

Can we talk? Can we talk about how the Bible is to be interpreted with regard to women's ordination? In Germany the Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (SELK) has had a vigorous open discussion of the issue, as has the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA). Pastor Karl Wyneken sought to raise the issue in 1993. He shared the thoughts of the following article with the president of the synod, the praesidium, the CTCR and a circuit pastoral conference, hoping for a wider discussion of women's ordination.

When an earlier version of this article was published in the privately circulated Voices/Vision, a complaint was filed against him. Synod officials faulted him for violating the synod's procedure for expressing dissent, provided him with instruction on the "correct" position of the synod, and brought pressure on him to desist from further public dissemination of his views.

He has continued to raise the issue privately with church leaders and through appropriate channels, but few seem to want an open discussion of the issue. The on-line DAYSTAR JOURNAL published the article in its Pentecost 2007 issue in the hope that it might lead to a fuller discussion of women's ordination in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The author is a 1962 graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He holds the Master of Sacred Theology degree and completed the residency requirements for the Doctorate of Theology, majoring in historical theology, from the same institution. He has served churches in Sacramento, Santa Maria, and Fresno, California, and continues to reside in Fresno since retirement in 1998. He has served for nearly 45 years as archivist of the California-Nevada-District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

LET'S INCLUDE WOMEN IN THE PASTORAL OFFICE

"Pastor, I've been thinking about what I want to be when I grow up. Guess what! I'd like to be a pastor, like you!" That was good news. But it was only partly good news. The bad news? Her name was Lisa, and this was the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Forced to leave the Synod of her family and friends, birth, and early upbringing to pursue her goal, Lisa Nelson received ordination in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1993. In the years since, I have been led more and more to the conviction that our Synod's discriminatory policy is both senseless and needless. It is based on misunderstandings about the nature and purpose of the Bible and the historic context that was the matrix in which it originated (technically known as hermeneutical principles). The flawed understanding is that social structures and practices that merely reflect the particular social and cultural conditions of long-past times when the Bible came into being must continue to be regarded as having timeless validity.

Heedless of the perils—the disservice it does to our Lisa Nelsons as well as the danger to our Synod as a whole and its mission as we move along in the 21st century—we cling obstinately to it and refuse even to allow discussion about it.

The following is essentially a summarized form of various reflections I have shared with the president of synod and its praesidium since 1993. It was presented substantially as it appears

here at the December 1998 conference of the pastors of the Central San Joaquin Circuit of the CA-NV-HI District, in keeping with the provision of a synodical by-law regarding the expression of dissent. It is my hope that these concerns, raised in good faith and conscience, will not continue to be ignored. They need to be addressed. My sense is that the need is urgent.

1. Doesn't the Bible clearly teach that women are not to speak in public assembly (1 Corinthians 14:33-35), or to teach men or have authority over them (1 Timothy 2:11-15)? Must we not regard these as authoritative for us today?

This is true only if we make certain assumptions about the nature and purpose of the Bible. One such assumption would be that the Bible was ever intended to provide us with direct and absolute answers to questions such as this. The Bible's all-important purpose is clear—to lead us in faith to a right and saving relationship with God in Christ. But the Bible is not a kind of “manual of operation” that settles firmly and completely such matters as how we are to organize and govern the church, what offices are necessary, or how leadership positions are to be filled. The Bible may include some instructive material of this nature applicable to its original context. These two texts are good examples. When St. Paul wrote these he was giving particular advice or instruction at a particular time to a particular problem in the particular situation of a particular group of people. These instructions reflect and are conditioned by the social circumstances and cultural norms that prevailed in the first century A.D. at Corinth and Ephesus. Should they then be used to determine church dogma or practices and be binding for all times and situations? There are numerous instances of such time-conditioned material in the Scriptures (*parenesis*). See point 4 below.

Another very important point to note is that the Bible obviously contains many things that simply reflect the prevailing attitudes and customs of that day. This sort of material we might call sociologically descriptive. Such material needs to be recognized and distinguished from that which sets forth the Bible's major purpose and message, namely, God's revelation through the Law that calls us to account and exposes sin and the Gospel that proclaims His grace in Christ. That message is theologically prescriptive. Cultural and sociological *description* from the first century A.D. and prior should not indiscriminately be taken as theological and revelational *prescription* for the 20th.

2. Could you be more specific with regard to how these particular passages should be understood today?

Let's begin with 1 Corinthians 14. Here the Apostle seems to be laying it down as law that women are not allowed to speak in the Christian assembly. For one, we have an obvious dilemma when we consider this text alongside what the same writer says just three chapters earlier (11:5); there he allows that women do speak in public worship—they pray and they *prophecy*. (What is there called “prophecy,” by the way, was probably very close to what we would today call “preaching”!) How can this be?

The answer is that we don't know for sure. We can only guess. This uncertainty factor, when texts lack clarity, it seems to me, is of considerable significance and I want to come back to that, but first let me mention a couple of possible understandings of what is going on here. First, let's note some things about the context. Paul's main concern in the preceding section was the problem of disorderliness in worship, particularly due to the disruptive charismatic

activities of some. The disorderliness of these Christians could cause offense to the unbelieving, and thus the reception of the Gospel might be impaired. The advice that women keep silent appears to be a further development from the foregoing, a kind of “appendix” to it. Paul’s main concern is still the negative effect any kind of disorderliness may have on “outsiders.” This is borne out by his return to the subject in the “wrap-up” conclusion in v. 40 (“Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way”) before he goes on to his next major topic in ch. 15.

Let’s note one other thing: what the English translations render as “women” could as well be translated “wives.” Verse 35 where it is suggested they wait until they get home and discuss matters with their husbands clearly supports this rendering. There is a simple explanation for why this might have seemed to be a desirable policy. Ancient synagogue practice (and even in a house-church setting in a Gentile city Jewish ways might still prevail) was that women sat segregated from the men, at the rear. To be included when there was discussion, the women would have had to shout across the assembly and this would have been disruptive. Maybe at times they just couldn’t hear what the men in their area were talking about and were tempted to air their frustration. But instead, suggests Paul, “Let them ask their husbands at home”—and thus avoid unnecessary disruption, especially if it offended visitors from the pagan community and thus might jeopardize the Gospel’s reception.

Is this what moved St. Paul to appeal for silence on the part of the women—primarily a need for good decorum? If so, doesn’t it seem rather unlikely that he would have anticipated that what he was writing to first century Corinthians would be used in the 20th and (as seems likely now in our church body) the 21st century to prevent women from becoming pastors?

That’s one possible interpretation. There are others. Some interpreters point out that in first century Gentile culture such as that of Corinth it was considered in poor taste or offensive for a wife in public to engage in discourse with her husband, especially if it was to contradict him. Possibly this was in Paul’s mind as he penned this recommendation for that moment at that place. For a Corinthian wife to speak out in the presence of her husband, especially if it might be something contradictory, would seem culturally subversive and offensive to prospective Gentile converts.

According to either of these interpretation, it is absolutely essential to see that what Paul advised and why he did so was FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL, that is, to provide the most favorable conditions possible for it to be heard. In first century Corinth that appears to have meant asking the women (or wives) to avoid behavior that might there and then offend prospective converts and so keep them from hearing the Gospel. In our world today, however, prospective hearers of the Gospel are not likely to be turned off by the fact that women speak in our worship assemblies. Today, in fact, it is far more likely that the exclusion of women and discrimination against them will create offense and so jeopardize the hearing of the Gospel. Paul apparently gave this instruction in order to avoid an offense that could impede the progress of the Gospel. By applying that advice literally and slavishly 20 centuries later we could be causing an offense that imperils our witness to the Gospel, the very thing Paul was hoping to avoid. How tragically ironic.

3. **You mentioned something before you called an “uncertainty factor” and that you would come back to it, didn’t you?**

Yes, and I think this is a point of some importance. These texts—and we’ll find this also the case with the 1 Timothy passage—are not very clear, to say the least. Interpreters disagree about various facets of them and can only speculate as to what exactly the writer meant by some of the things that are said. A great amount of study has been done of these texts and the results are inconclusive.

Certain key words are not entirely clear. As we noted above, is 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 referring to women in general or just wives? What does the Greek word there for “speak” mean? Some interpreters suggest that in this context its sense could be something like “chat” or “converse,” not any and all speaking, which would support the interpretation that disorderliness is the primary concern. In 14:13 Paul adds the phrase “as the Law says,” but there is no clear source for this in the Torah, so to what is he referring? Should the punctuation of 14:33 be such that “as in all the churches” goes with what follows (speaking by women) or with the preceding (regulating charismatic activities).

In 1 Timothy 2:12 the Greek word generally translated “have authority over” is a rather uncommon term (only here in the New Testament); in other Greek literature it can have a broader range of meaning, including “exercise seductive powers over.” What exactly does it mean here? In 2:15 there is a most puzzling statement, one rendering of which is that “women will be saved by childbearing.” If we read that literalistically, are we to conclude that their salvation comes by something other than grace alone?

Another text cited by those who would exclude women on hierarchical grounds is 1 Corinthians 11:3ff., a text that easily rivals any in the Bible for interpretive problems and puzzles. For instance, Paul there speaks of “headship,” but there is no consensus about the exact meaning of the Greek word there translated “head.” It can have the sense of “source,” not necessarily “ruler.” Again, this is where discussion of the “subordinate” role of women occurs, but he uses the same term of the relationship of Christ to God the Father. Are we thus to conclude that Paul taught the heretical view of the Trinity known as Subordinationism?

Cases could be multiplied. Our point is that the texts most pertinent to the issue of the role of women are in large part unclear and subject to disputed interpretations. A very important and valuable rule in Biblical interpretation is that essential doctrines should not be based on unclear, obscure, uncertain texts. These controverted texts leave much to be desired in terms of clarity and certainty. Should such debatable texts be grounds for barring half the human race from the pastoral office?

4. How about the 1 Timothy 2 text?

For some, this may seem to be the most problematic text of all. Women are to “learn in quietness and full submission” and not to “teach men” or “have authority” over them (2:11-12). But here again we need to ask, Is this a hard-and-fast, once-and-for-all rule, an absolute divine mandate? Or is it conditional and situational, a directive of that writer to that particular set of circumstances at that time in that social/cultural milieu?

Interestingly, in this very same chapter, the verses just prior, we have several examples of instructions that no one but the most fanatical fundamentalist would dream of taking literally, absolutely, and for-all-time binding. Just two verses prior to the restriction on women teaching the writer says that women are not to braid their hair or wear jewelry (v. 9). Who

but the most biblicistic crank would insist on taking that injunction literally? We readily recognize the time- and culture-conditioned nature of such instruction. Going back just one more verse we have yet another example of exhortation that begs to be understood relative to the time and situation of the original writer and readers: in v. 8 the writer suggests that the proper posture for prayer “is with upraised hands.” Why don’t we insist upon a literalistic application of that injunction? Of course, the selective literalist will opportunistically find one thing useful in that verse, however inconsistent it may be: the subject in this clause happens to be “men,” so doubtless there will be those who will pick that out, ignoring the part about upraised hands, to support the exclusion of women. This is what selective, or eclectic, literalism—at its finest (i.e. worst)—could lead to.

While we’re on the subject of selective literalism, we might note that quite a lot of this goes on in the fundamentalist exegetical enterprise. For example, if the New Testament parenetic advice remains forever totally and uniformly in effect, would not 1 Corinthians 16:20 mean that we must kiss one another, not just shake hands when we greet one another or share the peace?

Or again, here’s another example, one on which our Lutheran Confessional writings weigh in. If apostolic injunctions are timeless and once-and-for-all binding, what ever happened to several we find in Acts 15, where we have the report of the “first convention” of the early church at Jerusalem? There the apostles decreed that Gentiles should continue to keep certain Jewish kosher food prohibitions such as the consumption of meat from animals that have been strangled or not properly bled. How is it that *Blutwurst*-loving German Lutherans have never worried much about not keeping these apostolic injunctions?

In the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, which we consider normative for our theology, the Confessors call upon the example of this no-longer-observed ruling to demonstrate that not just any and all injunctions, even ones like this from the apostles themselves, must be slavishly followed for all time. And what is the rationale for this playing light-and-loose, so to speak, with the very Scriptures themselves, in this case even the New Testament? The answer is simply, but most powerfully, that such matters must be viewed and their on-going applicability determined solely in the light of and subject to nothing else than the Gospel and its aim and intent that is central to all understanding of Scripture.

So the Augsburg Confession (28:65-66) treats this Acts 15 decree, even though it was enacted by the apostles and is in the New Testament, as pertinent only to that time and the original circumstances: "The apostles commanded abstention from blood, etc. Who keeps this command now? Those who do not keep it certainly do not sin, because the apostles did not wish to burden consciences through such bondage. They issued the prohibition for a time to avoid scandal. For the general intention of the gospel must be considered in connection with the decree" (Kolb-Wengert edition; cf. Apology 28:16). The last sentence in the Latin reads: "*Est enim perpetual voluntas evangelii in decreto consideranda.*" The older Tappert edition translates *perpetual voluntas evangelii* even more elegantly and pointedly: “in connection with the decree one must consider what the perpetual aim of the Gospel is.”

“The perpetual aim of the Gospel” – why can we not follow the lead of the Reformers to let that be the guide and touchstone to which we submit all time- and culturally-conditioned matters that the Bible merely reflects from the historical and cultural milieu of its time? How does the exclusionary treatment of women accord with “the perpetual aim of the Gospel” in our time and circumstances today?

But to come back to 1 Timothy 2. Knowledge of the historical background and cultural context in which this text was created can again be helpful. 1 Timothy and the other two “Pastoral Epistles” were written considerable later in the New Testament period. By then, we know that a major concern was the inroads that certain false teachers, thought to be forerunners of what would blossom into the Gnostics heresy, were making, particularly among women (cf. 2 Timothy 3:6). Some women would have found this heresy attractive because certain Gnostics went to extremes, holding even that women were perhaps the superior sex. Eve, for example, was to be admired (note the possible reaction to this in the verses immediately following the one forbidding women to teach men). Call it a first century version of gender discrimination-in-reverse, “affirmative action” carried to an extreme!

When we read it against this likely backdrop, the restriction on having women teach takes on a different light. Presumably the teaching that *some* women were doing was creating a problem. The simple apostolic solution of that moment was to prohibit *all* women from teaching. The trouble with applying this to our situation today is that this heresy is not exactly the problem for us that it was in first century Ephesus. In any case, simply ordering women today to keep silent would probably not be a very effective method to combat it.

(We recognize there are those who think they detect quasi-gnostic aspects in the contemporary feminist movement, coming especially from a vocal minority that sometimes has attracted attention out of proportion to their numbers. The critics would like to tar and feather with this brush all who support reasonable and equitable inclusiveness. Is such a sweeping, generalizing method of guilt-by-association worth dignifying with a response? The “radicalism” of some perhaps needs to be addressed, but it is hardly an excuse for turning a deaf ear to the legitimate and responsible concerns of the vast majority, including all the women I have known and worked with in our synod.)

5. What about texts that seem to call upon women to be in subjection or submission to men? Wouldn't these have a bearing on whether women may be pastors?

This is one of the arguments our synodical theologians in particular have used to support the exclusion of women from the pastoral office. It is claimed that hierarchical arrangements that include the subjection of women to men were in God's original creative plan (the so-called “Order of Creation”) and are therefore to be considered still in force and to be enforced. A careful reading of Genesis 1 and 2 rather, if anything, suggests equality. Hierarchy is introduced as a result of the fall in chapter 3, thus its intervention is a part of what might better be called “the Order of Fallen Creation.” A Roman Catholic theologian has referred to the insistence on male domination as “a celebration of original sin.”

Does the New Testament, for example in Ephesians 5, call for a one-way, hierarchical “submission” on the part of women to men? One simple response to this is to note that the opening statement that heads this whole section on various roles, verse 21, calls for submission to be *mutual*. True Christian submission is gender-neutral. *Every* member of the Body of Christ willingly offers it in servant love for the good of his/her fellow human being. This submission is *voluntary* and in no way is to be confused with the coerced submission often demanded in the world, as in past it has been of women.

If we as Christians want to speak of ourselves as in or under some kind of “order,” why would it not be that of the New Creation, the Order of Redemption?

While on this subject of the order of creation we might mention that the way the Biblical creation accounts have been used for support may actually be quite un-Lutheran, that is, contrary to Luther’s actual exegesis of Genesis 1-3. Luther, it appears, did not understand these texts to be saying that subordination and hierarchy was an inherent feature of the original creation. He held that it was introduced with the Fall, in chapter 3. It was John Calvin, some suggest, who advanced the notion that the original creative design included hierarchical orderings. Today most interpreters, including Calvin’s Reformed descendents, would probably find Luther’s insight preferable. The sad irony is that we have some Lutheran theologians now who prefer Calvin’s view and advocate it.

6. So far we’ve dealt mainly with how certain Biblical texts ought not be used to support the exclusion of women from the pastoral office. Does the Bible say anything on a positive note that would support the inclusion of women?

This is an extremely important point. The best answer is perhaps to direct attention to the whole overall positive thrust of the Biblical revelation, particularly the New Testament. Numerous studies of the Biblical background and social structures of the times unanimously attest how much women were oppressed and discriminated against, both in Judaism and in the pagan world. In many ways New Testament Christianity repudiated such treatment and vastly enhanced the status and role of women. Jesus’ own acceptance and inclusion of women was little short of revolutionary, at least relative to their low and abased status in society generally. The early Christian community appears to have followed in his steps. Even St. Paul, who is often faulted for taking a dim view of the involvement of women, says many things that, in comparison to how women were treated elsewhere in the world of that day, remarkably enhance the status and role of women. His epistles refer frequently to women who were his co-workers and played significant roles side by side with him.

There were both advances and retreats as time went on. We see set backs in those texts we’ve examined that indicate that restrictions on the role of women were sometimes reintroduced. The Scriptural revelation is a dynamic, not static process and does not avoid the reality that we live in an imperfect world. But the overall direction of things, the ideal that the vision of the Kingdom sets before us is that among God’s people there ought to be equality and the renunciation of power-seeking and discrimination.

There are some texts in the New Testament that sadly and to our detriment, it seems to me, we neglect. How often Jesus appeals to his disciples to accept as their own his servant mentality and warns against the lust for power that is the world’s model and the Evil One’s great goal to seduce them into (e.g. Mark 9:33-37; 10:35-45; Matthew 23:5-12). The powerful assertion of St. Paul in Galatians 3:28, that in Christ there is neither slave nor free, Jew nor Gentile, male or female is certainly a powerful text we must keep before us.

7. I understand that some object to women pastors because it appears that this is just a matter of giving in to trends in our world today. It’s as though we are letting the world “set the agenda” for the church. How do you answer that?

That's really a distortion. I'm sure we can agree that the world must not be allowed to "set its agenda" for the church, and that's exactly what allowing women to be ordained will prevent.

The problem is that the world *has been* pushing its agenda all along and has very often succeeded in getting its agenda accepted. This goes back even to the times when our Biblical revelation was in process of coming into existence. The Bible was not written in a vacuum, totally out of touch with the social, cultural, historical circumstances of its human writers. Their writings reflect to some degree the natural, normal situation of their day. The Bible partakes of and reflects the human conditions of its human writers and their particular social and cultural setting and circumstances.

The fallen world's agenda is to hang on to power-craving needs for human beings to exploit one another, for hierarchies that oppress, and the like. God's redemptive purpose is to thwart and defeat that agenda. Nevertheless, the Bible, as a product of human writers who were subject to the conditions around them in their world, may reflect certain aspects of the world's agenda of that day. For example, the degrading institution of slavery is condoned, or at least accepted uncritically as a fact of life, perhaps even something of a socio-economic necessity in the ancient world. And thus the world, including most Christians regrettably, continued to tolerate it for another 18 ½ centuries or so.

Are we letting the world set our agenda by advocating gender equality? No, the problem when it comes to this issue is that the world has been allowed to set the agenda for roughly 20 centuries now. It's high time we put an end to letting the world set the agenda. Our agenda must be to defeat the world's agenda, not to perpetuate, promote, and even champion it.

8. Isn't this for the church an issue of relatively lesser importance, at least compared to our major mission of evangelizing the world? In fact, won't a change of our policy create dissention and distract us from that? Can't we justify our present policy on the grounds that we can thereby more effectively carry out the Great Commission?

This sounds to me like we're then saying a good end justifies the means, however questionable. The principle that the end does not justify the means seems to me to be a pretty sound one. I haven't heard that it's been revoked, or suspended. The church surely has no business claiming exemption from it. Indeed, we need to take it most seriously of all.

An issue of lesser importance? I feel strongly that on this point in particular we need to intensify our awareness of just what's at stake. I can't go into all the ramifications here but I'll share just one thought: in our world today, especially in developing, over-populated countries where people can barely exist and die early in hunger and squalor, it is well-known that one thing above all else helps bring about change and improvement. That is the raised status, education, and empowerment of women. A recent *National Geographic*, for instance, has an excellent article, "Women and Population" (October 1998, pp. 36-55). I simply wonder, What kind of impact will a church have, what kind of witness will it give, if in its own society it can't let go of its need for power hierarchies that needlessly discriminate?

[Author's update: as this is being prepared for publication in 2009, a 1998 *National Geographic* article is obviously no longer very "recent." In the decade since, this issue, I believe, has continued to be extremely critical. Some progress has been made, but surely it is far from enough. One informative—if disturbing—recent study is the book by *New York*

Times columnist Nicholas Kristof and his wife Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: From Oppression to Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (Knopf: 2009). In the November 19, 2009 *New York Review of Books* Sue Halpern wrote: “If Kristof and WuDunn have their way, righting ‘gender inequality in the developing world’ will be embraced as the moral battle of the 21st century as totalitarianism was in the 20th and slavery was in the century before that.” (http://www.nybooks.com/articles/23372?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Emailmarketingsoftware&utm_content=92445003&utm_campaign=November192009issue+_+uylutu&utm_term=BreakingaConspiracyofSilence)]

9. If there are no compelling Biblical or theological grounds for excluding women, then it is left up to us—is that right? So why can’t we simply decide that we should exclude them?

You’re correct, of course, that I do say that it’s a question we are left to answer. We have a theological term for such a question. We call it an adiaphoron (plural: adiaphora)—that is, a matter neither expressly commanded nor forbidden by the Scriptures. Another way of stating it in theological jargon is that such a question is one to be decided *de iure humano* (by human right, or on human authority)—that is, it’s a matter left to human discretion, not something decided for us by divine command (*de iure divino*). Yes, of course, the church *can*, indeed must, make determinations about adiaphorous matters. We do it all the time. There are multitudes of things not explicitly spelled out in the Scriptures. In many cases we can collectively decide as a synod about them and much of the time we can all readily abide by those decisions. Examples would be what style of organization we opt to have, what particular offices to have, what the qualifications are to be for offices, how to accord recognition to those called (the practice of ordination), etc., etc.

This is also true in large part for how we establish qualifications for the pastoral office. Obviously, gender *could* theoretically be a criterion. Indeed, it has been—for most of nearly two millenia, mainly because it has been uncritically assumed that this is the divine will. Theoretically we have no divine mandate either for or against ordaining women—all other things being equal. In our world and society today, however, there is something new in the equation. We have a sensitivity in society, together with appropriate legislation, that encourages all possible equity and fairness and restrains gender-based discrimination.

The option to discriminate on the basis of gender is now ethically and legally undergoing challenge. Lacking a divine mandate (a “heavenly reason”) for opting to exclude women, the only rationale for it is human expediency (“earthly reasons”). But what “earthly reasons” can there be in our world today to justify excluding women? Is it really any longer expedient? What exempts us from the ethical sensibilities and/or legislation that discourages or forbids gender discrimination? *In what way are we different from any other institution that is subject to the anti-discrimination laws of our land?*

(Naturally, being a religious organization, we could no doubt appeal to First Amendment “rights” and attempt to hide behind its “protections.” And no doubt we could get by with that. Our country’s civil institutions tend to interpret First Amendment “rights” with considerable latitude. But again, “legal” is not necessarily genuinely “ethical.”)

The consciousness that has developed in our society today thankfully is doing much to encourage equitable treatment and justice for all. The church should be at the forefront in this

effort, not dragging its feet and doing everything possible to sabotage the effort. Why would Christians want to exempt themselves from it?

We might also, incidentally but rather fundamentally, it seems to me, ask ourselves what is happening to our regard for and commitment to the Fourth Commandment.

It is the contention of this study that there is no “heavenly reason” to exclude women from the pastoral office. That means it is a human option. But that option, for very compelling reasons, is no longer appropriate or advisable. There is no “earthly reason” either to persist with our present policy that needlessly discriminates against women.

Karl Wyneken
Fresno, CA