

## **Galatians 3:26-29 and the ordination of women**

During the course of the debate in the Swedish Lutheran Church on whether to ordain women Krister Stendahl published a booklet called *The Bible and the role of women* (1966). In it he used Galatians 3:28 to argue that the dichotomy between men and women had been overcome by Christ in the church. Because this applies both in relation to God and in relation to each other, women are eligible for the ordained ministry. Since then the interpretation of Galatians 3:26-29 has been part of the Lutheran debate on the ordination of women to the ministry.

After analysing the argument as it is developed in Galatians 3:26-29, this paper summarises how it is understood and used by those who promote the ordination of women and by those who argue for the ordination of men only.

### **The context and structure of Galatians 3:26-29**

This passage is part of Paul's argument against a group of Jewish Christian agitators. They had confused the churches in Galatia by their claims that Paul had not preached the full gospel to the converts from paganism. Their focus was on the need for performance of 'works of the law,' with its demand for circumcision in order to receive the blessing that God had promised to Abraham (Gal 1:6-7; 5:2-12; 6:12-16). They seem to have taught that for the Gentiles to share in the inheritance of Abraham, faith in Christ had to be supplemented by circumcision and adherence to the law.

The argument that leads up to this passage runs as follows. After his initial greetings, Paul insists that there is no other gospel than the one that he preached to the Galatians (Gal 1:6-10). He then gives an historical prologue that defends his authority and the authority of the gospel that he proclaimed. He recalls his own calling as an apostle (Gal 1:11-24) and recounts the acceptance of his message and ministry by the apostles in Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10). Finally he shows that he used his authority to correct Peter when he withdrew from fellowship with the Gentiles in Antioch (Gal 2:11-14).

At Galatians 2:15-21 Paul begins the main part of his argument with the basic proposition that justification is received by faith in Christ, rather than by the observance of the law. Then comes his first argument about the primacy of faith in 3:1-18. Here he appeals to three facts: the experience of the Galatians with their reception of the Spirit and the Spirit's ongoing activity among them by the hearing of faith (3:1-5); the example of Abraham as the man of faith and the recipient of the promise of blessing, with the Spirit (3:6-14); and the priority of the covenant of promise to the covenant of the law (3:15-18).

In his second argument (3:19-4:7), Paul uses two rhetorical questions (3:19, 21) to raise the issue of the purpose of the law and the issue of the apparent contradiction of the promises of God. Paul makes three points about the law. It was added: to deal with transgressions until the coming of Christ, the promised seed, and the reception of the promised inheritance through faith in him (3:19-22). It prepared the people for their inclusion in Christ as sons<sup>1</sup> of God (3:23-29). Christ has redeemed those who were under the law so that they might receive adoption as sons and heirs of God (4:1-7).

### Translation

*26 For all of you are sons of God<sup>2</sup> through the<sup>3</sup> faith (that is) in Christ Jesus;*  
*27 For as many (of you) as were baptised into Christ<sup>4</sup> have put on Christ,<sup>5</sup>*  
*28. There is<sup>6</sup> neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male and<sup>7</sup> female,<sup>8</sup>*  
*For all of you are one<sup>9</sup> in Christ Jesus.*  
*29. And, if you are Christ's, then you are seed of Abraham,<sup>10</sup> heirs<sup>11</sup> in accordance with the promise.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'sons of God' is used, rather than the more inclusive term 'children of God', because Paul argues that through baptism we share in Jesus' status as the only Son of God and heir of God the Father. 'Sons of God' keeps clearer this connection to 'the Son of God.' It also retains the importance of sonship for inheritance in Paul's argument.

<sup>2</sup> See Rom 8:14,19; Gal 4:6,7; Matt 5:9,45; Luke 6:35; Heb 2:10; 12:7; Rev 21:7.

<sup>3</sup> It is not entirely certain why Paul uses the article here. It may be that, as in 3:23 and 25, he refers to the content of the gospel, what is believed, or, as in 3:14, to Christ as the object of faith, the one in whom they believe. This may be used in contrast to the teaching of his opponents on faith in God rather than faith in Christ.

<sup>4</sup> See also Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 12:13. The passive is best understood as a divine passive to refer to God the Father as the primary agent in baptism.

<sup>5</sup> See Rom 13:14; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10.

<sup>6</sup> The word *eni* is a shortened form of *enesti*, which means 'it is,' or 'it exists,' or 'it can be,' or 'it is possible.' This shortened form is also used to make a strong negation in 1 Cor 6:5; Col 3:11; and James 1:17.

<sup>7</sup> The use of *kai* rather than *oude* breaks the pattern of the two preceding antitheses. Its occurrence in Col 3:11 shows that it does not change the sense. Most scholars say that Paul here quotes Gen 1:27 from the Septuagint. It may also be an allusion to Lev 12:7, or a stylistic variation, or a stock formula, or a subtle attack on his opponents' teaching that the religious status of women in the church and their participation in the blessing of Abraham depended on their attachment, like Sarah in Gen 17:15-21, to a circumcised male person.

<sup>8</sup> Even though Paul uses similar antithetical pairs of terms for groups of people in 1 Cor 12:13 and Col 3: 11, the reference to the two sexes is found only here.

<sup>9</sup> The Greek uses the masculine singular form to denote that the unity of all the diverse people mentioned in the previous sentence is given and received only in the person of Christ. Here Paul most likely refers back to 3:16 where he had argued that the 'seed' of Abraham was not all his descendants but only 'one' person, the Messiah.

<sup>10</sup> See Gal 3:16,19; compare Acts 3:25; Rom 4:16,18; 9:8. Paul uses no article here because he wants to distinguish those who are seed/sons/heirs of God in Christ from Christ himself as 'the Seed,' the one who is the true Son and heir of God the Father.

<sup>11</sup> See Gal 3:18; 4:1,7,30; 5:21.

## Analysis

This passage is a carefully crafted rhetorical unit. It is embedded in its immediate context by the particle 'for' (*gar*) in 3:26. This signals that the unit explains why Christians are 'no longer under the law' (3:25) and how the promised blessing, the Holy Spirit, the inheritance from Abraham, is given to those who have faith in Jesus the Messiah (3:14,18,22). The passage consists of three explicative sentences, each introduced by 'for' (*gar*, 3:26,27,28), that culminate in a concluding conditional sentence that is linked to them by the connective 'and' (*de*) (3:29). The first and third explicative clauses begin with the same word, 'all' (*pantes*), that highlights the connection between sonship and unity in Christ. This chain of explicative clauses does not give three different reasons for release from the custody of the law; rather, they complement and augment each other (see Longenecker: 154). Between the second and third explicative clauses Paul has inserted an appositional clause made up of three antitheses that affirm the result of investiture with Christ in baptism (3:28).

In 3:26 Paul explains why the Galatian Christians are no longer under the tutelage of the law. There is a shift from the third person plural of the previous verses to the second person plural to emphasise that he is addressing both Jewish and Gentile Christians in Galatia. This is reinforced by the emphatic use of 'all' to assert that all those who have faith in Jesus as the Messiah are 'sons of God'. All share in his status and inheritance as the only Son of God the Father.

This is a remarkable claim if it is considered against the backdrop of the Old Testament. In ancient Israel the king, like the coming Messiah, was commonly regarded as God's royal son, his regent and heir (2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; 28:16; Ps 2:7; Isa 9:6; cf. Ps 89:26). While Israel too was envisaged collectively as God's first born son (Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1; Jer 31:9), the Israelites were only once called 'sons of the Lord' (Deut 14:1). Their theological status was normally determined by their membership in God's people, his human clan. Hosea prophesies that one day they would be called 'sons of the living God' (1:8-11). That would be their new status when they were reunified under a single head. According to Paul, this promise of sonship was fulfilled by the baptismal union of Jews and Gentiles with Christ regardless of their gender or economic status (3:26; compare Rom 8:13-16; 9:4; 2 Cor 6:18).

Paul holds that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (Gal 1:15; 2:20; 4:4,6). By itself that claim was not at all controversial for any Jewish

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<sup>12</sup> See Gal 3:14,16,17,18,19,21,22; 4:23,28. Paul uses this term quite specifically in this chapter to refer to the promise that God made to Abraham and his seed in Gen 22:18 (3:16,17,19,29) as well as what was promised, the Spirit (3:14,22).

Christian. But to that he adds the controversial assertion that all those who have faith in Jesus the Messiah are also 'sons of God.' This includes the Gentiles. By adoption both Jews and Gentiles share in Christ's own 'sonship' (4:5). Since they have his royal filial status they receive his Spirit as their common inheritance from God the Father, so that they too, like Jesus, may address God as Father (4:6,7). Even though, by adoption, they are the descendants of Abraham (3:29), they are not just the sons of Abraham (3:7), but sons of God as well (3:26). They do not receive their God-given status as heirs by law through Abraham, but by grace 'through' God (3:18; 4:7). Through faith they share in the unique relationship of the Son with God the Father.

After declaring that all believers are 'sons of God,' Paul gives the reason for this assertion in 3:27. They are all God's sons by virtue of their baptism. When they were baptised into Christ they assumed his status before God the Father. Here Paul's use of imagery is startling. All those who have been baptised have dressed up as Jesus the Messiah. They have not just dressed up in the same royal regalia; they have dressed up in him and taken on his royal status. The imagery of taking off one set of clothes and dressing up in another is most likely derived from the practice of baptism (see Moule: 52,53). Elsewhere Paul uses this imagery for removal of the old self and its lifestyle by those who have been baptised (Rom 13:12; Eph 4:22,25; Col 2:11; 3:8,9) and their reception of their new self and all God's gifts in Christ (Rom 13:12,14; 1 Cor 15:53,54; 2 Cor 5:3; Eph 4:24; 6:10,14; Col 3:10,12; 1 Thess 5:8). This does not just mean that they have taken on 'Christ's characteristics, virtues, and intentions, and so become like him' (*contra* Longenecker: 156); they have taken on Christ himself and a new self in him (see Rom 13:12; Eph 4:22; Col 3:8). They belong to Christ and derive their being from him. Everything that belongs to Christ, such as his status as God's Son, his inheritance, his Spirit, his access to the Father, belongs to them. He is their be-all and end-all before God (see Col 3:11).

In 3:28 Paul draws out the implications of this foundational fact in a series of startling antitheses. Since they are clothed in Christ, dressed up in him, he, as it were, covers up their former clothing, the dress that had formerly determined their status before God.<sup>13</sup> Their theological status does not depend on whether they are Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, males or females. These attributes do not decide their standing before God the Father. Yet Paul does not base these claims on their common humanity as descendants of Adam, but on their union with Jesus the Messiah. They are all 'one' in him. They have their common sonship and their unity in him. All those who are clothed with Christ are one in him.

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<sup>13</sup> The presupposition for this argument is the common use of clothing in the ancient world to show a person's identity and status and to indicate a change of status with all its privileges and responsibilities.

Paul uses these negations in order to teach the unity that is given by faith in Christ. He argues that the promise of blessing that God gave to the 'seed' of Abraham in Genesis 22:18 applies to Jesus Christ, the one and only 'Seed' (3:16). By virtue of their union with Christ in baptism, those who have faith in Jesus also share in that promise because they are 'one' in him, the one person who is 'the Seed.' That one person is the giver of blessing and unity for all people, no matter what their human status might otherwise be. He unites them in all their diversity.

Many have been surprised at the presence of three antitheses here, as it seems that Paul only needs to mention the first (Jew/Greek) to make his point, 'while the others appear redundant for the argument Paul is making' (Betz: 162).

There are several possible explanations for the insertion of the three antitheses. First, it is possible that Paul is quoting from a baptismal liturgy of the early church or from his own stock baptismal teaching (so Betz: 197-200). We find variant versions of this in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Colossians 3:11. The fact that it is familiar material would explain why he quotes more than is necessary for his argument about the terms for the participation of the Gentiles in the inheritance of Abraham. This theory, however, does not explain the differences in formulation between the three versions of that material.

Second, it could be that Paul here contradicts the regular Jewish morning prayer in which each adult male thanks God that he is not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman (so Longenecker: 157). One problem with this explanation is that according to the Jewish tradition, this prayer was added to the daily prayers at about 150 AD by Judah ben Ilai. It therefore was not demonstrably in common use in Paul's day, although Judah may be sanctioning an earlier practice. Similar expressions of gratitude appear in Greek writings as well; for example, 'that I was born a human being and not a beast, next, a man and not a woman, thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian.'<sup>14</sup> These Greek references pre-date Paul by several centuries. According to this view, Paul here emphasises that in Christ there is no such superiority.

Third, these antitheses could refer to the law for circumcision. Martin has set out the argument that Paul here refers to the practice of circumcision in his day and its divine legislation in Genesis 17:9-14,23-27 (so Martin 2003: 111-125). Three groups were eligible for circumcision and the privileges that ensued from it: the physical offspring of Abraham rather

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<sup>14</sup> This thanksgiving is attributed to Thales and Socrates in Diogenes Laertius' *Vitae Philosophorum* 1.33, and to Plato in Plutarch's *Marius* 46.1 and Lactantius' *Divine Institutes* 3.19.17. See Longenecker, page 157.

than the Gentile offspring of Adam; the slaves who belonged to his household rather than free males who were employed to work in it; male members of Abraham's family rather than his female descendants. Thus the law for circumcision provides a rationale for the selection of these three antitheses in which the second part of each antithesis lists those who were excluded from the rite of circumcision. Martin concludes:

In contrast to the distinctions that determine the extent of the obligations of circumcision, Gal 3:28 states that none of these distinctions is relevant for determining candidates for Christian baptism. The covenant of circumcision distinguishes between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female.... Christian baptism ignores the distinctions required by the covenant of circumcision and provides a basis for unity in the Christian community. (2003: 121)

A difficulty with this interpretation is that these antitheses may reflect the practice of circumcision but they do not clearly echo the terms of the legislation in Genesis 17:9-14, 23-27.

In 3:29 Paul draws his conclusion from his three explanations about why the Christians in Galatia were no longer under the supervision of God's law and imprisoned by it. He recalls his earlier statement in 3:18 that the reception of the promised inheritance did not depend on the law, but was given by grace through God's promise to Abraham. Since all believers in Christ are sons of God who have been clothed with Christ and so belong to him, they too are Abraham's seed. Yet they are his seed only in a secondary derived sense, for their status as his 'descendants', his 'offspring,' depends on their union with Christ, who is the one and only 'Seed' (3:16,19). Both the promise of blessing for all nations and the blessing itself belong to him. That blessing is the gift of the Spirit (3:14), the Spirit of his Son (4:6). The Spirit is his inheritance. The Spirit belongs to Jesus as the Christ. Yet he does not keep the Spirit to himself as God's Son, but he shares it with all the 'sons of God' as their common inheritance from God the Father. They are 'heirs through God' (Gal 4:7). God has sent his Son to redeem all humanity from the curse of the law, so that they might receive the blessing of the Spirit as heirs of God and coheirs with Christ (3:13-14; 4:4-7; see Rom 8:17). All who are in Christ, no matter whether they are Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, males or females, are heirs with Christ of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:18. They all share in his sonship and inheritance.

### **The interpretation of Galatians 3:26-29 by those who argue for the ordination of women**

1. Galatians 3:26-29 speaks of the transformation brought about by redemption in Christ: that by baptism into him all people receive not only incorporation into the people of God, but also the divine status of sons and

heirs of God the Father, because they receive the very sonship of Christ himself. This establishes not only unity, but also equality on the basis that all have exactly the same status before the Father, that of the Son of God himself.

2. Precisely because these verses do not speak directly to order within the church or to the status of women, they are most valuable for our current discussion. Paul is writing here of a new and eternal reality not conditioned by culture or historical situation. Although the text does not say that all distinctions have ceased to exist in every sphere, it is the new reality of being in Christ which limits and redefines the significance of those other distinctions, not the other way around.<sup>15</sup>
3. That Paul embraced the implications of this redefinition in his own ministry can be illustrated by the following.
  - a. Paul expected Jews and Gentiles to embrace and treat the other as equal in honour and standing (see Rom 15:7-9; Eph 2:11-22). In Galatians 2:11-14 Paul says that by drawing away from the Gentiles, Peter was 'not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel.' He does not complain that by living like a Gentile Peter was not maintaining his station as a Jew.
  - b. In Philemon it is clear that the new relationship of brother in the Lord is to have a significant practical effect on the relationship of master and slave. The injunction: 'Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ' applies to all members of the community, including wives and husbands, slaves and masters (Eph 5:21-6:9). 1 Cor 7:21-24 establishes both the freedom of the slave and the slavery of the free.
  - c. Marital relations also are to be characterised by the mutual submission that partners share in the gospel (Eph 5:21-33). When Paul says that in sexual relations, each partner's body is ruled by the other (1 Cor 7:4), it is natural to read Paul's words against the background of Genesis 3:16b: 'Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you'. Paul comments in 1 Corinthians 11:11,12 that the Christian husband and wife are not independent of each other, but remain interdependent.

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<sup>15</sup> Stendahl writes: We would hardly expect to hear Paul say, 'These statements apply to the question of individual salvation, but in all other respects things are as they used to be' (32).

4. The fundamental relationship of any Christian is their relationship with God, and their status as children of God through the sonship and heirship of Jesus now gives shape and meaning to all other relationships. This challenges not only the traditional hierarchies of race and social standing which operate in our world (Gal 3:28), but even the primal relationship of male and female (Gen 1:27, Gal 3:28) which is now secondary to their union with Christ in baptism and transformed by it. This opens the possibility of a changed role for women. If our primary status before God rests in the given of unity in Christ, there can be no argument that limits the possibility of anyone's full participation in the ministry of the church on the basis of inferior status. While equality is never to be grasped or demanded within the church, it is given as part of the inheritance shared by all God's children. They have 'the right to become children of God' (John 1:12).
  
5. Paul's new order in Christ reflects a restoration of God's original intention in creation, overthrown by the fall into sin. If the husband's rule is a consequence of sin (Gen 3:16), then sin's defeat reinstates the partnership in which male and female both 'rule' (Gen 1:26). In faith the church reflects and models to the world the work of restoration promised for all creation (Isa 65:17). The prophetic vision of Joel 2:28-29 specifically includes an equal partnership of men and women, slaves and free people, young and old, all participating in the Spirit's ministry of proclamation. This is fulfilled for women in Acts 2:14-21 (see 1 Cor 11:5).
  
6. At times Paul seems to take a position at variance with the interpretation presented here.<sup>16</sup> When we examine these instances more closely, however, the seeming contradictions can be resolved by noting that they represent temporary concessions explained by Paul's desire not to cause offence and thereby damage the mission of the church.<sup>17</sup>
  
7. It is a Lutheran principle that the gospel does not overthrow the social order (AC 16:5). Laws cannot be made on the basis of the gospel, neither in society nor in the church. However, the freedom of the gospel is active in the lives of those who live in society, and who worship and work as members of the body of Christ. The abolition of distinctions between Jews and Gentiles was effected early in the history of the church, but not without a struggle, as witnessed by Paul's Letter to the Galatians. It took many more centuries of growth before Christians were moved to take a leading role in the abolishment of slavery in Western society. Progress towards the establishment of equal opportunities for women within our

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<sup>16</sup> For example, 1 Cor 11:3-15; 1 Cor 14:33b-38; 1 Tim 2:11-15.

<sup>17</sup> See the accompanying paper '1 Corinthians 14:33b-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 permit the ordination of women' which deals with these texts.

society has been an even more complicated journey, but – at its best – represents an achievement which can also be seen as a reflection of the renewed and restored creation implicit in, and derived from, Paul’s teaching here in Galatians 3:28 (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17). The ordination of women into the church’s ministry not only reflects their changed status within society, but continues to unfold and implement the full implications of the gospel within the church.

### **The interpretation of Galatians 3:26-29 by those who argue for the ordination of men only**

1. Galatians 3:26-29 does not deal, either implicitly or explicitly, with the ministry of word and sacrament. In it Paul teaches that, despite their diversity, all baptised people are united with Christ and so share in his sonship. By grace they have the same theological status before God the Father and have all received the Holy Spirit as their promised inheritance. While Paul’s choice of the three antithetical pairs in Galatians 3:28 is determined by the contrast between circumcision and baptism, their similarity to the lists of pairs in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Colossians 3:11 shows that they are meant to teach the unity of all people in Christ, rather than the abolition of religious, economic, and sexual differences.
2. When Paul maintains that all who are baptised are one in Christ Jesus, he does not here teach their equality with each other, but their unity in Christ that transcends all diversity.<sup>18</sup> An examination of the idiom ‘you/they/we are one’ bears this out (Matt 19:6; Mark 10:8; John 17:11,21,22; Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 3:8; 10:17; cf. John 10:30).<sup>19</sup> In each case this idiom describes the unity that is established between different persons, with all their various gifts and tasks (eg. Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 3:5; 10:17). That God-given unity does not abolish their diversity, but employs it for the common good. Thus Paul does not use this idiom in Galatians 3:28 as an argument to assert that all people are created - or recreated - equal, but to teach the unity of diverse persons in the body of Christ.
3. The differences that Paul mentions in Galatians 3:28 are not all of the same kind. The religious difference derives from God’s covenant with Israel. The economic difference results from the fall. But the sexual difference is given by God in creation. Christ supersedes the first two, for all who are baptised are heirs of Abraham and free sons of God. But the sexual difference from creation remains and is still significant in the order of redemption.

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<sup>18</sup> See below at paragraph 4a.

<sup>19</sup> See Hove, in Grudem, ed (2002: 105-143).

4. In Galatians 3:26-28 Paul claims that both sexes equally share in Christ's sonship and the gift of the Holy Spirit. They are not just part of God's extended family as children of God but are actually included in Christ's unique relationship with God the Father.
  - a. Since by baptism both women and men are sons of God, they are also coheirs with Christ, the only Son and heir of God the Father. Their theological status is therefore granted to them by virtue of their union with Christ. Yet even though they are equal in status as sons and heirs before God the Father, they do not all do the same work, or have the same gifts. All participate in the work of the church, but they do not do so in the same way.
  - b. The unity of women and men in Christ does not abolish the order of the family. Instead, it confirms their diverse tasks and gifts in both domains (I Cor 14:33b-38; Col 3:11-19; 1 Tim 2:2-3:13; Tit 2:1-8; cf. Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:12-26). Like Christ, Christian husbands are to be heads of their wives, just as their wives are to subordinate themselves to their husbands, like the church to Christ, its head (Eph 5:21-33).
  - c. Yet headship and subordination do not imply superiority or inferiority, domination or subservience, but the exercise of self-sacrificial love in the Christian family and the church. The unity of men and women in Christ, and their equality before God the Father, presents them with new possibilities for humble service of others in community, each according to their station and vocation. That kind of love, that kind of service, is what is so new for those who are a new creation in Christ (Col 3:9-4:1).
5. The ready use of equality as a theological term does not sit well with the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son who did not grasp at equality with his Father, but who, in obedience to his will, sacrificed himself for all those who wanted to be equal in status and power and glory with God (Phil 2:6). Thus the New Testament rarely speaks about equality.<sup>20</sup> This vague legal term was popularised as a political slogan by the French and American revolutions. Its careless use by the church translates the proclamation of the gospel into legal discourse with its concern for personal rights and privileges, social rank and status, political position and power.
6. Theological implications may be drawn from a passage in Scripture to confirm, or to elaborate, a point of teaching. But such deductions may not be used by themselves, without further scriptural foundation, to establish

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<sup>20</sup> Acts 11:7; 2 Cor 8:13,14; Phil 2:16; Col 4:1; 2 Pet 1:1.

doctrine and to impose it on the church. Moreover, these conclusions must not contradict what is explicitly taught on that matter elsewhere. The use of Galatians 3:28 as the scriptural foundation for the ordination of women does just that. It contradicts Paul's prohibitions in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15, as well the teaching in Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-19, and 1 Peter 3:1-7 on the relationship between men and women in marriage. It is true that elsewhere Paul quite rightly draws out social implications from the gospel. But the supposed implications of his teaching in Galatians 3:28 should not be used, together with arguments about social change and women's rights, to discount what he says much more clearly elsewhere about the ordination of women. Such a procedure does not provide a sound scriptural basis for the abolition of an established ecumenical rule that comes from Christ's command and the teaching of the apostles.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper we have set out our agreement on the argument of St Paul in Galatians 3:26-29. We agree that baptism clothes us with Christ, gives us his status as sons and heirs of God the Father, fills us with the Holy Spirit and despite all our diversity makes us one in Christ. We have also set out our areas of difference. Those who uphold the existing position of the LCA hold that the equality of men and women before God does not make them equally eligible for ordination. Those who argue for the ordination of women hold that the equality of men and women in baptism supports their case.