

A Biblical Response to the *Draft Doctrinal Statement: The Call and Ordination of Both Men and Women to the Office of the Public Ministry (DDS)*

If we ask the question, “What does Scripture teach us about the office of the ministry?” we find that it teaches the following: (1) Christ chose the Twelve and Paul to serve as his Apostles, all of whom were men; (2) when the early church selected a replacement for Judas, the Apostle Peter insisted that this replacement could not simply be any eyewitness of the resurrection, such as Mary Magdalene, but needed to be a man (Acts 1:21–22); (3) Christ, through the Apostle Paul, then instructed the church to ordain men who fit certain God-given criteria to continue on the ministry of Christ’s word that was begun by the Apostles (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9); and (4) Christ specifically forbade women from carrying out the central function of the pastoral office, which is the authoritative preaching and teaching of Christ’s word within the church as it gathers for divine service (1 Cor 14:33b–38; 1 Tim 2:11–15).

The DDS, by endorsing Theses of Agreement VI, 1–9, acknowledges that the office of the ministry has been instituted by Christ as his gift to the church. Yet instead of then asking, “What does Christ teach us in Scripture about the office he has instituted, so that we can abide by it?” it seeks to deconstruct New Testament teaching, and to find loopholes in it that will allow for the ordination of women.^a Therefore it cannot be endorsed as a biblically-based doctrinal statement, as the following points show:

1. **Whereas the DDS states that “The New Testament does not insist that those who hold the office [of the public ministry] must be male; they could also be female” (paragraph 21) ...**

We respond: The New Testament says the exact opposite. When it outlines the qualifications a person must have to be called to the pastoral office, it stresses that a pastor must be “able to teach,” and then prohibits women from doing the kind of teaching the office requires.

As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. ³⁶ Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? ³⁷ If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. ³⁸ If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. (1 Corinthians 14:33b–38)

¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all subordination. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved

^a This should not be surprising, since the Synod did not ask the CTICR to study what Scripture has to say on the issue. Instead, it asked CTICR to draft a doctrinal statement with the preordained conclusion that women can be ordained. Perhaps this has value as an academic exercise, but a Church that has Scripture as its highest authority cannot determine doctrinal questions this way. To do so would be to treat Scripture as if it is irrelevant in the process of coming to a theological conclusion, except as a means of justifying what we human beings have already decided we want to do.

through childbearing^b—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. (1 Tim 2:11 – 15)

Lest anyone argue that the kind of teaching and authority that is referred to here is different from the teaching authority that pastors have within the church, we should note the following. First, both texts are set within the context of a discussion of what takes place in public worship. Therefore Paul is speaking most obviously about the kind of authoritative speaking/teaching/preaching that pastors do within the divine service. Second, the 1 Timothy passage continues as follows:

3 ¹The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer,^c he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Tim 3:1–7)

In other words, in 1 Timothy 2 and 3 Paul contrasts women, who are not permitted to teach or to exercise authority over a man within the church, with those who are qualified to be pastors, and therefore must be “able to teach” the members of the church.

2. Whereas the DDS—in line with our culture today—treats male headship as if it is something that is akin to racism and slavery, and is inherently oppressive and misogynistic (see paragraph 17 and its commentary) ...

We respond: This reflects a failure to appreciate biblical teaching regarding servant headship.

Misogyny is completely contrary to the Christian faith. In the Gospels we see Jesus showing perfect respect for women (Luke 2:51; 10:38–42; John 4:27). Furthermore, the Lutheran Confessions criticise misogyny as anti-Christian (“Daniel says that it is characteristic of Antichrist's kingdom to despise women” [Apology 23.25, citing Dan 11:37]). When this same Lord Jesus, through his Apostles, commands that women are not to serve in the public ministry, and are to respect the role of their husbands as heads of their households, this is not because he is a misogynist. Instead, it is because he is calling men to a role of servant headship modelled after himself and his loving, self-sacrificial love for his bride, the church.

For a man to serve as the head of his household does not mean that he can selfishly boss the rest of the family around. Instead, it means that he is called to lovingly serve his wife, even to the extent of dying for her, and to serve the needs of everyone else in the household, particularly their spiritual needs (Eph 5:25 – 6:4; Col 3:19). It means that he is called to lead the way for everyone in the household by striving to be the first one who

^b Or, “through the birth of the Child” (i.e. Christ). Cf. Genesis 3:15 and Galatians 4:4–5.

^c The Greek word here is *episkopos*. This is sometimes translated as “bishop,” but this does not mean a bishop in the modern sense. In the New Testament it is one of several terms, including *presbyteros* (elder) and *poimen* (shepherd), that are used for what we now know as pastors.

says, "Let's pray about this," to be the first one who says, "Let's go to church," and to be the first one who says, "Let's consult God's word." It means being the one who takes the initiative in teaching the faith to the children,^d and striving to be the first one who says, "I'm sorry," and the first one who forgives. Likewise, for a man to serve as a pastor does not mean that he can lord it over his flock (1 Pet 5:3). Instead, it means that he must "share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim 2:3), serving for the sake of God's people in the front line of a spiritual war that will not yield for him earthly rewards.

Only those who falsely equate this servant headship with the kind of self-serving abuse of power that characterises people who operate outside of Christ (Mark 10:42–45) would say that the Bible's teaching regarding male headship within the church and the family is oppressive or demeaning towards women.

3. Whereas the DDS uses much speculation regarding Paul's motives and the cultural situation of his day to try to relativise Paul's prohibition against women preaching and teaching in the church, and to say it only applied back then but not today ...

We respond: We do not need to speculate in this way. Instead, Paul tells us in Holy Scripture why he gave this prohibition. When we examine his reasons it is evident that both his reasons and the prohibition that flows from them still apply today.

The DDS, together with its commentary, makes various suggestions as to why Paul gave this prohibition. The chief suggestion is that he did so out of cultural sensitivity. The DDS argues that for women to take a prominent lead in public would have been so offensive in first-century culture that it would have hindered the spread of the Gospel, and that this was Paul's overriding concern in issuing this prohibition. It then argues that since our culture is different today, this prohibition should no longer apply. Given how little Paul says about this,^e how little we know about first century culture, and how often Christ and his Apostles displayed a willingness to offend people's sensibilities, this line of argumentation is mostly speculative. Yet even if there is some truth to it, and Paul was trying to be sensitive to cultural norms, this does not nullify the other reasons he had for this prohibition, which he carefully spells out for us.

Paul tells us that this prohibition is grounded in the headship God gave to men at creation, the consequences of the fall for women, and a command of the Lord. Furthermore, he tells us that this prohibition applies not only in one local context, but "in all the churches of the saints." If Paul had given different reasons the case would be different. If he had focused exclusively on the local context or the need for cultural sensitivity then it would be possible to argue that this prohibition does not apply to us today. But he did not. Instead, the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Apostle Paul, points us to creation and the fall and a command of the Lord as the reasons for this prohibition.^f

^d "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but nourish them through the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

^e In 1 Timothy 2 Paul says nothing about any need for cultural sensitivity. In 1 Corinthians 14 he says that "it is shameful for a woman to speak in church." Given that he does not spell this out further, this could mean "shameful in God's sight," or it could mean "shameful according to cultural norms," or it could mean both. Even if it means the latter, this is a slender basis on which to build an entire case, and does not nullify the other reasons Paul gives for his prohibition.

^f The DDS tries to argue that Paul's statement in 1 Cor 14:37, "the things [plural] I am writing to you are a command of the Lord," refers exclusively to the command to "pursue love" [singular] given 36 verses earlier and not to the verses that immediately precede it (paragraphs 11 and 12). Not only is this grammatically implausible, it means wrenching the statement out of its immediate context.

These reasons are neither time-bound nor culturally relative. Therefore one cannot argue that this prohibition no longer applies to us today unless one is willing to say that Scripture errs when it gives us these reasons, and we are more enlightened than it is.

4. Whereas the DDS lists many women who were involved in leadership roles in Israel and in the early church (paragraph 18) ...

We respond: It never demonstrates that any of these women were pastors. Unless these women were pastors, and were not serving in auxiliary roles instead (cf. Theses of Agreement VI, 9–10, which the DDS claims to uphold), their examples do not warrant the conclusion that women can be pastors.

Furthermore, the DDS cannot argue that any of these women were pastors without undermining its own central argument. The DDS argues that in theory women could have been pastors in New Testament times, but in practice they could not, since this would have been too offensive in the culture of the day. That is a hard argument to sustain if there were in fact women pastors in the early church. The more the DDS points to women who held leadership roles in the early church, the more its attempt to explain Paul's prohibition as necessary for the sake of cultural sensitivity breaks down. A more reasonable explanation of the data is that the culture of the day was not an insurmountable barrier that prevented women from holding leadership positions in the church, and the New Testament church did not exclude them from leadership positions in general. Instead, it excluded them from one particular leadership role, the pastoral office, and it did this for reasons that were primarily theological rather than cultural.

5. Whereas the DDS says, "The fact that the twelve apostles whom Jesus commissioned were all male is descriptive of the preaching office at the time, but it is not prescriptive of the office for all time" (paragraph 4) ...

We respond: The Scriptures say the opposite. By prohibiting women from holding this office, and saying that this is a command of the Lord, Paul teaches us that it is Christ's will for the preaching office to follow the pattern he set when he chose only men to be his Apostles.

Given that the DDS claims to acknowledge that the pastoral office has been instituted by Christ, it is mystifying that it then treats both the example of Christ and his directions to us through his Apostle Paul as irrelevant to how the office is ordered today.

6. Whereas the DDS argues that women can be ordained on the basis of (1) the creation of all people in the image of God (paragraph 3) and (2) the unity of all baptised believers as children of God (paragraphs 3 and 17) ...

We respond: The New Testament treats neither of these as sufficient by themselves to qualify a person for the ordained ministry.

If creation in the image of God were a sufficient qualification, then unbelievers could be ordained, since they too are created in God's image. Yet Scripture says that pastors "must hold firm to the trustworthy word" (Titus 1:9). If our baptismal identity as children of God were a sufficient qualification, then small children could be ordained. Yet Scripture says that pastors must be "able to teach" (1 Tim 3:2; cf. Titus 5:9). Furthermore, drunkards, serial philanderers and practicing homosexuals could be ordained. Yet the Bible says that pastors must serve as examples of godliness to their flocks (1 Tim 3:3; 4:12; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet 5:3). The Bible does not treat the office of the ministry as something that is equivalent to

the priesthood of all believers (cf. Theses of Agreement VI, 4, which the DDS claims to uphold), or that is open to all people or all baptised believers. Instead, it treats it as something to which Christ calls specific, duly qualified individuals (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). And one of the biblical qualifications is that these individuals be men.

The New Testament does not treat our baptismal unity in Christ as something that now abolishes created differences between men and women, or distinctions between believers when it comes to our God-given gifts or vocations here on earth. Paul goes straight from talking about the baptismal unity of all believers within the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12–13), to talking about this body as something that is made up of many different yet complementary members (1 Cor 12:14–31). Likewise, the Apostle Peter says in one breath that Christian women should be subordinate to their husbands (1 Pet 3:1–6), and in the next breath that they are joint heirs with their believing husbands in the grace of life (1 Pet 3:7). There is no conflict between the two, since our standing in God's sight is not determined by the works we do in vocation, nor is it impaired by how humble our vocations may be in worldly eyes.

7. Whereas the DDS suggests that for the LCA to ordain women would only entail a small change to its doctrine of ministry (paragraphs 1 and 2) ...

We respond: In reality it would radically alter it, by undermining its foundation in Christ's word, and its purpose of serving Christ's word.

The LCA teaches that the office of the public ministry is an office that has been instituted by the word of Jesus Christ for the sole purpose of serving his word (Theses of Agreement VI, 1–3, 5). To the extent that we alter it in defiance of Christ's word it will no longer be the office that Christ instituted. Any women who are ordained will be ordained by human beings and not by Christ. Furthermore, their ordination will embody within it a rejection of one part of Christ's word. This will make it impossible for them to serve Christ's word without reservation, to proclaim the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), and to serve the church's mission by teaching everything that Christ has commanded us (Matt 28:20). This will inevitably open the door to further errors, as it has done in other churches.⁹

⁹ For example, the vast majority of Lutheran Churches in the western world that ordain women have gone on to bless same-sex relationships and/or to ordain non-celibate practising homosexuals within a few decades of women's ordination coming in. This illustrates the extent to which they have jettisoned scriptural authority. This includes the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Church of Norway, the Church of Sweden, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, the Evangelical Church in Central Germany, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baden, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brunswick, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Oldenburg, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schaumburg-Lippe, the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, the United Protestant Church in France, the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria, the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein, all of which are members of the Lutheran World Federation. If we look at the total membership of these churches (based on 2014 data supplied by the LWF), this means that 96.5% of Lutherans in Europe and North America who belong to churches that ordain women also belong to churches that now support same-sex lifestyles. In contrast, none of the Lutheran Churches that ordain men only ordain practising homosexuals or bless same-sex relationships.