

Why Not?

*A Plea for the Ordination of those
Women whom God Calls to
Preach His Gospel*

By
REV. WALTER A. SELLEW, A. M.
Bishop of the Free Methodist Church



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Introduction to the First Edition

This tract is intended chiefly for the members of the Free Methodist church to which the author belongs. That church believes and holds that there are some women as well as men called to preach the Gospel. The object of this tract is to convince the members of this church that those women whom they believe God has called to preach the Gospel should be ordained the same as the men whom God has so called. The question of the right of some women to preach is not herein discussed; but is taken for granted, as those to whom it is addressed have deliberately, after years of discussion and consideration, with scarcely a dissenting voice, agreed that some women are called of God to preach, and when so called have just the same right as men to do so. So this tract is written only for a limited few. Yet the author trusts that it may prove neither uninteresting nor unprofitable to all who may be interested enough in women's work in the church to peruse its pages. It is written simply for the love of the truth and if there are any errors of statement or any flaws in the logic no one will be more pleased than the author to have the truth prevail at his expense.

JAMESTOWN, N. Y., August, 1894.

Introduction to the Second Edition

This pamphlet was originally published in 1894 at the time when the contention in the Free Methodist church regarding the ordination of women was at its height. We had recognized quite a number of women as called of God to preach and to do the regular work of a pastor. This recognition had been given year after year for some time, both by giving them licenses to preach and by appointing them as pastors on circuits and charges the same as the men preachers. Quite a large number of preachers and laymen in the Free Methodist church were fully convinced that we should ordain these women. We felt that justice to ourselves as a denomination as well as to the women themselves demanded their ordination.

The general conference of 1894, however, by a decisive vote refused to permit them to be ordained. Since then there has been no general discussion of the subject, and there has been no aggressive move made to secure their ordination, but there has been a strong and increasing undercurrent of feeling in the church in favor of it. This change of sentiment culminated at the last general conference held in 1911 when the action was taken to allow of their ordination as deacons. The vote on the subject was so decisive and was taken with so little debate as to show conclusively that the church had given the subject much thought and attention and was fully ready for the proposed change.

Following the action there were ordained at the conferences of 1913 five women, all of them acknowledged to be clear cases of women called of God to preach the Gospel. At the conferences of 1914 there can be no more than five additional women elected to deacon's orders, probably less than that number.

The author has two objects in view in republishing this pamphlet. 1. A large number of people have come into the church since it was published nearly twenty years ago. He desires these people to be informed as to the reasons and arguments for our present position on this subject. 2. It is expected that some effort may be made at the next general conference to repeal the action taken on this subject by

the last general conference. He desires as far as possible to forestall any such attempt.

The pamphlet has been abridged and revised a little to meet present conditions, but not in anything material.

The author, as always, only desires that truth and justice may prevail.

Walter A. Sellow.

JAMESTOWN, N. Y., May 14, 1914.

Shall We Continue to Ordain Those Women Whom God Has Galled to Preach His Gospel?

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."—Gal. 3: 28.

It cannot be claimed that man and woman were created equal in every respect, as the absolute equality of any two persons associated together is a constitutional impossibility. A fundamental law of association, even when applied to only two persons, is that of superiority and inferiority. In the beginning, however, man and woman were created with equal rights. In the word we read: "So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." There were no distinctions as to their right to be blessed of God, to live, to eat, to rule whatever there was to be ruled. There is a vast difference, however, between *equality of rights* and *equality of relations*. Rights are inherent, relations are results. Rights, though unacknowledged, trampled upon and seemingly destroyed, cannot perish or change. Relations are constantly changing. So it cannot be claimed that man and woman were created equal as to their relation to each other. In that respect they never have been equal. They never can be so. At the time of creation, this inequality of relation between man and woman had two prominent phases in both of which man was manifestly superior.

1st. In point of time, man was created first. It is doubt-

ful if this point of superiority has any bearing whatever on the subject now under consideration.

2nd. In point of physical strength, man was and always has been superior to woman. To be sure there have been some women stronger than some men, but generally they have never been able to hold their own with the men in this respect. This inferiority of the woman has not been one of physical or mental endurance, but simply of physical force. So, the profession of war has usually been considered as belonging to the men. And the profession of pugilism has always been regarded as their exclusive property. In fact, this superiority in physical power of the man over the woman has always been the open secret of their complicated conditions. The men have *possessed* the *power* and they have *taken the rights*. But rights taken by force are rights still, and woman the world over has been patiently waiting—waiting with a patience only surpassed by her modesty,—for the glorious Gospel of love as taught by Jesus Christ, and its attendant civilization, to restore to her these rights which have been taken from her by force. This they have been doing, not suddenly, not with noise, not with confusion, not by wars and blood as other rights have been regained, but with peace and with quietness has this most blessed salvation been returning to woman those social, business and religious privileges which God designed she should freely enjoy. Yet it is a curious fact that the prejudice against the religious rights and privileges of woman is more strongly entrenched than that against either her social or business rights, and yields the last of all, and then most reluctantly. He who has the property of another in his possession, selfishly detained against the will of the rightful owner, is not at all likely, by the very nature of the case, to see clearly the right relations existing between them. So, men, who for so long a time had held these varied rights in their possession, acquired

by force, and with whom this principle of power had been for so long a time both judge and jury, law and gospel, could not be expected to see their relations rightly. But life is motion. Inherent rights will not always be quiet, and the law of return operates here as in nature. The prejudice against the social rights of woman was the first to begin to give way; but so long delayed was this that not till after the dark ages did the light of God begin to break through and reveal what ought to have been recognized long before, that woman in the social sphere was not only the equal but actually the superior of man. It has, however, come at last; and now in all Christian nations the social work of the world and of the church is largely, where it belongs, in the hands of women.

The prejudice against women doing any business, especially for themselves, did not yield so easily or so quickly as the social prejudice. For many centuries it was regarded as woman's special prerogative not only to bear children and do the work of the household, but also to produce by cultivation, care, and industry all that was eaten, and to care for all stock necessary or profitable for meat and milk; and the duty of bearing children was not regarded as depriving her of the right to hoe and dig. The law of force which took from woman any property she might have or might have earned, and that stood between her and any occupation which man wanted to monopolize, and that compelled her to dig at the drudgery he did not desire to do, has been giving way, until now, nearly all occupations and professions are open to her, and laws prohibiting her from such are slowly but steadily being replaced with laws permitting her to earn and own property and manage her personal business affairs untrammelled by a class of men who think they possess superior knowledge as to how a woman's money should be spent.

The religious prejudice, however, is still very strong against

women. So much so that, even to-day, except in a few favored localities, it largely controls the professed Christian church. But the wonderful freedom of religious work in the United States, and especially the remarkable missionary activities of the world, are working wonders in letting light shine on the word of God in relation to woman's work in converting the world.

The relations of women to Christianity and to Christian work can be noted under two heads.

I. Those privileges or duties which result from simple *membership* in the church of Christ. These are principally *singing, praying, teaching* and *visiting*. The right of women to do any or all of these is now not questioned. No Protestant body now denies some women the right to do any or all of these publicly under certain circumstances. Allowing it to be done publicly under certain circumstances, yields the question and throws the burden of proof on those who deny them this same right under certain other circumstances, to show what they deny them to be wrong.

II. After the rights resulting from church membership, come those privileges and duties which result from some *official relation* to the church. These may be reduced to two heads.

(1.) *Preaching the Gospel*. There is great prejudice even now against women preachers. So great is it that many will listen to no reasons or arguments in favor of their preaching, nor will they even go to hear them preach. With such it is no use to attempt argument. A good woman preacher filled with the Spirit will convince more people that she has a right to preach, and do it more quickly and easily than pages of argument. But the age of women preachers has come. As the Spirit is poured out on all flesh our daughters are prophesy-

ing, and the prophecy in Psa. 68: 11 and 12, "The Lord giveth the word: the women that publish the tidings are a great host," is being rapidly realized. Whatever position other religious bodies may take, the Free Methodist church has unequivocally declared that women have the same right to preach the Gospel as men. They believe that right is based simply upon the call of God. The number of women so called compared with the number of men called has nothing whatever to do with the call. If we admit that one single woman is called of God to preach the Gospel, that would establish her right to do so, and the call of ten thousand other women would not increase in the slightest degree the right of the one first called to do so. That this is the position of our church can not be denied, as two classes of preachers recognized by our discipline, traveling preachers and evangelists, now have women among them duly authorized to be there by our church authorities; and as said action granting women their licenses as preachers and evangelists was taken after years of deliberation and carried by an overwhelming majority, our polity as to that question may be regarded as settled beyond dispute. So it may also be considered as settled that the objection to ordaining women does not have any bearing on their right to preach. It has been suggested that a spirit of opposition to women preaching is the secret of the objection made by some among us to the ordination of women and that those who object to their ordination have never yet fully consented in their minds to this position which we as a church have taken, that women have an equal right with men to preach the Gospel. It is feared that there is some truth in this suggestion, and that a careful and searching examination of their motives will reveal to such persons that the root of their objection is here, though they may not have been conscious of it. Such a suggestion is not entitled to consideration; as, if it has any

foundation in fact, it is simply a relic of prejudice and not a principle of church polity with us.

(2.) All other *official relations* aside from preaching, connected with membership in the church, may be classed as *governments*, or *privileges* and *duties* related to the *government* of the church as an organized body.

Right here many persons make a bold stand against women having anything to do with governing in the church. Such persons hold that, admitting the right of women to preach the Gospel, the Bible plainly declares against their governing or ruling in the church. This question may be one that has two sides, and it may also be that we as a church have taken the wrong side. But right or wrong, our position has been taken and the Free Methodist church is now fully committed to the right of women to govern equally with the men in the organized church of Christ. The Free Methodist church is a democratic body. All authority is derived from its members. All vested authority is in or with some official body. No individual has any but delegated authority and that, if continued, is subject to frequent accounting, review and reelection to the office from which he receives that authority. To show that women have equal rights of governing in our church it may be stated that they can now, equally with men, be a member of any official body having any vested as well as delegated authority recognized by our church. They can also according to our discipline be elected or appointed to nearly every official position inside the church. To impress this fact, which has great bearing on this subject, it may be noted that women can now be members of the following bodies in our church having either vested or delegated authority: official boards; quarterly conferences; annual conferences; general conferences; church trustees; trustees of general conference; stationing committee; missionary board; executive committee of the general confer-

ence; and all bodies having jury authority, even in the trial of a superintendent. Women in our church can also occupy the following official positions according to discipline: steward; class leader; Sunday-school superintendent; band worker; quarterly conference evangelist; annual conference evangelist; general conference evangelist; preacher in charge of circuit; counsel for an accused person (member, preacher, district elder or general superintendent); secretary of quarterly conference, of annual conference, of general conference; editor or publisher of the Free Methodist; Sunday-school secretary and evangelist; editor of Sunday-school literature; general missionary secretary, and president pro tem. of a quarterly conference, and some other positions. So that we find that now we allow women, equally with men, to belong to every official body in the Free Methodist church having any authority whatever, either vested or delegated; and they can fill every official position in the church except district elder of a district carrying with it the right to preside at quarterly conference, general superintendent, carrying with it the right to preside at annual conference and general conference, president pro tem. of an annual conference, and president pro tem. of general conference. The reason that women are not allowed by our discipline to fill these positions is not that these positions carry special authority with them, as they do not. The duties connected with them are so plainly defined and the authority conferred is so restricted and hedged about with safeguards against any possibility of abuse of such authority, and those who fill the positions are held to such strict account for all their official acts that any person with ambition for authority would be very much dissatisfied with these positions. The reason women are not allowed these positions is that we have thought best to restrict these positions to those whom we have ordained elders. If we continue to ordain women deacons, they would

still be prohibited from these positions, and even if we ordained women elders we could still prohibit them from these two positions if it was considered advisable to do so. There is nothing inherent in these two positions—district elder and general superintendent—as interpreted by our church, that would necessarily prevent a woman from filling them, because we already allow to women all there really is in either of these positions, *full right to preach and govern*. What remains in these positions aside from preaching and governing is simply a question of executive or administrative ability, and that evidently has nothing whatever to do with ordaining women, because it is never a question in ordaining men. We ordain some men as elders who have but very little executive ability and we do not, by so ordaining them elders, consider ourselves under the slightest obligations to elect them either district elder or general superintendent.

If it should be argued that, because women are already allowed so many privileges in the Free Methodist church, there is no necessity for their ordination, it will be readily admitted that women have already all the rights and privileges for religious work in our church that she needs or can well use. The above list of bodies to which she may belong and positions which she may fill is of itself a standing proof that no organized church offers to woman a greater field of usefulness or more opportunities for working for God and for the salvation of souls than the Free Methodist church. No woman, filled with the love of God and possessed with a burning desire to do something for the salvation of souls, could ask for better opportunities than she finds here. This plea for her ordination is not made for her advantage directly, or that she may have more opportunities of working for God. She now has in our church all such openings she needs, and more than she uses. Ordination for woman is not asked for her benefit,

but for the benefit of the church. She can now, as heretofore, get on very well without it; but the time has come when the church demands it both for the thing itself and for the consistency of our position before the world and before God.

Having failed in the foregoing relations of woman to the church to find any good or substantial ground of objection to her ordination under certain circumstances, let us consider the subject of ordination in general for a short time. The question as to whether a person called of God to preach the Gospel should be formally ordained by men has always been one of great controversy, not only as to the simple fact, but more especially as to *who, when, how and by whom*. Opinion has swung from one extreme to the other. This, like other forms, ceremonies, and ordinances, which always clothe the soul of true spiritual worship, has been magnified and exalted by ecclesiastical formalism, which is always death to the spirit, until the nut has become nearly all shell; or on the other hand, it has been belittled and despised by an egotistical insubordination, until the poor soul, self-exposed to the devil, has been withered and blasted by his fierce attacks. Formalism exalts ordinances to the point of worshiping them instead of God. Fanaticism rejects them that she may the more completely and unrestrainedly worship *self*. The devil is fully satisfied with either of these forms of idolatry.

In order to understand women's relation to ordination, it will be necessary to obtain a correct understanding of the teachings of the New Testament on the subject of ordination in general. There are two classes of passages which refer to this subject.

- 1st. Those which use the word "ordain."
- 2nd. Those which refer to the ceremony without using the word.

It is a curious fact, and one that shows clearly the tendency

of men, who themselves have been ordained, to unduly magnify its importance, that scriptural ordination depends entirely upon those passages which *do not use the word ordain or ordination*, and that, if it depended alone upon those passages in the King James version where the word *ordain* is used, the whole ceremony would be swept from its foundation. It is now admitted that, in every passage in the New Testament where the word *ordain* is used to express the ceremony of setting apart by imposition of hands a person called to the ministry, it is incorrectly translated. These passages are as follows: Mark 3: 14, "He ordained twelve, etc." John 15: 16, "I have chosen you and ordained you, etc." Acts 1: 22, "must one be ordained to be a witness, etc." Acts 14: 23, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, etc." 1 Tim. 2: 7, "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle, etc." Titus 1: 5, "That thou should ordain elders in every city, etc." Heb. 5: 1, "For every high priest is ordained for man, etc." In the revised version the word "appoint" is substituted for the word "ordain" in all the above passages except one when the word "become" is used. So that if the authority in the New Testament for ordaining men depended upon what men have tried to make of it, ordination as a ceremony would fail. It is, however, fully established as a warranted and authorized ceremony by these passages which refer to it without using the word "ordain." Acts 6: 6, referring to the seven deacons, says: "Whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them and sent them away." 1 Tim. 4: 14, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." 2 Tim. 1: 6, "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."

These passages clearly show that the ceremony of ordina-

tion is not the exalted affair that some would have us believe. The obliteration of the word "ordain" from the New Testament, and the fact that the ceremony we call ordination by laying on of hands is not commanded but only referred to in the above passages, show conclusively that it is simply a prudential ceremony. To further show the true nature of New Testament ordination and to strip it of some of its self-appropriated functions and importance, let us notice that nowhere can it be shown that the administration of the sacraments—baptism and the Lord's supper—was committed to ordained persons. In fact, the contrary impresses itself upon a careful, unprejudiced enquirer. There is nothing to show that any of the apostles had been ordained at the day of Pentecost when so many were baptized. Paul preached many years before his ordination as given in Acts 13: 3, and then he seems to have been ordained more as a superintendent and missionary than as a preacher or administrator of sacraments, while there is no account of his ordination as elder, and nowhere is he distinctly called "elder;" and he may not have been one, though he probably was. There is no account of the ordination of any elder as such in the New Testament. Peter and John incidentally call themselves "elders," but when and where and by whom they were ordained elders we do not know. Besides these two we do not know that a single individual was an elder in the Apostolic church. Furthermore we only know by the New Testament that elders had but two functions or prerogatives.

1st. Some of them ruled or presided, probably elected to do so. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor."—1 Tim. 5: 19.

2nd. They were authorized to anoint and pray for the sick. Nowhere are they authorized to baptize or administer the Lord's supper. While this is so, it has always been con-

sidered as wise and prudent to commit the administration of the sacraments to ordained persons, but their right to administer the sacraments was not based upon their ordination, but primarily upon their call to preach. Schaff, in "Apostolic Church," Vol. 1, page 130, says: "The ministerial office was instituted by the Lord before His ascension and solemnly inaugurated on the first Christian Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. It appears in the New Testament under different names, descriptive of its various functions, 'ministry of the word,' 'ministry of the Spirit,' 'ministry of reconciliation,' etc. It includes the preaching of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments and church discipline.

"The internal call to the sacred office and the moral qualification for it must come from the Holy Ghost, but be recognized and ratified by the church through her proper organs. The persons thus inwardly and outwardly designated by the voice of Christ and His church were solemnly set apart and inducted into their ministerial functions by the symbolical act of ordination."

Christ laid hands on many persons and for many purposes; principally, however, for healing, but never for ordination. Many other facts might be mentioned to show that this ceremony of ordination has been carried far above and beyond its original simplicity and importance by men who had personal interest to serve. It has been the storm-centre so long of the controversy about "Apostolic succession" that its importance in theological controversy is not intrinsic, but artificial and deceiving.

Let no one suppose, however, that, because it was so simple, and was the result of the growth of the Apostolic church rather than of divine revelation, it is of no importance. It occupies an important and honored place in the church. Though the intrinsic and official importance of ordination has always been

denied by the Protestant church, yet its relative importance has always been recognized. It has always been considered as a recognition by the church of a call to preach already made by God, and the formal and permanent induction into a ministry to which the candidate has already been ordained by the Holy Ghost. The church makes nothing, creates nothing, imparts nothing. It simply recognizes. The functions of the church were not to bestow a gift, but simply to recognize and authenticate what has already been bestowed by the Head of the church. For this reason they prayed that the Lord would show whom *He had chosen*, and they laid hands on him to express the co-operative action and the benediction of the church as to the choice already made by the Holy Ghost. So in Acts 13: 2, "The Holy Ghost said: Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

A permanent call to the Christian ministry has always been regarded by the Protestant church as a call to ordination, which has always been a distinction between a minister and a layman. Luther was very radical. Schaff says: "Luther identified ordination with calling, saying, 'Whoever is called is ordained.'" Prof. Kidder, of Drew Theological Seminary, says: "Ordination is an act, or the peculiar feature of a series of acts by which all ministers have their order or office in distinction from the laity of the church." McClintock & Strong's Cyclopædia says: "The Protestant churches of Germany, Holland, Switzerland, France, Denmark, Poland and Scotland, etc., all unite in considering the call of God expressed through the suffrages of the church as the essential prerequisite to true ministerial character, while ordination is simply an appropriate ceremony designed to authenticate that call and publicly separate ministers to the sacred office." All authorities consulted agree that ordination is a public recognition by the church of a call to the ministry, a formal and

permanent induction to that office, and an authentic separation between a minister and a layman. A special call to ordination apart from a call to the ministry is an unheard of condition. No church has ever required it. A call to the ministry, recognized by the church as complete and permanent, has always carried with it the right to ordination. In our discipline, in the form for the ordination of deacons, the candidate is asked: "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you the office of the ministry in the Church of Christ?" This is the true basis of ordination as recognized by our church requisite to ordination as deacon, and by which our church recognizes all deacons as preachers and the right of all persons, permanently called to the ministry of the Word, to ordination. In the form in our discipline for the ordination of elder, the same question is asked: "Do you think in your heart that you are truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the Gospel ministry?" The whole prelude, exhortation, and admonition in this ceremony is all about the ministry. It says: "And now again we exhort you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you have in remembrance into how high a dignity and to how weighty an office ye are called: that is to say, to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord, to teach and to premonish, to feed and to provide for the Lord's family, to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children that are in the midst of this evil world, that they may be saved through Christ forever." And so it goes on through the preliminary reading and all the questions. Not a word about ruling or administering the sacraments. Therefore, as the Free Methodist church unequivocally recognizes the ministry of women, we are bound to recognize her right to ordination. To permit and encourage her in a public ministry, to travel a circuit, to organize classes, to have full charge of a

circuit or a station as a pastor, and year after year to do all the work as a minister that we ask or expect of a man, and then after she does it all, to deny her ordination is inconsistent to say the least. If we were of sufficient numbers or importance as a church to attract the attention of the secular or religious press, there would be some who would vigorously assail our position, allowing women the right to preach the Gospel on an equality with man; and more, who would still more strongly attack our position allowing them official positions in the government of the church; but all persons of every creed or belief, of every name and nation, would join in ridiculing our inconsistency that, after allowing women all these things already mentioned, we have until recently refused them ordination. Those among us who object to the ordination of women are in this dilemma. They must either consent to their ordination on logical grounds or they must deliberately attempt to undermine our established and recognized position regarding woman's relation in our church. An open challenge is out to show a single passage of Scripture, or produce a single argument against ordaining women which will not apply with equal force either against their right to preach the Gospel or against their right to govern in the church of Christ.

On the other hand, it can clearly be shown that in Apostolic times not only were there women ministers or preachers, but that they were ordained to a distinct official relation to the church. It does not appear that there were a large number of them so ordained, probably only a few; but if there can be shown to have been only one, it opens the way for others under similar conditions. What those conditions were or what they should be now, if women are to be ordained, is not now the question. It is simply a question of fact, and the fact is that Phœbe is declared by the Word, and acknowledged by all authorities to have been an ordained deaconess in the Apostol-

ic church. She was not what we in these days call a deaconess. The order of deaconess as constituted in the modern church has many duties and functions similar to those assigned to deaconesses in the Apostolic age, but the deaconesses of that day were ministers or preachers, and Phœbe was not a deaconess as we understand that word to-day, but she was a *female deacon*. In the English translation given in King James version, she is called a "servant," but, as is well known, the Greek is *διακονος*. The word originally signified just what we now designate by the word "servant." It soon, however, in the phraseology of the Apostolic church lost its original signification and, as the church developed as an ecclesiastical organization, this term was soon used only to designate persons who were ministers of the Word, or preachers. After the Acts the word is never used in any other sense in the New Testament. To show this it may be noted that Paul used the word *διακονος* twenty-one times, and in every case, with a single exception in Rom. 13: 4, where it is used to express a ruler's position as a power appointed of God (which does not weaken the argument), it is used to designate one we would call a preacher or minister, and in every case except that of Phœbe is so translated in our New Testament. These passages are as follows: Rom. 13: 2-4, "A minister of God." Rom. 15: 8, "A minister of the circumcision." Rom. 16: 1, "Phœbe, a servant, etc." 1 Cor. 3: 5, "Who is Paul and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" 2 Cor. 3: 6, "Who hath also made us able ministers of the New Testament." 2 Cor. 6: 4, "Approving ourselves as ministers of God." 2 Cor. 11: 15, "As ministers of righteousness." 2 Cor. 11: 23, "Are they ministers of Christ? * * I am more, etc." Gal. 2: 17, "Is Christ therefore the minister of sin?" Eph. 3: 7, "By the gospel whereof I was made a minister." Eph. 6: 21, "Tychicus, a faithful minister in the Lord." Col. 1: 7, "Epaphras * * who is for

you a faithful minister of Christ." Col. 1: 23, "The gospel * * whereof I, Paul, am made a minister." Col. 1: 25, "The church: whereof I am made a minister." Col. 4: 7, "Tychicus, a faithful minister in the Lord." 1 Thess. 3: 2, "Timotheus, * * minister of God." 1 Tim. 3: 8, "Likewise must the deacons, etc." 1 Tim. 3: 12, "Let the deacons, etc." 1 Tim. 4: 6, "Thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ."

It is entirely clear from the above passages that the word, *διακονος*, is not used by Paul to express a menial position in the church, but, on the contrary, an exalted official position. This is confirmed by the fact that whenever Paul desired to express a menial relation he uses the word *δουλος*. This he uses in this sense over thirty times, and it is translated a "servant," while the word *διακονος* is never used by Paul to express the menial relation of a servant, and is never so translated except in the case of Phœbe. Notwithstanding this mistranslation it is evident from the use of the two words by Paul that Phœbe's position in the church was not a menial one, but an official one and that she was what we would call a minister or preacher. It is also clear that she was ordained, as we use that word. All authorities agree on this. Over fifty standard dictionaries, cyclopædias, and eminent theological authorities have been carefully consulted. It may be tedious, but it is necessary, to quote them in this connection in confirmation of this statement.

Herzog's Cyclo.—*Deaconess*. "Phœbe was a deaconess in the church at Cenchrea. The women whose names are mentioned in Rom. 16: 12 (Tryphena and Tryphosa) were probably deaconesses."

Cambridge Bible, Rom. 16: 1. "Plainly the word 'servant' here bears more than a menial reference. Phœbe was in some sense a dedicated helper at Cenchrea."

Blunt's Cyclo.—"Phœbe was a deaconess."

Eadie's Cyclo.—"Deaconesses were for a long time an established order of church offices (Rom. 16: 1). Phœbe was a deaconess of the church. What the peculiar office of the deaconess was we are not informed. Probably the female deacons attended to their own sex as the male deacons to theirs, etc."

Dr. Smith's Dic. of Christian Antiquities.—*Deaconess*. "An order of women in the primitive church who appear to have undertaken duties in reference to their own sex analogous to those performed by deacons among men. There can be no doubt that deaconesses were considered to be an order in the church."

Same. Pliny to Trajan.—"Two maids (*ancillæ*) whom he had tortured 'whom the Christians called ministers' (*ministrae*, deaconess)."

Jerome, on Rom. 16: 1, says: "In the east women deaconesses appear to have ministered to their own sex in baptism and in the ministry of the Word."

Dr. Hook's Church Dictionary.—*Deaconess*. "St. Paul speaks of Phœbe as a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea, and deaconesses appear to be the same persons as those whom Pliny in his famous letter to Trajan styles '*ancillæ quæ ministrae dicebantur*; maids who were called deaconesses.'"

Boutelle's Bible Dictionary.—*Deacon, deaconess, ministra*. "Acts 6: 3-6, Rom. 16: 1, 1 Tim. 3: 8-13. Ministers at first appointed to relieve the apostles of secular duties in the Christian church, subsequently distinguished from the elders, fulfilling various ministerial duties in the church as helpers to the ministers of higher degree."

Buck & Henderson's Theological Dictionary.—*Deaconess*. "A female deacon. It is generally allowed that in the primitive church there were deaconesses. Such it is reasonable to think Phœbe was (Rom. 16: 1), who is expressly called *διακονος*,

a deaconess, or stated, servant, as Dodridge renders it. Pliny refers to them, when speaking of two female Christians whom he put to torture; he says, '*quæ ministrae dicebantur*;' who were called deaconesses."

Brown's Cyclo. of Religious Knowledge.—*Deaconess*. "A female deacon. It was generally allowed that in the primitive church there were deaconesses. Such an one it is reasonable to think was Phœbe (Rom. 16: 1), who is expressly called *διακονος*, a deaconess, etc."

Chamber's Cyclopædia.—*Deaconess*. "Female ministers, Rom. 16: 1."

Anthony's Dictionary of the Bible.—*Deaconess*. "Rom. 16: 1. Phœbe is called a servant, but in the Greek, a *deaconess* of the church at Cenchrea."

American Cyclopædia.—*Deaconess*. "A female officer of the early church. The institution of deaconess originated with the apostles as is clear from Rom. 16: 1."

The Century Dictionary.—*Deaconess*. "One of an ecclesiastical order of women in the early church. Rom. 16: 1, 'I commend unto you Phœbe, the deaconess of the church at Cenchrea.'"

Wright's Universal Dictionary.—*Deacon*. "A person in the lowest degree of Holy orders." *Deaconess*. "A female deacon in the primitive church."

Imperial Dictionary.—*Deacon*. "A person in the lowest degree of Holy orders." *Deaconess*. "A female deacon in the primitive church."

Richardson's Dictionary.—*Deacon, Deaconess*. "The lowest order of clergy in the Apostolic church. Rom. 16: 1, 'I commend unto you Phœbe, the deaconess of the church at Cenchrea.'"

Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language.—*Deaconess*. "A female officer in the primitive church."

Chamber's Dictionary.—*Deaconess*. "A female deacon in the primitive church."

Imperial Lexicon.—*Deaconess*. "A female deacon in the primitive church."

Barclay's English Dictionary.—*Deaconess*. "A female in the ancient church who administered offices to those of her own sex, such as the baptism of adult women."

The Encyclopædic Dictionary.—*Deaconess*. "A female deacon in the early Christian church. (Rom. 16: 1) Phœbe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea."

Stormonth's Dictionary.—*Deaconess*. "Formerly a female deacon in Christian churches."

Craig's Dictionary of the English Language.—*Deaconess*. "A female deacon in the ancient church."

Skeat's Etymological Dictionary.—*Deacon*. "An officer in the primitive church. Derivative, *ess*, signifying of female origin."

Encyclopædia Britannica.—*Deaconess*. "Title of a ministry to which women were appointed in the early church."

Johnson's Cyclopædia.—*Deaconess*. "Title of a rank of female officers in the early Christian church."

Zell's Cyclopædia.—*Deaconess*. "A female deacon in the primitive church."

Beeton's Dictionary of Universal Information.—*Deaconess*. "There were also deaconesses in the primitive church, one of whom was Phœbe" (Rom. 16: 1).

Worcester's Dictionary.—*Deaconess*. "A female deacon in the primitive church."

On the Revision of the English New Testament, by Lightfoot, French & Ellicott (Harper & Bro. 1873, p. 104).

"The error of inserting the article where it is absent is less frequent than omitting it where it is present, but not less injurious to the sense. Thus, in 1 Tim. 3: 11, *λειτουργίας*, etc., would

hardly have been rendered 'even so must their wives be grave,' if the theory of the definite article had been understood, for our translators would have seen the reference is to *γυναίκας διακόνους*, 'women deacons' or 'deaconesses.' The office of deaconess is mentioned in only one other passage in the New Testament (Rom. 16: 1), and there it is obliterated in the English version by the substitution of the vague expression, 'which is a servant,' for the more definite *οὐσαν διακόνου*, 'who is a deaconess.'

"If the testimony borne in these two passages to a ministry of women in Apostolic times had not thus been blotted out of our English Bibles, attention would probably have been directed to the subject at an earlier date and our English church would not have remained so long maimed in one of her hands."

John Calvin's Commentary on Romans.—Rom. 16: 1 (Phœbe), "And, first, he commendeth her by her office, because she had an honest and holy ministry in the church."

Webster.—*Deaconess*. "A female deacon, as: 1st, In the primitive church, one whose duties resembled those of a deacon."

Dean Alford.—(Rom. 16: 1). "*Phœbe*, a deaconess."

Same.—(1 Tim. 3: 11). "Who are these, (1) deaconesses? (2) wives of deacons? (3) women in general? I conceive we may dismiss the two last at once for Chrysostom's reason: 'Why should Paul in the midst of writing on another subject insert anything respecting women? * * * We come thus to consider that these women are deaconesses, *ministrae*, as Pliny calls them in his letter to Trajan (see Rom. 16: 1)'. In this view the ancients are, as far as I know, unanimous. I decide then that these women are deaconesses."

Same, on verse 12. "(General directions respecting those in the diaconate of both sexes, the female being included in the male.)"

Strong & McClintock's Cyclopædia.—“Phœbe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea.”

Clarke's Commentary.—Rom. 16: 1. “Phœbe is here termed a servant, *διακονοῦσα*, a deaconess, of the church at Cenchrea. * * * It is evident that they were ordained to their office by the imposition of the hands of the bishop.”

Same.—1 Tim. 3: 11. “Whatever is spoken here becomes women in general, but if the apostle had those termed *deaconesses* in his eye, which is quite possible, the words are peculiarly suitable to them. That there was such an *order* in the Apostolic and primitive church, and that they were appointed to this office by the imposition of hands, has been already noticed.”

Same.—1 Tim. 5: 14. “As the preceding discourse, has been about younger widows, and this is an inference from it, it is evident that by younger women the apostle means young widows. These he considers unfit for the office of the female diaconate.”

Dean Stanley, “Christian Institutions.”—*Deacons*, p. 190. “The foundation of this order was grounded on the elevation of the care of the poor to the rank of religious service. The deacons became the first preachers of Christianity. They were the first evangelists because they were the first to find their way to the homes of the poor. Women as well as men were enrolled in this order.”

History of Apostolic Church. Philip Schaff, D. D., p. 533. —“Besides them we find in the Apostolic church the order of female deacons, or deaconesses. The existence of such deaconesses in the Apostolic church is placed beyond doubt by Rom. 16: 1, where Paul commends to the kind interest of the Roman Christians the sister, Phœbe, probably the bearer of the letter.”

In speaking of deacons he also says: “The existence of a

deaconess, Phœbe, at Cenchrea (Rom. 16: 1), certainly leads us to infer that there were deacons there also.”

Young's Analytical Concordance.—*Phœbe*. “A female minister in Cenchrea who had helped Paul.”

Robinson's Bible Cyclopædia, p. 338.—*Deacons*. “They were selected by the people from among themselves and were presented to the apostles and by them ordained by the imposition of hands. Persons of both sexes were appointed.”

Same.—*Deaconesses*. “Paul speaks of Phœbe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea, and says that she had been his patroness as well as that of many others, which implies a dignity seldom considered. These appear to be the same as those whom Pliny in his famous letter to Trajan styles ‘ministers or assistants.’”

Sawyers, “The Church.”—“Rom. 16: 1, I commend to you Phœbe, our sister, who is a deacon of the church in Cenchrea.”

Same.—“1 Tim. 3: 11, The women (female deacons) also must be grave, etc.”

Here is a clear case about Phœbe at least. McClintock & Strong's Cyclopædia, in speaking of Tryphena and Tryphosa, Rom. 16: 12, says: “It is likely they were fellow deaconesses and among the predecessors of that large number of official women who ministered in the church.”

Philip Schaff, D. D., in “History of Apostolic Church,” says, p. 534: “In all probability Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis, who are praised for their labor in the Lord (Rom. 16: 12), served the church in the same capacity,” i. e., as deaconesses.

McClintock & Strong's Cyclopædia, under the head of Priscilla, says: “The wife of Aquila and probably like Phœbe, a deaconess.”

If it is claimed that there is only one clear case of a woman deacon in the New Testament, it may be answered that neither are there more than two clear cases of men elders, Peter and

John. If it is claimed that there was a class of male elders, and there must have been more than two, it may be answered that there was also a class of female deacons and there must have also been more than one. It is as clearly proven of the one as of the other, and no more so.

We conclude from these facts:

1st. That there were female deacons in the primitive church.

2nd. That they were an established order of officials.

3rd. That many of them at least, if not all, were ministers or preachers. The fact that those in the diaconate, both men and women, *preached*, and that they *all* preached, is as clearly proven respecting the women as the men.

4th. That women deacons were elected to this office, and set apart to the ministry thereof by the imposition of hands the same as the men deacons.

5th. That the women deacons performed the same duties for and stood in the same relation to the women as the men deacons did for and to the men.

In view of these facts it is very difficult to see how we can consistently avoid the conclusion that to be consistent we must continue to allow the ordination of women to the subordinate ministry of the diaconate.

Some one may ask, however, "How about women elders?" There are some good authorities who claim that there was a distinct order of women elders in the Apostolic church, but it would be difficult to establish that fact by the Word, except by inference. To be sure it would not be an unreasonable inference to conclude that, because there were women in the subordinate ministry of the diaconate, some of these women were elevated to the eldership; but to prove it is another thing. It does not seem, however, that we are required to prove it. If it is admitted that women were elected and

ordained to the diaconate, according to our view of the Gospel ministry, our contention is allowed. If it should be objected that women were ordained in Apostolic times because of the peculiar social conditions prevalent then, and that the exclusiveness of woman's relations rendered ordained women an absolute necessity, it may be answered that this has nothing to do with this question, because a necessity never creates a right. The right existed before the necessity, and continues after the necessity ceases to exist. Whether the Oriental exclusiveness of the female is more conducive to purity and holiness than the present apparent laxity in the social relation of the sexes among the western nations may be an open question, but it does not bear on our subject. It is not improbable, however, that there may be at some future time, more or less remote, a reaction on this subject, and that public opinion may demand of religious bodies that they authorize women to perform for their sex at least some of the duties now discharged by male ministers. If so, would conference action in that direction create the right of woman to ordination? It would simply recognize what was already there and had been called out by an apparent necessity. Some may think, and not unreasonably, that the necessity for such action now actually exists. That is a matter of opinion. Whether it does or not, the right to it is inherited. Its recognition is all that is asked.

It has been urged that if we ordain women we will soon be ruled by women. It may be answered that we are now so ruled if it be true that the people are sovereign. Women have a majority in most of our societies and the real authority of the church is there. No person in our church can be started in the ministry without the recommendation of the society to which he belongs. The society elects its lay representative to conference. Now, it is a fact that, though the women have the

real power and authority in the church, by having the majority of the votes, yet she almost always uses it to delegate her power as a voter to some man, whenever one any way suitable for the position can be found. How often do we find the women of a society struggling to find men enough who are eligible to fill the offices in the church. It is only when the men are manifestly unfit for the position, or when some woman is pre-eminently qualified for it, that a woman is elected. If the men rule the Free Methodist church to-day it is because the women have expressed by their votes a desire to have it so. This is no argument either way but is favorable to the ordination of women rather than against it.

That other objection to the ordination of women, which we sometimes hear, that men through feelings of gallantry or enthusiasm would vote some women into orders who were not worthy, has more foundation than the last. It is admitted that there is some danger in this respect, but not enough to entitle it to much consideration. There are quite a number of unworthy men ordained each year from one cause or another; and why should the men desire to monopolize all the unworthiness in this line? Furthermore it may be noted that, while the women by having a majority in most of our societies, have, by virtue of that majority, the right to say by their votes whom they think God has called to preach the Gospel, they have delegated to the men the right to determine who shall be ordained; and as it is altogether likely that but comparatively few women will be ordained, and as practically not a single woman can be ordained except by the votes of the men to whom our women voters have delegated this right, we must trust these men to see to it that the few women who are ordained shall be every way well qualified and worthy the high office to which they may be chosen.

It has also been urged that because some women seem to

want to be ordained it is an objection to it. The only ground upon which it would be commendable for a woman to desire ordination is the same we would commend as the basis of a man's desire for ordination. That would be a desire to be permanently recognized by the church in a ministry to which one had already been called by God. To desire ordination for the honor it confers or for the privileges it grants would be regarded as unworthy in a woman as in a man, and no more so.

In whatever light we view this question we are forced, some of us reluctantly, to the conclusion that the present position of our church on this subject is entirely consistent. If a woman is called to preach the Gospel she has the same right as a man to be ordained. If she is called to the pastorate it does not increase her right to ordination, but it places an imperative responsibility upon that body which recognizes that call to see to it that she is ordained. Such a body is bound to do so in honor, in justice, in right, in due respect, not for woman, but for themselves. What shall we as a church do at this time? Is not the past history of our denomination an answer to this question? Have we ever made a backward move? Has not God honored us in every one of these advances we have made along the lines of truth? Our present position as to woman's place and work in the church of Christ has been carefully and prayerfully taken. Her ordination may not have been seen or considered when early in our history we authorized her to preach the Gospel, but it was there, and is the only logical conclusion or completion of that position. Every argument, every vote against her ordination, whether intended or not, is only an argument, is only a vote, against her right to preach the Gospel. Having now given to women preachers the right to be ordained deacons, shall we now permit any attempt to tear down that which we have built at so great cost?