

**Women in Church Office
Is It Biblical?
R. Hanks**

Many denominations today are admitting women to the church offices of minister, elder and deacon. They claim that this is the only way to recognize the gifts that God gives to women, and that only in this way does the church do justice to the Biblical teaching that all are equal in Christ (Galatians 3:28).

Are these claims correct? Does the church deny women the right to exercise their God-given gifts if it denies them the right to serve in the offices of the church? Should women be ordained as ministers, elders and deacons? What does the Bible say?

The teaching of the Bible on this issue is as clear as it can be. Women may *not* serve in the offices of the church. I Timothy 2:12 says, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." I Corinthians 14:34 teaches the same thing: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law."

These verses do not mean, of course, that a woman may not say anything at all in the church, but that they may not speak *in positions of authority*, that is, *to teach or lead in worship*. They are to be "under obedience" and may not "usurp authority." They may not speak by way of praying, prophesying, edifying, exhorting or teaching as the rest of I Corinthians 14 shows.

All this is confirmed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, which speak of both elders (bishops) and deacons as *husbands*. To ordain women, therefore, contradicts the plain teaching of Scripture.

The only way to get around what Scripture teaches on this matter is to deny that Scripture is the inspired and infallible Word of God. That is why the churches that ordain women say that the passages quoted are only Paul's words reflecting the culture in which he lived or a low personal view of women. If Scripture is the Word of God, then these verses are not the mind of Paul, but the mind and will of God! God says, "Let your women keep silence in the churches!"

But what about the gifts God gives to some women? Is it not true that some women are better qualified than many men to do the work of the various church offices?

We must understand that the issue is not whether God gives gifts to women. He does. The issue is not whether women ought to use their God-given gifts. They must. The only issue is *where* they are to use their gifts. The Holy Spirit who gave them those gifts forbids them to use their gifts in the offices of the church.

But does this mean that women have no role at all in the church? By no means. Women have a very important place and calling in the church. The Bible speaks of it in I Timothy 2:15, 5:9-14, and Titus 2:3-5. They have a God-given role in the church that no man can fulfil.

What must we think, then, of a church that allows the ordination of women? Such a church has denied the authority of the Word of God and is in disobedience to the Word. It must repent or Christ will come and "remove its candlestick from its place" (Rev. 2:5) so that it will no longer shine with the light of the glory of God as a witness in the world. Then those who are part of it will be in darkness and not in light.