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DEBATE ON WOMEN'S ORDINATION

Opening Remarks

Certain ironies in this debate:

Both debaters men, bachelors, celibates.
Roman Catholic debater is against the Pope's position.
Protestant debater in favor of it.

Topic evokes considerable heat:

Men have misused authority, spoken snidely, etc.
(but this is true of all kinds of human authority ever since humanity fell into sin)

Women feel being shut out of certain offices implies they are viewed as inferior, since this is common view in our society today (and prob thruout history) (not biblical view, where humility is important characteristic of leadership: Moses, Jesus, etc; and authority not = personal worth: Trinity)

Want to examine biblical teaching on subject

According to Bible, Women are not to be Elders

Range of term "ordination"

Some traditions ordain deacons
but some biblical support for women as deacons

Some traditions distinguish pastors, elders, bishops
but these appear to be synonymous in Bible

Here limiting "ordination" to eldership
suggest Bible does not permit women elders

Direct Biblical Evidence

No explicit statement like "Thou shalt have no women elders before Me" or such

But contrast qualifications for elder/deacon in 1 Timothy 3:

1Tim 3:1-13 (NASU) *It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires [to do]. 2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. 4 [He must be] one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), 6 [and] not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside [the church], so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 8 Deacons likewise [must be] men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, 9 [but] holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. 11 Women [must] likewise [be] dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Deacons must be husbands of [only] one wife, [and] good managers of [their] children and their own households. 13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.*

1 Tim 3:11 may be provision for women deacons
cp Rom 16:1; Pliny *Ep* 96.8

Rom 16:1 (NASU) *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant [or deaconess] of the church which is at Cenchrea;*

Pliny, *Letters* 96.8 *They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god... This made me decide it was all the more necessary to extract the truth by torture from two slave-women, whom they call deaconesses. I found nothing but a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths. I have therefore postponed any further examination and hastened to consult you.*

nothing parallel in section on elders 3:1-7

More direct evidence in 1 Tim 2:11-12:

1Tim 2:11-12 (NASU) *A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. 12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.*

New Testament Practice

No Apostles Women

Jesus certainly had women who helped in his ministry
but none of the 12 were women

Women certainly were eyewitnesses of his resurrection, but none listed in Paul's list and apparently not believed by the men.

Broader use of "apostle" might include Junia

Rom 16:7 (unless this is Junias, a poss nickname for Junianus); even with feminine name, this may mean "outstanding in opinion of apostles."

No Scripture Writers Women

(not writer of Hebrews, who uses masculine singular participle to refer to self in Heb 11:32)

Clearly Women Prophesied: daughters of Philip, etc.

but no examples of their audience

some argument whether this authoritative or not, teaching or not; I think it is, but this is a matter of God's charismatic initiative, not a regular office (see below for OT distinction).

No Specific Indication of Change from OT Situation

main suggestion is Gal 3:28:

Gal 3:28 (NASU) *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

but context is sonship, inheritance – not office

in OT, Gentiles, slaves, females not normally heirs, but in Christ this is changed.

Old Testament Situation

Regular Offices: those that have standard arrangements for succession

No priests women

No Levites women

No rulers women (exc Athaliah, an usurper)

Charismatic Offices: chosen by God's Spirit

Two prophets:

Miriam: listed as leading Israel with her brothers (Mic 6:4); as prophet (Ex 15:20) leading women in dancing and tambourine playing

Huldah: sought for consultation rather than speaking in public (2 K 22:14ff)

One judge:

Deborah: clearly leading and being consulted in public, but in a context where men not doing what they should (Judges 4-5)

No Scripture writers appear to be women

but utterances are recorded:

Miriam (Ex 15:20): singing Moses' song

Deborah (Jud 5): own song

Hannah (1 Sam 2): ditto

similarly in NT w/ Mary (Luke 1)

Why Such a Prohibition?

Should obey God even if he gives no reason for command

recall C.S. Lewis in *Perelandra*

if every command has known reason, then obeying for sake of reason, not because we love and respect God.

Paul suggests two reasons in 1 Tim 2:13-14:

1 Tim 2:12 (NASU) *But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. 13 For it was Adam who was first created, [and] then Eve. 14 And [it was] not Adam [who] was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*

(1) priority of man in creation

referring to Genesis 2

(2) woman deceived at fall

perhaps suggests women more trusting than men

seems to be somewhat parallel to other OT examples where descendants penalized for sin of ancestor:

Esau selling birthright: Gen 25ff

Reuben for incest: Gen 49:3-4

Simeon & Levi for violence: Gen 49:5-7

note God's reaction to rebellion of Korah (Levite), Dathan & Abiram (Reubenites): Num 16

and to rebellion of Miriam & Aaron against Moses: Num 12

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Eli for not restraining sons: 1 Sam 2-3

How Long Does Such a Prohibition Last?

We are not told.

Suggest this is another of those features in the NT which represent an advance beyond the OT, but the full consummation is at the Lord's return.