it over' one another, but to serve one another in love, then we understand that authority is there for our benefit. Being under authority, however, affects us so deeply that our natural 'fleshly' resistance to authority tends to surface. Even so, the Word stands and the church is subject to God's Word.

As a woman in Christ, I have no need to try to usurp the authority that belongs to the Office of the Ministry since I am wonderfully secure and richly blessed in the function and role God has given me.

*Pam Williams, Kapunda.*

## Another Personal View

In the 1970s I first began reading about the ordination of women debate. Overseas churches were grappling with the issue. I could then personally see no need to ordain women nor perceive any biblical directives for doing so. I have not changed my view.

In my lifetime I have been instructed and nurtured by 21 pastors (all of them male). None of them ever denied me the opportunity to serve my Lord in a host of interesting ways. Christian women of my generation and older have often been unhappy to see women wanting to be equal with men in every way. God made us different to fulfil different roles. We were not convinced that we would be doing Christian women a service by ordaining them to the Office of the Ministry.



Deep in our heart and soul was a sense that the arguments for the ordination of women were not valid. Even though some with theological insights claim there is no reason why women couldn't be ordained, many women have concerns and fears. It isn't only the practical problems that concern us. We are fearful of our own human frailties, our God-given female emotions. We know our limitations. We desire to preserve the family unit in all its fullness in a society that is determined to dismantle God's order for humanity. The real issue is whether God planned for women to be pastors when he made us. Many said, 'no'.

I also have a concern that the ordination of women issue is becoming something that could divide Christians. Years of discussion, debating, dissecting the issue have only served to divert us from the greater needs in our communities as God's people. There are countless avenues open for women to serve in the church and society in very practical areas, but unfortunately there are only a few women to fill these needs. It seems to many mature Christian women like me, that our well-educated, well-trained female graduates from theological institutions could find many worthwhile places to use their skills without needing to be ordained as pastors.

From discussion with some members of other denominations who have ordained women, I have learned

that it has not always been the enriching experience they had hoped for.

I am so grateful for the spiritual guidance that many faithful preachers of God's Word have given me over the years. Like many Christian women I have felt protected, cared for, loved, and guided into the way of truth. Why would I want to embrace a change that might alienate people rather than bring them together in harmony?

*65-year-old baptised Lutheran woman (name withheld)*

## A Personal Protest

*On November 11, 1992, the Church of England approved the ordination of women to the priesthood. Of those who spoke against the legislation, one of the most eloquent was Mrs Sara Low. Here is her testimony.*

When I was converted to Jesus Christ in my early twenties and came into the Church of England, I was told by my parish priest, now a bishop on these benches, that the Church of England based itself on Holy Scripture, holy tradition and human reason. This legislation [ordination of women] gives me the gravest possible concern on all three counts.

One of the things that I have learned in my time as a Christian is that where we are faithful to the revealed truth, there the promises of the New Testament are fulfilled. The churches that believe this and do it are, in my experience, those that are blessed.

I have listened, like many of those here, for nearly 20 years to this debate. I listened very carefully to the early arguments about Jesus' cultural conditioning and the claim that Jesus did not have the freedom to appoint women. If cultural conditioning was determinative for Jesus, then all his teaching and all his actions are thus heavily influenced. We are no longer talking about the eternal Son of God. Jesus Christ is different today from what he was yesterday, and he will be different again tomorrow.

I have listened to the arguments that the early church was equally unable to make this change, yet, on the contrary, what could have made a bigger bridgehead with the

There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. (1 Corinthians 12:5)