

BACKGROUND OF WOMEN'S ORDINATION IN MINISTRY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

The historical background of women's ordination is a complex narrative shaped by cultural, religious, and societal dynamics spanning centuries. The exclusion of women from religious leadership roles has roots in various traditions, with arguments often rooted in interpretations of sacred texts and entrenched patriarchal structures. Throughout history, many religious institutions have limited women's involvement in leadership positions, asserting theological justifications for their exclusion from ordination and clerical duties. However, the latter half of the 20th century witnessed significant shifts in attitudes towards women's roles in religious leadership. The feminist movement and changing societal norms prompted a reevaluation of traditional doctrines, leading to increased calls for gender inclusivity within religious hierarchies. Various denominations and religious communities embarked on theological discussions and deliberations, reconsidering long-held beliefs about the eligibility of women for ordination. The implications of women's ordination are profound and multifaceted. Beyond challenging gender norms, it raises questions about the interpretation of religious texts, the nature of authority within religious institutions, and the evolving dynamics of faith in contemporary society. The acceptance or rejection of women's ordination reflects broader societal attitudes towards gender equality, impacting the inclusivity and relevance of religious institutions. Additionally, the experiences of women who break through ordination barriers contribute to ongoing dialogues on faith, justice, and the evolving role of women in religious contexts. As religious communities navigate these shifts, they grapple with questions of tradition, interpretation, and the ongoing pursuit of equality within the sacred sphere.

Introduction

The historical background of women's ordination in ministry is a complex and multifaceted journey that traverses diverse religious traditions, theological landscapes, and cultural contexts. The question of women's eligibility for ordained leadership roles within religious institutions has been a subject of reflection, debate, and transformation over the centuries. Rooted in interpretations of sacred texts, cultural norms, and theological doctrines, the exclusion or inclusion of women in ordained ministry reflects the broader dynamics of gender roles and societal attitudes.

This exploration delves into the historical evolution of women's ordination, examining pivotal moments, theological debates, and societal influences that have

shaped the landscape of women's involvement in religious leadership. From the early Christian communities to the contemporary era, the narrative unfolds the varying approaches within different denominations and religious traditions, showcasing the diversity of perspectives that have contributed to the evolving understanding of women's roles in ministry.

Beyond the historical narrative, this discussion also delves into the implications of women's ordination on religious communities, theological discourses, and societal paradigms. The inclusion of women in ordained ministry is not merely a historical phenomenon but a dynamic force that challenges and transforms the very fabric of religious institutions. It prompts theological reflections on the interpretation of sacred scriptures, redefines notions of spiritual authority, and contributes to a broader societal discourse on gender equality and justice.

As we embark on this exploration, we uncover not only the historical contours of women's ordination but also the enduring implications that ripple through the tapestry of religious, social, and theological realms. The historical background of women's ordination is a narrative that intertwines tradition and change, faith and activism, inviting us to engage with the past to understand the present and shape the future of inclusive and equitable religious communities.

Historical Background of Women's Ordination

The historical background of women's ordination is a complex and multifaceted narrative that spans various religious traditions and historical periods. Traditionally, many religious institutions have restricted women from holding official leadership roles within their hierarchies, often citing interpretations of sacred texts, cultural norms, and established patriarchal structures as justifications.

In Christianity, for example, the exclusion of women from ordained ministry has deep historical roots. The early Christian communities were influenced by prevailing Greco-Roman and Judaic cultural norms, which tended to marginalize women from positions of authority. Over centuries, theological interpretations of biblical passages, such as those attributed to the Apostle Paul, were used to reinforce the idea that women should not serve as ordained clergy.

In contrast, some early Christian communities had women in leadership roles, and historical evidence suggests that women served as deacons in the early Church. However, as institutionalized Christianity developed and became more centralized, women's roles in leadership diminished. Similar patterns of exclusion can be found in other religious traditions. In Islam, for instance, interpretations of Quranic verses and Hadiths have been used to justify the restriction of women from certain leadership roles within religious institutions. In Judaism, too, traditional interpretations of religious texts have limited women's participation in certain religious rituals and leadership positions.

The modern movement advocating for women's ordination gained momentum in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, coinciding with broader social and political movements for women's rights. The feminist movement of the mid-20th century further influenced religious communities to reconsider their stance on women's roles in leadership and ministry.

Since then, various Christian denominations, as well as some branches of Judaism and other religions, have engaged in theological discussions and reforms regarding the ordination of women. Despite progress in some areas, debates and challenges persist, reflecting the ongoing tension between tradition and the evolving understanding of gender equality in religious contexts. The historical background of women's ordination continues to shape contemporary dialogues on faith, equality, and the role of women in religious leadership.

Women Ordination and Theological Training in UMCA

In every society and organization women are always ready to serve at all cost and to any length, more effective than men especially when they are given opportunity to display their talent therefore, Women cannot be ruled out in any given organization. They are very much unique in nature and good to use for any success of a mission.

When referring to women ordinations and education in UMCA it means there is a vacuum that the denomination needs to fill and certain things to be put into consideration for the growth of UMCA. Theological education has to do with effective communication and understanding of the term "theology" which has a compound meaning. First, "theos" means God and "Logos" meaning a "word" it therefore etymologically means "God's word". It also means relation of God's word, it tells more on who the creator is and what he does in the universe. In the same way it connotes that which has been deposited in the Bible. The Study of theology gives one the knowledge of God's will, mind and His plan for all mankind in the universe. (Danfulani 1997 p 13)

Women within the UMCA concept have never been given a chance to be ordained in UMCA since the formation of the Church 1905. Women that came to Nigeria with their husbands were given full support by the denomination by way of getting involved and devoted to the work of mission. They participated in the teaching of the word fully. They were never relegated to the background like early Nigeria women who holds tenaciously to the cultural concept that they are second class citizen, who are looked down upon as the date of mesal antesiactuon for men or just like man's properly being treated like slaves (Danfulani 1997 p 106).

Tswanya (interviewed) wife of UMCA president said UMCA women should seek theological education or go to Bible schools to receive more education about the work of the ministries since education is very important for their ordination. She

said that the current administration is already planning how to implement this programmer. This theological education is highly needed for UMCA women because it has certain advantages and values to enhance the message of the Gospel. It brings more encouragement from the wife; the woman will be able to share knowledge with their spouses, More so, they will be given recognized certificate. There is no harm in training one's wife as a pastor since it is unbiblical to abandon one's wife and children for theological education alone (Danfulani 1997 p 124).. Mrs Tswana (interviewed) further said there were examples of these women in the Bible Esther, Deborah and many others. Esther became the Queen of Persia; it was by God's design that Esther was chosen and was left to be in the "battle" front for the sake of her fellow Jews. She faced the challenge in her time to be able to free the Jewish brethren who were at the point of death, she cared not for her life and said "if I perish I perish" it is a statement that anybody should not be bold to say. However she confronted the lion and won the battle for the Jewish brethren. The salvation of the Jewish in a strange land became so important to her even at the detriment of her own life. Babatunde sees Esther as an epitome of example for women in UMCA. She possesses certain qualities for the battle to be won, first she was humble to the point that everything Mordecai told her, she obeyed and secondly, she prayed and fasted to seek the face of God, which eventually led to the favor she received from her husband.(Nkem 2001)

In the same like manner, Mrs Tswana and Mrs Ango (interviewed) said for a woman to be ordained in UMCA she must possess certain qualities. First, she must be born again. secondly, she must undergo certain training from Bible College, thirdly she must be recommended based on her character, fourthly, she must possess spiritual characters such as fruit of the Holy Spirit as written in Gal 5:22 such as love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, patience, self-control and more of these. Fifthly, she must be called, for the fact that such a woman has gone to Bible school or received theological education does not mean she has been called into the ministry, however she can still teach in secondary schools. It was said that even if the woman is not called as long as she is married to a pastor she must connect herself into the ministry and pray for God's favor. More so, women that are to be ordained in UMCA must be gifted or talented because there is no one without one gift or the other while on the final note she said they must be married so as to avoid any form of adultery and unnecessary attractions to the opposite sex.

Mrs. Ango (interviewed) added that women ordination in UMCA should be constitutionalized since UMCA already have women who have attained theological training they should be ordained in UMCA since they have no church of their own. There are also examples of mainline denominations that had ordained women ministers in the 1800s include the American Baptists, the United Church of Christ, the Congregationalists, and the Disciples of Christ. The Pentecostal

movement has also influenced the participation of women in ministry at the onset of the twentieth century. However, this later declined. But some key denomination like Methodists, Evangelical Free church, the church of the Nazarene, the Wesleyan Methodist, Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Presbyterian (USA) started to ordain women¹. Thus, opposite is the case of UMCA, probably this is one of the reasons why the denomination is not growing in Africa. This led to the question of Nkem who said “what is the situation with churches in Africa and especially Nigeria? He mentioned some of these churches who are yet to be ordaining women in Nigeria, though some of these churches gave their reasons for objecting to women ordination of which it is also applicable to UMCA examples are the nature of women, nature of the ministerial office, from the gender of God and lastly from the practical point of view.

The nature of women, psychologically, the feminine is used to represent the 'darker' side of humanity and of the supernatural; it is more clearly associated with untamed nature than is the masculine back toward paganism. Secondly, women from the nature of ministry; both the prophetic and sacramental understandings of ordination examined earlier accept a divine aspect of ministry-God takes the initiative to call person. One would then ask, does God call women to be ministers in the church? Some answer no, because “women are less capable than men of piety, zeal, learning and whatever else seems necessary for the pastoral office. Moreover, in regard to the wife; hence, it is natural that the man as the head of the wife should be appointed to the ministerial office².

From the sacramental understanding of ordination, it is argued that the women are incapable of receiving the “indelible character”. Female sexuality is the first impediment to receiving the sacrament of ordination; there comes the defectiveness of reason, a state of servitude, the guilt of homicides, the stigma of illegitimacy and condition of the physical mutilation. Hence, woman inherently is inferior and “the functions or roles of the sexes rest upon an ontological hierarchy of worth and endowment. Again, many defend a solely male priesthood on the conception of a male deity- male priests should minister to a male deity. For the scripture uses predominantly masculine language in speaking of God. Properly this is the reason from which theologians infer that God is more like the male than like female.

Overview of Women Ordination in Early Church

The question of women's ordination in the Church in the early 20th century was linked to the question of women's suffrage in several countries. The St. Joan's

¹ Ibid p 68

² P 82

Alliance campaigned in both England and the USA in 1911 for both women's ordination and women's suffrage. As the 20th century progressed, numerous Protestant denominations began to ordain women. By mid-century, most of the mainline denominations in the USA had some ordained women. A big breakthrough occurred when the Episcopal Church USA, a member of the Anglican communion of churches, ordained women as priests officially in 1976. This breakthrough followed a long struggle, with 11 women being ordained illicitly (but validly) in 1974, followed by another group of 5 in 1975. This phenomenon inspired hundreds of Roman Catholic women who felt called to ordination to gather together with men and women theologians in Detroit, Michigan to organize an effort to bring their campaign to the Vatican. The gathering took place in late 1975, and was known as The Women's Ordination Conference. Shortly thereafter, in 1976, an organization was formed to carry this campaign forward, and it was named The Women's Ordination Conference.

There were almost immediate reactions in Rome to these developments. The Pontifical Biblical Commission studied the issue in 1976, and announced that there was no biblical impediment to the priestly ordination of women. However, Pope Paul VI hastily issued an encyclical known as *Inter Insigniores* which denied that women could adequately represent the male Jesus as presider at the Eucharistic table. Women's Ordination Conference was not deterred, but built a large constituency within the USA, and inspired women in many other countries to organize in similar ways in their countries.

Soon after, there was the Canadian Network for Women's Ordination and by 1985, Maria von Magdala developed a group in Germany. By the mid-1990's there were also organized groups in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and many other countries. In 1996, at the First European Women's Synod, held in Gmunden, Austria, representatives from the above-mentioned organizations and other interested women met to organize an international coalition which was to serve as an umbrella group for all of the individual groups. This group became known as Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW), and serves as an international resource to all. Three international WOW conferences have taken place in 2001 and 2005, and 2015. Strategies for finding ordaining male bishops were shared among WOW groups. The result was that what had not produced results on one continent (North America), did so on another (Europe).

Brief History of Women Ordination in Baptist Church

The history of women's ordination in Baptist churches is characterized by complexity and diversity, evolving across different periods and influenced by theological, societal, and cultural shifts. In the early stages of the Baptist movement, there was no uniform stance on women's roles in ministry, and practices varied among congregations. Some Baptist churches allowed women to assume leadership roles, while others adhered to more traditional gender roles.

During the 19th century, discussions on the role of women in the church became more prominent, coinciding with the rise of women's rights movements. This period set the stage for increased scrutiny of traditional views on women's participation in leadership within Baptist congregations.

In the 20th century, Baptist denominations and local churches grappled with the question of women's ordination, with different groups adopting diverse approaches. Some Baptist congregations began to reassess their positions, embracing the ordination of women as ministers and deacons, reflecting a more inclusive stance influenced by societal changes and the feminist movement. However, due to the decentralized nature of Baptist denominations, which grant a significant degree of autonomy to individual congregations and local associations, views on women's ordination vary widely. As a result, the acceptance or rejection of women's ordination is not uniform across the Baptist tradition. The latter half of the 20th century and the current era continue to witness ongoing discussions and debates within Baptist circles regarding women's roles in ministry. While many Baptist churches have embraced the ordination of women, others maintain more conservative views, often rooted in specific theological interpretations of biblical passages related to gender roles.

In essence, the history of women's ordination in Baptist churches reflects a dynamic and evolving landscape, shaped by theological convictions, cultural influences, and ongoing conversations within the diverse Baptist community (Brackney 2006).

The Female Ordination: Theological Reflections

The debate over whether or not females should be ordained into the pastoral ministry seems to be a matter of concern in Christian denominations for some time now. The debate is often entwined on issues and concepts that border on a wide range of academic disciplines: Theology, Religion, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, History, and Anthropology. At other times, this debate hinges on practical lessons from daily lives as in the personal encounters of life and traditions of one's faith community. Whatever form the debate takes, the fact remains that it has become intensified in recent times. Though some people have views that affirm female ordination, others are strongly opposed to the whole notion of female ordination.

This is not surprising at all. This is because the notion of female ordination in and of itself has always been beset with what appears to be a permanent divide of two main views, namely, Complementarians and Egalitarians. Each of these groups advances strong arguments that are often accompanied with strong emotional feelings. In actuality, these feelings have the potential to either rift a faith group apart or to reduce the resources, whether human or material, available to the faith community. In any of these cases, the Christian church stands to

lose. This then suggests that primacy should be placed on the issue so a third option, certainly not a middle ground, but a position that offers a leading be sought. Such an attempt is made in this paper. In what follows, I shall be considering the main arguments for each divide and then theologically reflect on them. By theological reflections, I mean the kind of thinking that integrates faith and life. This method of thinking may “confirm, challenge, clarify, and expand how we understand our experience and how we understand the religious tradition. The outcome is new truth and meaning for living. (Kinast, 1990, p. 3).”

1. Egalitarians and Female Ordination

The school of thought that advocates for the formal or authoritative inclusion of women in pastoral ministry as ordained pastors is known as egalitarianism. From the French *égal*, meaning “equal,” the term is sometimes captured as equalitarianism. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* defines it as a body of thoughts that hold “that all humans are equal in fundamental worth or social status (Arneson, 2002, n. p.).” Though the idea denoted by the term has been around for a while, the French Revolution seems to have intensified its meaning in wider socio-cultural dimensions of life (Miller, 2013). In recent times, the term seems to contain two views. First, it is seen as “a political doctrine that all people should be treated as equals and have the same political, economic, social, and civil rights (**American Heritage Dictionary**, 2003).” Second, it is defined “as a social philosophy advocating the removal of economic inequalities among people or the decentralization of power (**American Heritage Dictionary**, 2003). In the domain of Christianity, some scholars have extended the term to mean a major biblical teaching concerning the fundamental equality of women and men of all racial and ethnic mixes, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings and example of Jesus Christ and the overarching principles of scripture (Stag & Stag, 1978). One key reason they present as supporting their stance is the idea of equality of the sexes in the original plan of God. the key to understanding the relationship between the sexes is Genesis 1: 26-28.

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all[a] the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

From this scriptural passage, some egalitarians see a revelation of the intention of God in creating the two genders. Bilezikian (2006, p. 18), in particular, argues that “when God declares, ‘let us make man in our own image,’ the term man refers to

male and female. Both man and woman are God's image bearers. There is no basis in Genesis 1 for confining the image of God to males alone."

furthermore, he (p.19) explains that:

the male/female differentiation reflects realities contained within the very being of God and derived from him as his image. Femaleness pertains to the image of God as fully as maleness. God is neither male nor female since he is neither a physical nor a sexual being. He transcends both genders as they are both comprehended within his being.

For this reason, both male and female are authorized by God to exercise some of his authority over His creation. In another sense, they are permitted to act as God's commissioned agents (Bilezikian, 2006, p. 20).

With reference to verse 27, egalitarians have pointed out to the absence of a division of responsibilities or of a distinction of rank in the exercise of the God- delegated dominion. To them, the text seems to be re-emphasizing strongly that since men and women bear the image of God, both are given the task of ruling or governing the earth without any reference to differentiation on the basis of gender (Bilezikian, 2006, p. 20). Thus, a proper understanding of this text should lead to a non-hierarchical complementarity in the relationship between the genders in the performance of their God-appointed assignment.

Theological Reflections

Biblical Arguments

Biblically, Genesis chapters 1-3, Apart from these scriptural passages, 1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:12; and Ephesians 4:23 as perennial extension of the headship of male gender over the female gender. However, egalitarians have different interpretations of each of these passages. Broadly, they see counsels from these passages as referring to specific issues at particular periods in the history of the Christian church. Further, they point to Galatians 3: 28 as the God ordained ideal for a relationship that must exist between the genders.

A theological consideration of these scriptural passages among others could be helpful.

I refer to Genesis chapter 1. Within this chapter, the diligent seeker of truth will find the basic aim of God in the creation of human beings in the two genders. This aim is revealed in verse 26:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to our likeness, let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Generally, it is held among biblical scholars that the word translated man in the above passage is the generic use of the masculine gender (Loader, 2004, p. 57; Matthews, 1996, p. 215).

Hence, it is best rendered human beings. This being the case, then, God intended to create **human beings** in His image, according to His likeness, and not in a vacuum. In other words, the product that God intends creating will be fashioned to possess certain qualities or attributes or characteristics of his or her Maker, as allowed by Him. The purpose of such spiritual semblance between God and human beings was to make it possible for the latter to adequately represent the Former as His vicegerent on earth. Consequently, as God exist in three persons, in one essence, in perfect unity and harmony (Deuteronomy 6:4) so man was also created as male and female (Genesis 1:27) to exist in perfect harmony and unity with himself.

Again, there is no biblical record of hierarchy in the Godhead. That God, from the onset, is heard discussing His intention among Himself (Godhead) is indicative of this assertion. For this reason, God never intended any hierarchy to exist in the relationship between maleness and femaleness. This is because both together represent God. Thus understanding the image of God as physical is detrimental to the meaning of the text and to the entire teachings of scripture. More so, when God is perceived as transcending time, space, corporeity, and gender (Ganssle, 2001). Now this human being(s), to be created in the image and likeness of God, was/were to have dominion over all the earth. Two inferences could be made here. First, human beings, both male and female together, were intended to exercise dominion over all the earth in the original plan of God. This will make it highly incomprehensible for anyone to single out either the male or the female gender alone as the sole possessor and executor of the divine-ordained dominion over all the earth. Second, the scope of the dominion did not include the exercise of authority of one gender over the other. The reason is not farfetched. Since male and female are part of each other (Genesis 2:21-22), and together as image and likeness of God, represent Him on earth, it will be out of place for an intelligent God to place one under the authority of the other. It would be synonymous to an individual saying to himself or herself that one of his or her members (say the righthand) is under the authority of another member of his or her own body (say the leftfoot). In the New Testament, Paul expounds almost endlessly on this concept of one body (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4). Thus a contextual meaning of the exercise of dominion, in the intention of God, is that both male and female, not one alone, are to exercise the God-given dominion over the earth as His representative. Singling out one gender in the exercise of this dominion and placing the other gender under the authority of one will constitute a perfect foil in the original intention of God for creating human beings in His image and after His likeness. Jesus Christ expressed this despicable attempt in the most prohibitive terms possible, ‘What God has put together...(Mark 10:9).’

As God carried out His outlined intention for creating human beings, verse 27 records what happened:

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

As He always does, God has brought His intention into fruition. The result of His creative act was the making of His image, after His likeness, in male and female forms, sharing partial traits of plurality of the forms of the Godhead. Therefore, male and female, apart from each other, do not constitute the full image of God and cannot fully represent God let alone exercise the God-given dominion over the earth. They can only do so jointly. Verse 28 highlights this important lesson.

Then God blessed them, and God said to them. “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

God has given dominion over the earth to man, in His image and likeness, but this dominion could be extended to completion as long as man, in His image and likeness, fills the entire surface of the earth. The only means to do that is through procreation (fruitful and multiply). Certainly neither male nor female alone could accomplish this. Each needed the other. Through this joint effort, they could create other images of God, like them, to accomplish God’s task. Here again, consigning dominion over the earth as the sole property of only one of the genders is unfounded in scripture. Thus from the first chapter of the Bible, it could be seen that the Lord never intended a relationship of hierarchy to exist between the genders. Rather, a relationship based on and existing in mutuality, similar to that existing among the Godhead, seems to be implied.

Theological Argument

Theologically, the complementarians have put up the argument that males, rather than females, represent Christ adequately. This is because, the Bible presents Christ as man, thus He is better represented by males as they minister to His followers. Packer, for example, states that “that one male is best represented by another male is a matter of common sense (Parker, 2001, p. 20).”

Morris adds that “women’s ordination destroys one of the most important images of the relationship between Christ and His Church because a woman cannot be a bridegroom and, therefore, cannot represent Christ, the bridegroom, to the faithful (Morris, 2004, n. p.).”

However, such conclusion appears theologically unfounded. The biblical passage in Genesis 1:27 clearly records that God created both male and female in His image and likeness. Based on this clear statement of scripture, then, it becomes undeniable to assert that males reflect God as much as females do. In other words, no one gender reflects God more or better than the other. Practically, this is true in the interaction between the genders in their daily encounters. There are certain aspects in which maleness exclusively reflects God and in other aspects too femaleness uniquely reflects God. Therefore, a comprehensive representation of God would be realized when maleness and femaleness are given their God-

ordained, planned, established, and designed initial perspective of a non-hierarchical mutuality. Within this context, May and Joe are right in their notion that "... the ideal church structure would thus appear to have both male and female pastors, in order to fully reflect the different aspects of God (May & Joe, 2013, n. p.)." The words of Apostle Peter are very significant in this context. For him, God does not discriminate. "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him (Acts 10:34-35)." If God had created maleness to dominate femaleness in both Church and society, then, He surely will have shown partiality and favoritism in His dealings with the genders. But He does not. In all His dealings, He continuously show that He is an impartial and indiscriminating God, accepting individuals from any gender who show reverence to Him and righteous-works induced by faith in Jesus Christ. This is seen more clearly in the manner in which God, the Holy Spirit, distributes spiritual gifts to all Christians, not males alone. In His distribution, the apostle Paul acknowledges that "one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills (1 Corinthians 10:11)." These gifts make "...some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11)," for the purpose of comprehensively "...equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesian 4: 12-13)." That some women such as Miriam (Micah 6:4), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14), Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3), Anna (Luke 2:36), and the four daughters of Phillip (Acts 21:8-9) were selected by God to represent Him in different times and on different occasions is indicative of how the Holy Spirit distributes these gifts. Therefore, if God Himself chooses men as well as women to represent Him, which creature can prevent or hinder another individual who has been clearly chosen by God and endowed with relevant ministering gift(s), according to the will of the Holy Spirit, to perform his or her chosen role either in the church or in society? If we succeed in hindering such persons from performing their God ordained tasks, aren't we working against the plan of God? Wouldn't we be replacing God's directives with church requirements? Since when did true Christians decide not to follow God's leading? Theologically, if God's choice of people to represent Him on earth is not based on gender, then men as well as women can represent Him as well in any capacity the Lord of the Gospel Ministry pleases.

Traditional Arguments

Traditionally, opponents of female ordination have pointed out to the long-standing practice of excluding women from the pastoral ministry. For some, the fact that God has led His church to restrict the ordained ministry to males for nearly 2000 years ought to be a motivation to continue the practice (Morris, 2004). Analytically, this is an *is-ought* argument. To say that a particular way of life should be adhered to because it has always been the situation is a dangerous

argument to make. Sin, for instance, has always been with humanity since Adam and Eve's days (Romans 5:12). Per the *is-ought* argument, then, we must continue in sin. However, a complete cessation of sinful lifestyle is necessary for the Christian to live in new life in Christ (Isaiah 55:7). Similarly, slavery was a long-standing practice that was often thought to have some support from scripture (Philemon 1:15-16). Even renowned church fathers and theologians such as Augustine of Hippo and John Chrysostom, at one time, spoke in favor of slavery (Pagels, 1988, p. 114). Yet, upon God's directions, William Wilberforce and others called for a change in the status quo (Wesley, 1974; Daugherty & Finney, 1876).

Implication of Women Ordination in Ministry

I. Spiritual Influence:

- Empowered Spiritual Leadership: Women's ordination empowers women to take on spiritual leadership roles, fostering a more diverse and inclusive representation within religious institutions. This diversity enriches the spiritual experiences of congregants, providing varied perspectives on faith and deepening the overall spiritual journey.
- Pastoral Care and Emotional Support: Women clergy often bring a nurturing and empathetic approach to pastoral care. Their spiritual influence extends to providing compassionate support, addressing emotional needs, and fostering a sense of belonging within the religious community.

II. Social Influence:

- Gender Equality Advocacy: Women's ordination serves as a powerful symbol of gender equality within religious contexts. By challenging traditional gender norms and advocating for women in leadership, religious institutions contribute to broader societal changes, influencing perceptions of gender roles and promoting equality in various spheres of life.
- Community Building and Inclusivity: The inclusion of women in ministry promotes a more inclusive and welcoming religious community. This social influence extends beyond gender, fostering a sense of community that embraces diversity, encourages dialogue, and promotes unity among congregants.

III. Eschatological Influence:

- Witness to Kingdom Values: Women's ordination can be seen as a manifestation of eschatological principles, signaling the realization of Kingdom values within the religious community. The breaking down of gender barriers aligns with the idea of a future reality characterized by equality, justice, and the full participation of all believers in the life of the community.
- viii. Contributing to Shalom: The eschatological vision of shalom, often associated with peace, wholeness, and justice, is advanced through the positive influence of women's ordination. By embracing equality and inclusivity, religious communities participate in the anticipation of a future

where all members are valued and actively contribute to the well-being of the community.

IV. Psychological Influence:

- **Cognitive Empowerment:** Women's ordination can positively impact individuals' cognitive perceptions by challenging ingrained stereotypes and biases related to gender roles in religious leadership. Witnessing women in authoritative spiritual roles may contribute to a shift in cognitive schemas, promoting more inclusive and egalitarian perspectives.
- **Identity Formation:** The ordination of women provides positive psychological influences on women's identity formation within religious contexts. It reinforces the idea that women can serve as leaders, contributing to a sense of agency, purpose, and self-esteem among female believers.

V. Emotional Influence:

- **Validation and Recognition:** Women's ordination offers emotional validation and recognition, affirming the worth and contributions of women within religious communities. This recognition can have a positive impact on emotional well-being, fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance.
- **Inspiration and Aspiration:** The presence of women in ordained ministry serves as an emotional source of inspiration and aspiration for individuals, especially women and girls, encouraging them to pursue leadership roles and challenging preconceived limitations based on gender.

VI. Sociological Influence:

- **Cultural Transformation:** Women's ordination contributes to sociological changes by challenging cultural norms and expectations regarding women's roles. This influence extends beyond religious institutions, contributing to broader societal shifts in attitudes towards gender equality and women's participation in leadership roles.
- **Community Dynamics:** Sociologically, the inclusion of women in ministry reshapes community dynamics within religious settings. It challenges traditional power structures, promotes more collaborative decision-making processes, and fosters a sense of community where diverse voices are valued.
- **Social Justice Advocacy:** Women's ordination aligns with broader sociological principles of social justice. It represents a commitment to dismantling gender-based discrimination, advocating for equal opportunities, and fostering a more just and inclusive society.

Women's ordination in ministry has profound and positive influences across multiple dimensions. Spiritually, it enriches theological perspectives, empowers women for leadership roles, and enhances pastoral care. Socially, it advocates for gender equality, fosters inclusivity, and shapes community dynamics. Eschatologically, it aligns with values of equality and justice, contributing to the anticipation of a harmonious future. Psychologically, it challenges cognitive schemas, fostering inclusivity and promoting positive identity formation. Emotionally, it validates and inspires, recognizing the worth of women in religious

communities. Sociologically, women's ordination contributes to cultural transformation, reshapes community dynamics, and aligns with principles of social justice, collectively creating a more inclusive, egalitarian, and spiritually enriching environment within religious communities and society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the historical background of women's ordination in selected denominations unveils a transformative narrative shaped by theological reflections, cultural shifts, and evolving perspectives on gender roles. Over time, some denominations have navigated this journey by reevaluating traditional interpretations of sacred texts and embracing a more inclusive theology that recognizes the spiritual gifts and leadership capabilities of women.

The positive implications of women's ordination within these denominations are profound and multi-faceted. Beyond challenging gender norms, women's inclusion in ordained ministry has enriched theological discourse, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of faith. The empowerment of women in leadership roles has contributed to the spiritual vitality of congregations, providing diverse perspectives and nurturing a more inclusive worship experience.

Furthermore, the ordination of women has positively influenced pastoral care, as women clergy bring unique qualities of empathy and compassion to their roles, contributing to a more nurturing and understanding religious community. As role models and mentors, women in ministry inspire and encourage others, particularly women and girls, to pursue their spiritual callings and challenge societal stereotypes.

At a broader societal level, the positive implications extend to the promotion of gender equality and the dismantling of discriminatory barriers. By embracing women in leadership positions, these denominations contribute to a more just and equitable society, aligning their values with broader movements for social progress and equality. While challenges and differing perspectives persist, the historical background of women's ordination and its positive implications underscore the dynamic nature of faith communities. As these denominations continue to grapple with tradition and embrace evolving understandings of equality, the ordination of women stands as a testament to the ongoing pursuit of justice, inclusion, and the recognition of the diverse gifts and contributions of all believers in the sacred journey of faith.

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