

# Response to the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word: Hermeneutics and Complementarianism



I

In previous essays responding to the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word's *Response to Women in Holy Orders*, I have claimed that the dividing issue has primarily to do with hermeneutics, not biblical interpretation. In this essay, I intend to have a more detailed discussion of the hermeneutical process itself, and how it functions in the *Response*, and why I find that problematic. In a later essay, I will discuss an alternative hermeneutic.

Oliver O'Donovan has a helpful discussion of the hermeneutical process in his book *Self, World and Time: Ethics as Theology 1*.<sup>1</sup> The context of the discussion is Christian ethics, but insofar as the issue of women's ordination is a concern about the practical application of Scripture – in light of what the

Bible teaches, what should we do? – the concern is the same:

1) “A biblical story, command, or counsel presents us with a train of moral thought, a discursive argument that runs, though sometimes we need exegetical insight to make it explicit, from some A to some B, led by its practical question . . . and reaching some resolution.” That is, at the time the Bible was written, there was some particular reality or situation A; in light of A, the Biblical authors concluded that some action B is the appropriate form of response to this reality (discerning and obeying God’s will in this situation).

2) “That whole course of thinking, from A to B, is laid before our attention as we seek to fashion a course of thinking of our own, from some X to some Y, led by our own practical question, observing our own contextual restraints, and finally reaching our resolution to the matter that is our own view.” That is, given our own moral or practical issue that needs to be addressed (X), how does the Biblical process from A to B give us guidance to discern what is the proper Y in response to X?

3) O’Donovan is clear that the biblical path from A to B is not negotiable; it is fixed in the text. Nonetheless, “[i]nterpretation has to do with what is already the case about the meaning of Scripture; moral thinking [and other decisions of practical reason such as church order] is not about what is already the case, but about what to do next.” That is, exegesis is not hermeneutics; interpretation is not application.

4) “Obedience is a matter of how our own confession is to harmonize with the testimony of Scripture, and it is concerned to achieve a correspondence between the *whole train of thought* of the text from A to B and the *whole train of thought* from X to Y.” O’Donovan suggests that we express this in the formula  $[A \rightarrow B] \rightarrow [X \rightarrow Y]$ . However, obedience is not simply a matter of taking up a conclusion in the manner of  $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow Y$ , which would

shortcut the process of  $X \rightarrow Y$ ; nor is it a simple matter of  $A \rightarrow X \rightarrow Y$ , working from some general principle or command overlooking how Scripture engages in its own process of what actions A might imply.

O'Donovan gives the example of divorce and remarriage. It is not good enough to proceed from some general principle such as "God approves of lifelong marriage" ( $A \rightarrow X \rightarrow Y$ ) or some command such as "Divorce and remarriage is forbidden by Jesus, and that is the end of the matter" ( $B \rightarrow Y$ ). We must ask the questions: Why is it forbidden? How is it forbidden? What is open and closed by the prohibition? Scripture addresses these questions within the parameters of the ancient world, but we have to ask the same questions within our own pastoral situation: "Nothing will count as 'biblical thinking' but a careful correlation of the complexities of the one situation with the complexities of the other" (79-80).

O'Donovan and others have contrasted the different principles of biblical interpretation used by Anglican Richard Hooker and his Puritan opponents. The Puritans held to what is called the "regulative" principle of interpretation; whatever is not explicitly commanded in Scripture is forbidden. For the Puritans, hermeneutics was a straightforward connection from  $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow Y$ , or even perhaps  $B \rightarrow Y$ . Hooker held to what is sometimes called a "normative" or perhaps "permissive" hermeneutic. Whatever the Bible does not prohibit is allowed as long as it is consistent with biblical theological principles. More than that, Hooker insisted that biblical interpretation involved the use of "reason," making crucial distinctions between "natural," "moral" and "positive" laws: "Hooker's advocacy of 'reason' . . . saw it as a hermeneutical servant of the text" (O'Donovan, 77) That is, for Hooker, moral and ecclesial application of Scripture was not a straightforward matter of "Scripture says A; therefore Y."

According to Hooker, not every "positive" law in Scripture is

a matter for permanent observance. The interpreter had to discern the purpose of the positive law in its original context, whether it was rooted in "natural" or "moral" law, or was rather of merely historical relevance, and where it fits within the context of both creation and redemption. For example, the civil laws of the Old Testament would not be binding on modern states, although the moral principles behind them are. Hooker insisted against both Puritans and Roman Catholics that the way in which church order was structured even *in the New Testament* was *not* necessarily binding on the later church. The Puritans insisted that because episcopacy is not explicitly commanded in Scripture, it is *forbidden*; Roman Catholics insisted that episcopacy [including the papacy] is of the *esse* of the church, and therefore *necessary*. Hooker insisted to the contrary (against Puritans) that while episcopacy is not taught explicitly in Scripture, the ecclesial structures that led to episcopacy were present in the New Testament church, and (against Roman Catholics), that although episcopacy is for the good order of the church (*bene esse*), it is not absolutely required.

In addition, the Puritans and Hooker had different notions of how to interpret biblical law. Puritans understood law as "divine command" in line with the "voluntarist" theologies of the late Middle Ages, what is now termed "deontological" ethics. Hooker echoed Thomas Aquinas in endorsing an ontological and teleological notion of biblical law: "virtue ethics." Law is not simply "divine command," but reflects both divine and created order. One has not understood the logic of any biblical command until one has understood how the moral principle of the law is rooted in the ontology of creation and redemption, and the teleological goal or purpose behind the law. How does the law lead to human flourishing and salvation? For Hooker, "because the Bible says so" is not an adequate theological hermeneutic.

I would add two additional hermeneutical observations to

O'Donovan's discussion. When later generations attempt to read Scripture to help address their own contemporary issues ([A→B]→[X→Y]), a particular biblical text or texts will provide the canonical center that guides interpretation of other passages, what Michael Gorman calls the "master story," or what I referred to as "warrant" in a previous essay. In addition, since no interpretation can take place without some kind of interpretive pattern to draw connections, some kind of hermeneutical "paradigm" will operate to provide the key to the interpretation of the "master story" passage. For Gorman, Phil. 2:1-11 is the "master story" for the apostle Paul's spirituality, and "cruciformity" is the paradigm that Gorman not only draws from the "master story," but also through which he interprets the rest of Paul's theology.<sup>2</sup>

In our original essay, Bishop Grant LeMarquand and myself distinguished between four different hermeneutical responses to the question of women's ordination: the traditional position of opposition to women's ordination, which we claimed was based on an ontology of inequality, and three modern positions – egalitarian, Evangelical complementarian, and Catholic sacramentalists – the latter three of which we insisted were all "new" positions insofar as they rejected the presumption of ontological inferiority that lay behind the traditional position. How does each position move from [A→B]→[X→Y], what is its master story (primary biblical resource), and what is its paradigm (key to interpretation)?

Despite the protestations of the *Response*, I demonstrated in the [previous essay](#) that the traditional position opposed the ordination of women because of a perception of ontological inferiority. As I also claimed, the traditional position reflected the economic social structures of all pre-industrial societies.<sup>3</sup> Pre-industrial societies are characterized by the following divisions of labor and social structures based in the biological realities that women give birth and breastfeed and men are physically stronger than women:

1) Distinction between public and private spheres of activity: In pre-industrial societies, the home was the primary location of economic activity, and the extended family is the primary source of economic activity. Large families are normative insofar as children provide labor in agricultural societies. Women's work is necessarily confined to the private sphere because they are often pregnant, but also have to be near children in order to breastfeed and care for children. The public sphere is reserved for men because only men have the freedom to not be near children. Because men are physically stronger, they also do most manual work. Most people are illiterate, but those who are educated tend to be men. In a society in which women were seldom educated and spent little time in the public sphere, men would have tended to think of women as less intelligent.

2) Hierarchy: traditional societies were not so much "patriarchal" (men rule women) as hierarchical. A handful of men rule over every one else: men, women, children, and slaves. There are few "patriarchs," but many slaves.

3) Shame/honor culture. Traditional societies were "group oriented," and behavior was often determined by concerns not to "shame" or "dishonor" one's particular family or social group.

The traditional argument against the ordination of women reflects this division of labor and pre-industrial social structures, as evidenced by John Chrysostom: "To woman is assigned the presidency of the household; to man all the business of state, the marketplace, the administration of government . . . She cannot handle state business well, but she can raise children correctly . . ." (The Kind of Women Who Ought to be Taken as Wives 4).

In the traditional opposition to women's ordination, women cannot be ordained for the following reasons, rooted in traditional pre-industrial culture:

1) Ordination is an activity that takes place in the public sphere; however, the work of women is confined to the private sphere.

2) The ordination of women would disrupt the hierarchy in which some men rule over other men, women, and slaves. Moreover, women cannot exercise authority over men because they are less intelligent than men. (Again, very few women would have been educated).

3) Women cannot be ordained because this would shame the church as a social group within a larger society in which women did not engage in activities in the public sphere.

In terms of theological rationale, the traditional argument against women's ordination was expressed this way:

(A) Women are less intelligent, more emotionally unstable, and more subject to temptation than men.

(B) Ordination necessitates exercising authority over others, particularly teaching and speaking in an authoritative manner. Women cannot be ordained because they are necessarily subordinate to men, and therefore cannot exercise authority in this manner.

(C) There is a direct correlation between (A) and (B). Because of ontological deficiency (A), women cannot exercise authority over or teach men (B), and so cannot be ordained (C).

In this context, what would be the "master story" or biblical text to which male opponents would appeal? And what would be the paradigm? 1 Timothy 2:12 has been the standard proof-text, but as I made clear in the previous essay, this passage was interpreted through the paradigm of points (A) to (C) above.

### **What is Complementarianism?**

As we mentioned in our original essay, following the recognition of the equality of women that followed the

industrial revolution, a shift took place in all mainline churches “as churches came to recognize essential equality between men and women, including intellectual and moral equality.” This meant that the traditional arguments based on women’s intellectual and moral incapacities disappeared. This also meant that all in the discussion now affirm:

(A1) Women share an equal intellectual, moral, and spiritual capacity with men. They are not less intelligent, emotionally unstable, or more subject to temptation than men.

Two new arguments now appeared against women’s ordination – an Evangelical position designated “complementarianism” and a Catholic sacramental argument. We summarized Protestant “complementarianism” as follows:

*Protestant opposition has focused on issues of authority, with preaching and teaching, and arguments focus on the exegesis of scripture. While strongly affirming the intellectual and moral equality of men and women, Protestant “complementarians” insist nonetheless that men and women have different “roles” to play in the church. All “roles” are available to men, but women are denied any “role” that would involve teaching or exercising authority over men. Protestant arguments appeal to biblical passages that seem to affirm (1) a hierarchical understanding of the relation between men and women; (2) forbid women to speak in church; (3) forbid women to teach.*

A more detailed outline appeared in my [“Tradition Challenge”](#):

*The Protestant Complementarian affirms (A1), but also continues to affirm (B). However, because the Complementarian does not affirm (A), he (or she?) cannot affirm (C). Rather, the Complementarian affirms:*

*(C1) Although (A1), women still cannot be ordained because*



*God has created different "gender roles" rooted in "male headship."*

*For Complementarians, men can exercise any role in the church that women can fulfill, but women have the exclusive role of always being in submission to male authority. In a religious setting, women cannot teach, speak publicly where men might be present, or exercise authority over men.*

*Complementarians do affirm (B), but rather than affirm (A) and (C), they affirm (A1), and (C1), and are thus an innovation in relation to the previous tradition.*

Note that Complementarians affirm two of the traditional positions originally grounded in traditional pre-industrial social structures: (1) a hierarchical relationship between men and women, and (2) a distinction between private and public "roles."

Complementarianism is also a movement that arose in the mid-twentieth century among traditionalist Calvinist Evangelicals. It thus tends to share three characteristics of Puritan exegesis: (1) a regulative hermeneutic; (2) a deontological "divine command" ethic; (3) a tendency to make a straight hermeneutic move from O'Donovan's A to Y or perhaps B to Y, conflating the exegetical process from A to B, and then jumping from there straight to Y. Complementarians also tend to make the straight move from historical account to hermeneutical normativity: A: there were no women priests in the OT; Jesus had no women apostles; Paul commanded women to be silent, and Paul said that he was not allowing women to teach or exercise authority over men; ergo, → Y: Women cannot hold church office today.

What are the biblical "master story" texts for complementarians, the specific texts in light of which all

other texts are interpreted? 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Cor. 14:34b-35 as well as Paul's use of the metaphor "head" in Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians 11 interpreted to mean "authority over."

What is the paradigm in light of which the texts are interpreted? The double notions of "hierarchy" and "authority": There is a hierarchy of relations of authority between the Father and the Son in the Trinity, between God and creation, between Christ and the church, and between men and women, and parents and children. Because men are higher in the hierarchy than women, they exercise authority over women, and the relationship cannot be reversed. Because women cannot exercise authority over men, they cannot be engaged in any authoritative public speaking or teaching (at least in the church), and so cannot be ordained.

Where does the *Response* fit into this discussion? The hermeneutic of the *Response* is boiler-plate complementarianism. This can be seen in the following ways:

1) The master story texts for the *Response* are the same complementarian proof-texts:

1 Tim. 2:18-15 and 1 Cor. 14:34b-35: "These two passages are the major New Testament texts on the relationship between men and women and their respective roles in the corporate or communal life of the church" (74).

Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians 11 interpreted in terms of hierarchical "headship" (14, 51-69, 72).

2) The fundamental paradigm is the same: authority and hierarchy. "The presbyter is not primarily an office which corresponds to a skill set but as one called by Christ Himself. In other words, it is constitutive of God's gracious vocation that the local Church confirms . . . in submission to Christ, according to *His* specific structure of authority" (4). The word "authority" is probably the single most used word in

the document. "The relational hierarchy between male and female, established in creation, is crucial for the theology of redemption in the New Testament" (32).

3) The notion of gender "roles," understood as meaning the subordination of women to male authority and the distinction between "public" and "private" is the same: "The order of creation, and the responsibilities, conferred on Adam, both indicate a subordinate role for Eve" (28; cf. 13, 14-15, 22, 31, 45, etc.)

4) The authorities cited repeatedly within the document are almost without exception, standard complementarian authors (Wayne Grudem, Douglas Moo, Thomas Schreiner, a commentary series edited by D. A. Carson). Grudem is the most frequently cited author. In contrast, although the authors occasionally cite egalitarian authors, e.g., Richard Bauckham (39), at no point do they actually acknowledge or engage the arguments of these authors. The arguments used in response to our essay are the standard complementarian tropes found particularly in authors such as Grudem, with no acknowledgment that every single one of them has been addressed somewhere in the literature. In reference to the discussion of whether *kephalē* should be interpreted as "authority over," the authors cite Richard S. Cervin and Alan Johnson, but quite selectively. Cervin and Johnson argue persuasively that Grudem is simply mistaken. Nowhere in the essay is there any mention of standard biblical interpreters such as Ben Witherington III, Anthony Thiselton, Philip B. Payne, Craig Keener, Michael Gorman, Kenneth Bailey, Linda Belleville, and Gordon Fee, all of whom have argued against the complementarian interpretation in numerous commentaries, theological texts, and essays. Our essay included an extensive bibliography. The writers of the *Response* do not interact with any of these sources in our bibliography, and there is no evidence of familiarity with their work. Grudem's standard arguments are echoed repeatedly in the *Response* with apparently no curiosity about whether

they have ever been addressed. They have.

5) Perhaps most telling, when the authors of the text cite studies produced by Protestant churches that have addressed the question of women's ordination, two of the studies are by very conservative Presbyterian churches in which a regulative hermeneutic would be normative. The third church is the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. All three of the churches would be at the "far right" of Protestant biblical interpretation. One hesitates to use the word "fundamentalist," but certainly these churches could be described as what George Hunsinger has designated "enclave." There is no mention of churches such as the Evangelical Presbyterian Church or the North American Lutheran Church, both of which have an ongoing relationship with Trinity School for Ministry, where Grant LeMarquand and I teach, and both of which ordain women. The only Anglican body cited is the Diocese of Sydney, well known not only for its rejection of women's ordination, but also for its approval of lay celebration of the Eucharist. The Calvinist leanings of Sydney are not a secret. I would not normally cite Wikipedia as a source, but Wikipedia notes that D. A. Carson (a prominent Reformed complementarian) is a regular visitor to the Sydney Diocese.

### **Master Passages and Paradigms**

I confess that when I first read the *Response*, I was most disappointed by two discoveries. The first, which I have already addressed in an [essay](#), was the misrepresentation of our own views, particularly ascribing to us positions that we do not hold. The second, however, was the discovery that the *Response* is fairly boiler-plate complementarianism. There is nothing new here, and these arguments have been addressed and answered countless times by other scholars. I address most of them at length in my blog essays, and in my upcoming book.

The complementarian case depends on the relationship between

the master story and the paradigm. The master story is based on two isolated passages and the interpretation of one metaphor ("head") in Paul's epistles. If 1 Tim. 2:18-15 and 1 Cor. 14:34b-35 are not universal prescriptions, but historical descriptions, the case collapses. If Paul's use of *kephalē* does not mean "authority over," the case collapses. If a stronger case could be made from other biblical passages, the complementarian case would not need to place so much weight on these. Other biblical passages and theological themes are interpreted in the light of the paradigm of authority and hierarchy, but these passages provide the master story. If the primary paradigm for ministry is not hierarchy and authority, the case also collapses.

These are not good biblical passages to provide the "master story" or biblical "warrant" for a discussion of women's ordination:

They are isolated passages and do not directly address the questions of women's orders at all. The writers of the *Response* admit this – "In fact, neither passage *explicitly* addresses the question of women's ordination" – but then go on to claim: "because women are prohibited from speaking in public gatherings of the Church they are therefore necessarily excluded from the ordained office of teaching in the Church." But, of course, neither passage says anything about women speaking in "public" gatherings of the church. Because the passages do not make a distinction between "private" and "public" speaking, the writers of the *Response* necessarily must read into the passages their paradigm of hierarchy and authority, of "public" and "private," and then proceed to establish the paradigm on the basis of the same passages.

There are good reasons to question whether 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is not actually an interpolation, not in Paul's original text. Assuming that it is, the most that can be said with certainty is that it prohibits some kind of disruptive speech by women in the congregation. It cannot be an absolute

prohibition of women speaking in the context of worship because the discussion about women's head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11 concerns the physical garb (or hairstyles) for women to wear when they *are* speaking *publicly* in church. Nothing in the context indicates that either 1 Cor. 14:34-35 or 1 Corinthians 11 has anything to do with women and church orders since there is no discussion of ordained ministry in the passages whatsoever.

1 Timothy 2:12 is not a prescriptive passage, but a descriptive passage. It cannot be an *absolute* prohibition against women teaching (as the writers of *The Response* admit) because at least one of Paul's disciples (Priscilla) was a teacher. The writers of the *Response* make the usual complementarian move of suggesting that Acts 18:26 means that women can only teach in private, but there is nothing in the text to indicate that Priscilla *and* Aquilla's taking Apollos aside had anything to do with a concern about Priscilla being a woman. Moreover, nothing in 1 Timothy 2:12 mentions concerns about women teaching "in public" rather than in private. The writers of the *Response* read this distinction into the text. Again, the passage says nothing about women and ordination. In Paul's actual discussion of the orders of bishops and deacons in 1 Timothy 3, he makes no connection to what he wrote in the previous chapter about women "teaching."

The writers of the *Response* complain that "It is disappointing that [LeMarquand and Witt] offer only a bare and scant assertion [about these passages]." I have written what will be an [entire chapter](#) in my book discussing these passages. But there were two primary reasons that we did not discuss them in depth. We were asked to keep our discussion as short as possible. Despite the affirmations of the writers of the *Response* that these "are perhaps the two most important texts that proponents of women's ordination must address," we regard them as peripheral, and not terribly relevant to the discussion.

The writers want to make the case that the apostle Paul's metaphorical use of the word *kephalē* ("head") in 1 Corinthians 11 and Ephesians 5 must be understood to mean "authority over" (relying heavily on Wayne Grudem), but Grudem's interpretation has been seriously challenged (I will address this in another essay), and, again, there is no explicit discussion of church office at all in these passages.

"Hierarchy and authority" is not a good paradigm to draw from these passages; nor is it a good paradigm for church ministry. As noted, these passages provide the "master story" for the interpretation of other passages cited by complementarians, in light of which those other passages are then interpreted as being about "hierarchy" and "authority." Certainly authority is an aspect of church ministry. All representative activity involves some authority. Even an Amish farmer working with other Amish farmers to build a barn exercises some kind of authority. However, a close look at the key passages in Scripture that address relations between men and women or that speak of pastoral practice emphasize servanthood and mutual submission, not authority (Ephesians 5, 2 Cor. 4; 1 Pet. 5:2-4).

### **Why Complementarianism is Not Good Hermeneutics: Asking the Question "Why"?**

As noted above, Oliver O'Donovan suggests that hermeneutical engagement needs to ask such questions as "How?" "Why?" "To what extent?" "What is open and closed?" In addressing the interpretation of passages like 1 Timothy 2:12, it is not enough to simply assert that there is a restriction and that it has to do with authority. Theologically, it is also necessary to ask the question "Why?" Given the complementarian paradigm, "*Why* is there a hierarchy between men and women?" Given that complementarians recognize (indeed insist!) that women are of equal intelligence and competence with men, *why* should men always exercise authority over women? Complementarians never answer this question beyond asserting

that it is a matter of "creation order," and that men and women exercise different "roles."

The complementarian understanding of a hierarchical relationship between the sexes, of public and private roles, directly reflects the pattern of pre-industrial relations between the sexes. In pre-industrial societies, the real justification for these structures was economic; however, the theological rationale was based on an ontology of inequality – women were less intelligent than men, subject to temptation, and emotionally unstable – and this rationale provided the answer to both the "why" question as well as to the traditional interpretation of the Pauline passages.

The complementarian case is closely tied to a deontological "divine command" ethic. With the switch to a new understanding of sexual equality following the rise of post-industrial culture, a new rationale is demanded for preservation of pre-industrial hierarchy and male authority. The *new* complementarian rationale is two-fold – a divine command ethic combined with a new notion of "roles." Note that roles actually exist in the sense that roles correspond to actions, and that people can play different roles depending on their actions. The same person can be both a parent and a progeny. The same person can be both a teacher and a student. But the roles in complementarianism are not based on performed actions, but on states of being. To always be in a state of subordination is not a "role" in the traditional sense, but simply a way of describing personal limitations. The metaphor of "roles" plays the sleight-of-hand role of hiding lack of rationale. To say that women must always be subordinate to men because that is their "role" is simply another way of answering the "why" question by stating that women must always be subordinate to men because women must always be subordinate to men. To appeal to divine revelation here is either to uphold a "divine command" ontology or to admit lack of rationale. Note that such an explanation is demeaning and



infantilizing to women.

The authors of the *Response* attempt to address what is a real problem by claiming that "Once home and family is factored in, [LeMarquand's and Witt's] claim that complementarians believe that all 'roles' are open to men, in contrast to all 'roles' not being open to women falls apart. Men cannot be wives or mothers, just as women cannot be husbands or fathers." Certainly this is true, but to be a wife or mother or a husband or father is simply the way to describe the particular manner in which both men and women can be spouses and parents. A male spouse and parent is a husband and a father; a female spouse and parent is a wife and mother. The "role" here is one that is equally shared by both sexes, simply exercised in different ways.

The *Responders'* attempt to qualify the way in which the two sexes have different roles ignores the real issue. For complementarians, men can be husbands and fathers, and men can also be *either* lay persons or clergy. Men can be students, but men can *also* be teachers. Men can listen in the church, but men can *also* speak publicly in church. In the case of women, however, women can be wives and mothers, but women can only be lay persons, *never* clergy. Within the context of worship, women can be students, but women can *never* be teachers. Women can listen in the church, but women can *never* speak publicly. So to be clear, the notion of "roles" applies to only one of the sexes. All roles are open to men, but women have the distinct "role" of being excluded from any role that would imply exercising authority over men.

The second way in which the *Responders* attempt to provide some rationale for ordaining men but never women is by pointing out that ordination is not about skills or competence; it is about *vocation*. In a footnote, they emphasize that office is not simply a function of talents or abilities, that "One is judged by faithfulness, not by the abundance of gifts." But of course, this would be the case for men as well as women.

Granted that there is not a direct one-to-one correspondence between gifts and vocation, and that one is judged by faithfulness, not by gifts, why should it be the case that *only* men can find a correspondence between their gifts and their vocation, that it should be the case that only men are “judged by faithfulness,” that only men can respond to a vocation for ordained ministry? Once one gets past the red herring fallacies here, it becomes clear that the trope of “roles” and the insistence that ministry is about vocation not skills is once more simply an appeal to deontology. Women cannot be ordained because men are in charge and women are not, and men are in charge because women are not in charge. Women cannot be ordained because women cannot be ordained.

In this context, it is significant that for the non-regulative Anglican hermeneutic found in Richard Hooker tied to a teleological ontology rather than a deontological divine command ethic, once one discarded the traditional pre-industrial rationale based on women’s subordination to men based on ontological inferiority, there would be no grounds for refusing to ordain women; the complementarian “master passages” would be understood as historical descriptions, “positive law” addressing a particular historical situation, but not as permanent prohibitions. The notion of “roles” based on some kind of permanent hierarchy between the sexes would make no sense.<sup>4</sup>

[1](#) (Eerdmans, 2013).

[2](#) Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

[3](#) See especially, Carrie A. Miles, *The Redemption of Love: Rescuing Marriage and Sexuality from the Economics of a Fallen World* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006).

[4](#) See especially Stephen Sykes, “Richard Hooker and the Ordination of Women,” *Unashamed Anglicanism* (Nashville:

Abingdon Press, 1995), 81-98.