

## **From Mt Sinai to Mt Calvary, on the question of Ordination.**

*(A short summary of some thoughts important to me, Paul Renner Snr)*

I think we need to read, understand and interpret the Scriptures for what they say they are, namely God's word of salvation, pointing us to, describing and elevating for us Jesus Christ. (*Luther "Was Christum Treibet"*)

To me the sacred Scriptures are like a wonderful mosaic, which when you look at it in its totality, its many parts (chapters, books, verses, etc) present to us God's way of salvation, namely Jesus Christ and His saving work of redemption. If you take any bit of the mosaic (scripture) out, you can have a long and interesting discussion on it, but you may be missing the point if you don't see it as part of God's total revelation.

I see a tendency – also among opponents of Christianity – to isolate, select, separate out of context sentences of Scripture, regarding them as part of a collection of divine propositions, individual "truths" and even immutable "laws".

As I see it that is often the case with for example reading and understanding the meaning and the purpose of the Sinaitic Laws and the New Testament "commands" (Entolai). The former were, and are, given to show us humans our sin and its consequence in death, and so to urge us to repentance; and then, as repentant and redeemed Christians, to guide us in our sanctified life of love. The latter, the New Testament "commands", are given in the interest and the execution of Christ's "apostolic" commission for the Church "to preach the Gospel" i.e. they are given to enhance that "preaching" and to prevent its impediment.

Christ's commission to His Church is to proclaim the Gospel – to elevate Mt Calvary (His crucifixion, resurrection, etc) – not to construct another Mt Sinai. All New Testament apostolic laws / commands / Entolai go out, so to speak, from Christ's Calvary, and they go out in the interest of the Gospel. Thereby they serve to bring people reconciliation and communion with God and to help to confirm them in that relationship of faith.

I read St Paul's divinely given "command": "Women keep silent" as the removal / prevention of an impediment to the Gospel: God saying to him "Tell them to cut it out!"

Everybody – women, men, kids, the mentally retarded – are, by virtue of their baptism, part of the Church which is given Christ's commission, and according to their Spirit-given gifts are "proclaimers" of the Gospel.

However – and I think this is too often overlooked – from among the "baptized" there are some who are called by Christ with a special call to be set apart and "ordained" to be what our Church call "pastors".

They are to be what our Confessions call "rite vocatus" (rightly called). And who is a "rightly called" person?

- The person needs to be called personally by God "vocatio immediata" and the Church needs to confirm that the call is genuinely from God "vocatio mediata"
- The person needs to be thoroughly taught and examined in the word of God so that that person is able (properly equipped) authentically to teach / preach the word of God and administer the

sacraments which are God's means of grace by which the Church is "created", survives and grows ("examinatio")

- And the person (their convictions and personal suitability having also been examined/ established) is ordained and sent to a place where they can serve as pastor ("missio"). N.b. They are not ordained into a status or title but into a divine service
- For some 2000 years they have been men and for some 70-80% of Christianity they still are. Have they got things wrong?
- I note that for some their understanding of God's word convinces them that it forbids outright the ordination of women. Women may be better theologians and preachers than men, and may genuinely believe that God has called them to be ordained as pastors. But – this is the conviction of some – if God's word (not just St Paul's) says that women should keep silent, then it follows that they can't be considered as "rite vocatus" (rightly called) for ordination.
- For others "rite vocatus", rightly understood and heard in the basic and overarching commission of Christ, does not unequivocally refer to gender or human attributes or talents, but to a vowed commitment to the word of God and capacity to proclaim it authentically (including the administration of the sacraments), which, they believe, can also apply to women.

"And where do I stand?" is being asked.

Right now I think that the Scriptures rightly understood, do not specifically and unambiguously prevent any class, gender or race as such from being ordained, provided they meet the "rite vocatus" criteria.

And how would I vote?

Unless I was convinced otherwise at Synod, I would not vote against women's ordination. But I would prefer a motion to read something like this:

*"We, the LCA delegates, assembled in its 2015 General Synod, believe that the ordination of women is not specifically and unambiguously against/prevented by Scripture, rightly/legitimately understood."*

However, if it were constitutionally carried, and if there were a sufficient number judged by Synod conscientiously to be against it, I would suggest a caveat:

*"If it is established that a substantial (sufficient) number of delegates are against the motion for conscience sake, the College of Bishops be empowered to decide when and where (if deemed advisable) women's ordination may be introduced in the LCA."*