

A Rejection of “Ordination, We’re listening”

The recent publication of the CTICR of the LCA, which argues for women pastors, has the sub-title, “We’re listening.” Our reply is “To whom?” and “To what?” Our conclusion is that the LCA officials who wrote this document have not been listening to God in His Word but to the current culture, and are guilty of twisting God’s Word (2 Pet 3:16), making it say what itching ears want to hear (2 Tim 4:3).

1 Cor 14:33-40 and its parallel 1 Tim 2:11-14 say that women should be silent in churchly assemblies (1 Cor 14:34-35, 1 Tim 2:11). The Apostle Peter wrote, “The Word of the Lord remains forever,” (1 Pet. 1:25). This Word of the Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever. The voice of the Holy Spirit spoken through the Apostle Paul to the Church with one voice almost 2000 years ago, telling us that women should remain silent in churchly assemblies, is the same voice spoken today. We have no right to reinterpret Scripture in such a way that we contradict the Church’s clear teaching of Scripture. However, the conclusion of the LCA document is a direct contrary when it says, “Neither 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 nor 1 Timothy 2:11-15 records a command of the Lord that would prohibit the ordination of women.” In other words, women do not have to be silent in the churches, and it is not shameful for them to speak.

The CTICR document interprets “order” in 1 Cor 14:40 (*taxis*) as “good order” in the sense of what is disorderly and disruptive (B 9, B 10), and so misses a basic point in the passage. If Paul’s only concern was with mere ‘good order’ or everyone speaking in turn, why does he only forbid the women from speaking? That would cure only half the problem. As “decently” in 1 Cor 14:40 is related to “shameful” in v. 35, so “order” is related to “let them be subordinate” in v. 34. “Disorder” here is not the presence of something like noisy chattering. The proper translation of *hypotage* is also not “subjugation” or “submission” but “subordination.” *Hypotage* is also a key-word in 1 Tim 2:11. God’s provision for various classes of His people after the fall into sin is subordination, as the verses in the Table of Duties (B 16) show: subordination of citizens to government, of wives to husbands, of children to parents, of servants to masters, and of women generally to men in 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2 in public worship. It is a reminder to the Church of all ages that Adam was created before Eve and that Eve was the first to be deceived (1 Tm 2:14). As an example of the terms in the original Greek, compare Rom 13:1-6. The English words with the stem “*ord*” precisely reflect the original Greek stem *tag*, with its variants *tass*, *tach*, and *tax*: “subordinate,” (v.1, v. 5) “ordained” (v. 2) and even in the Greek *antitasso* for “resist” (v. 2). The kind of disorder that the Church of all ages must particularly avoid is flouting God’s directions about subordination.

The CTICR document argues in B7 that, because “ministers” are not specifically mentioned in 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2, these passages do not exclude having women ministers. This argument is a furphy. It ignores a central point of the whole section 1 Cor 14:26-40, where the word for “silent” has been used twice already before v. 34: in v. 28 and v. 32. Women cannot both be silent and function as ministers.

In the context of 1 Cor 14:26-40, the apostle Paul defines the kind of speaking that he means. It is not absolute, but the speaking of one person before the church while the others listen: “each one brings a psalm, an instruction, an interpretation,” etc., (v. 26). The term “speak” (v.34) is *laleo* not *lego*. *Lego* means any kind of speaking is some type of intelligible words. *Laleo*, unless otherwise modified by adverbs, when used in connection with worship services, refers to religious speaking or speaking religiously in the public way – one person speaking before the church while the others listen. Of course women are not forbidden to join in unison in the confession of sin, the Creed, and Lord’s Prayer, the “Amen” after their reception of the Lord’s Supper, or in the liturgy and the hymns. The disciples too prayed together with the women, with one accord, (Acts 1:13-14). God is interpreting His Word by the context, and we should listen to Him.

The focus of the CTICR document on Corinth and on a supposed disorder there ignores Paul’s summary words, “As in all the churches of the saints” (v. 33c). It is a serious mistake therefore to assume a disorderly social setting as if this command of the Lord were a culture-bound directive (B 14, B 15), which does not apply to us today. *Authentein* in 1 Tim 2:12 also does not mean “domineer” but “exercise authority.”

According to the passage itself in vv.26-40, the “command of the Lord” (v. 37) is not Jesus’ general command to love. Love is not the focus of 1 Cor 14:33-40 or 1 Tm 2:11-14. Rather, it is the Lord’s

command that women should be silent in the churches. In doing this, the document fails to warn that ignoring this command of the Lord is disobedience, which incurs the Lord's judgment.

Similarly, the CTICR document takes pains to avoid the meaning of "is not recognised" (B 12) The NT frequently used the passive voice as an alternative to the mention of God's name. The tendency began already in the OT. People thought that they would be less likely to use God's name in vain if they completely avoided the Hebrew special name YHWH ("The Lord"). It has had the curious result that even the pronunciation of this special Hebrew name for "the Lord" has become unsure, because those who read the Scriptures in Hebrew regularly substituted another word, which also meant "the Lord." Jesus and His apostles sometimes followed this idiomatic usage. In short, Jesus' words "will be forgiven" meant "God will forgive"; "Will not be judged" meant "God will not judge" and "will not be condemned" meant "God will not condemn." These expressions are called "theological passives." Here "is not recognised" means "God does not recognise." Paul's warning that the Lord does not recognise those who ignore His command that women should be silent in church falls directly on those who advocate for women pastors, including the authors of this CTICR document. It is a serious thing to disobey God's Word.

It is granted that there were prophetesses in both the OT and the NT. However, it is mistaken to assume that prophetesses spoke in public worship. Origen long ago wrote on the subject of Montanist prophetesses:

The disciples of the women (those who were instructed by Priscilla and Maximilla) did not adhere to this commandment. They did not belong to Christ the husband of the bride. "There were", they say, "four daughters of Philip the Evangelist, and they used to prophesy. And if they used to prophesy, why is it strange that our prophetesses" (as they allege) "also prophesy?" We shall resolve this difficulty by saying, first, "As to the claims that your prophetesses used to prophesy, show the signs of prophecy in them!" Secondly, "Even if the daughters of Philip used to prophesy, yet they used not to speak in the churches; for we do not have this in the Acts of the Apostles. It did not happen in the Old Testament, either. The Scriptures testify that Deborah was a prophetess. Miriam, the sister of Aaron took a tambourine and went out from among the women... You would not find that Huldah, though she was a prophetess, spoke to the people, but to some particular person who had come to her."¹

It is also mistaken to understand that 1 Cor 11:2-16 belongs in the context of public worship (The CTICR document B 13), as the headings inserted in some Bible translations also assume. It is pointless to argue this point, however, because, even if it were granted that some prophetesses had been speaking in churchly assemblies, that would have become impossible after what Paul wrote about the commandment of the Lord in 1 Cor 14, just as the "love-feast" was no longer possible after what Paul wrote in 1 Cor 11. "The spirits of the prophets are subordinate to other prophets" (1 Cor 14:32) applies here. How much more would they have been subordinate to Christ's apostle?

Gal 3:27-28 does not mean the abolition of the general distinction between slaves and masters, men and women, etc. All those who are baptised are one in Christ. Contrary to the CTICR document B 17, this passage says nothing about who may be pastors, whether they are women, or, by a reduction to absurdity, baptised children, or baptised intellectually disabled people. The public ministry of the Gospel is not the concern of Gal 3:27-28. Furthermore, the shallow use of Galatians 3:28 ("there is neither male nor female"), against the direct and clear prohibition of female pastors in 1 Cor. 14 and 1 Tim. 2, logically entails also a complete interchangeability of the sexes in marriage, that is, the door is opened wide for same sex "marriage."

Dishonest twisting of Scripture is also apparent when the document assumes that the specific meaning of *diakonos* as "deaconess" or "minister" is intended in certain passages instead of the general meaning, "servant" (B 18). The context ought to determine whether *diakonos* in a given passage has the specific meaning, the public ministry of the Gospel, as it does in 2 Cor 5:18.

Against the conclusions of the CTICR document (C 19-21) it is clear to us that the members of the CTICR are not listening to God in His Word but to the current culture. We hold that (contrary which the document

¹ N. Bonwetsch, *Texte zur Geschichte der Montanismus, Kleine Texte*, vol. 129. Bonn: A Marcus and E Webber's Verlag, 1914, p. 34.

maintains (A, 2) the *Theses of Agreement* section VI, 11, the official position of the LCA since Union, should remain unchanged, and that those who drafted this document should be publicly censured and repudiated.

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