

How did we get here ?

Re. The Question : Women in special office or not

After Synod 2012, where do we stand with each other regarding the matter of women in special office in the church, and how did we arrive at this point ? From the perspective of those who comprehend Scripture and teach according to what the GKSA has understood and taught since 1859, the following:

According to the existing position since 1859, the general accepted Reformed exegesis and (by exception also the worldwide view) comprehension of the Word of God, is that women may not serve in the special office of minister, elder or deacon. However, some would go as far as to say that a woman could serve as deacon, since deacons are not called to teach and rule, as elders do.

Influenced by new and different views within the GKSA, new ideas had been initiated by some exegetes regarding women in special offices. The shift in view was caused by the hermeneutic departure point which implies that time considerations are deterministic and need to play a more important role in the interpretation and exegesis of Scripture. The result is that a fundamental different view of Scripture is applied. No more “Scripture and Scripture alone” but Scripture together with the influence of “Sitz im Lieben (situation in life)” of the times within which we live. The compelling change in view is therefore that that which applies to a particular time, does not necessarily apply to all times. It is this point of view which unavoidably and ultimately leads to liberalism and relativism in theology.

Within the GKSA we all confess that we are Reformed in our view of Scripture, but yet we differ in what it *means to be* “reformed”. And then we should not accuse each other of heresy, but rather be honest about it with each other. Therefore, honesty is expected from them who stand up after the open declaration is read before major assemblies. The delegates declare to honour all joint decisions, on basis of Scripture, confession and church order. Those, who then do not practise what they have agreed upon and pledged to honour, do not interpret the Bible or how to be reformed the same. They certainly do not belong together, since it is clear that their comprehension of the Truth of God’s Word is radically different from that of their brethren.

Those who favour and preach the new ideas and new view of Scripture; have since come head to head with Reformed exegetes who do not agree with them. Thus, to implement their views of Scripture they now have to implement their strategies gradually and very subtle.

1. First they had to ensure that their views are taught by certain academics. Over time they established a support base for their view of Scripture. And over time their students even “developed” their ideas even further.

2. They performed thorough exegesis – for which they should receive recognition. But their exegetical labours brought them to different answers compared to the existing Reformed exegesis where the Bible, and only the Bible is the only Source of Truth. For example, test these exegetes by asking them if there really was a snake in paradise which spoke to Adam and Eve. If you are then labelled a “Biblist” due to this question, you know where you are standing with them. Also matters regarding the virgin birth of Jesus, evolution, homosexuality, cremation, Sunday sport, etc. will eventually be interpreted differently.

Therefore the truth of Scripture, which is fixed and unique, is gradually no longer being viewed as the only truth.

3. The new school of thought laboured tirelessly to have the Reformed exegesis and view of Scripture, and their alternative view of Scripture be accepted as equally valid alternative exegetical models.

4. The book regarding women in the church, published before Synod 2009, was the result of the study whether women could serve in a special office or not. This book was also used in the above mentioned process. Several brethren, who could not come to the conclusion that women could serve in a special office, did participate by giving their inputs for the book. But, what must be clearly understood, is that the inputs of many were requested, but the result which was published, is the view of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the participants. Never was there any agreement that both points of view were equally acceptable and could be viewed as exegetical alternatives. The two positions clearly represent two opposing views of Scripture. The position which wants to confirm women in special office departs from the proven Reformed exegesis. It represents a view of Scripture which is foreign to Reformed exegesis and must be denied.

5. Then they worked tirelessly to get women ordained in the office of deacon. And those who laboured for this, knew that it probably would be very difficult to substantiate that women could not serve as deacon, by the others who maintained the reformed exegesis.

6. In the above mentioned process the reformed principle is continually set aside, namely that if one wants to change something in the light of Scripture, confession and church order, that he must be able to show with sound exegetical grounds why such change must be applied. They continually placed the onus on the group not agreeing with them to defend the existing decisions. Thus the cart is put before the horse. The burden to prove is displaced. The principle is that there must be proof from Scripture, confession and church order prior to making any change. Their proposed changes could not be proven. If it could have been proven, there surely would have been only one Scriptural point of view. And according to those who maintain the reformed exegesis since 1859, there is only one point of view, namely; that according to God's supreme intention women may NOT serve in the special offices of elders and pastors. Question is: Are we prepared to listen and bow before Scripture? And bow before God's will as revealed in His Word?

7. Since the decision that women could serve in the office of deacon (a compromise decision for which church law was technically misused in my opinion), the attempts have shifted to have women ordained into the offices of elder and minister. This was the ultimate goal from inception.

8. Since then huge attempts have been made to indicate that the whole issue regarding women in special offices, in the end came down to interpretation, but that it does not affect the nature or being of the church at all. According to them, the time and effort spent on this issue was merely something that satan used and abused to disrupt the church from performing her ACTUAL task. Internal strife prevents the church from fulfilling her external calling to full extent. Therefore, it is attempted to delegate decisions regarding cases such as women in special offices to the local congregation. It is incorrectly reasoned that this is merely a minor issue, in which we should allow the local churches the freedom of making their own choice.

Fact is that this view of Scripture is a major issue with far-reaching consequences. However, it is purposely downplayed.

9. Most of the brethren involved in the appeals, to be dealt with at Synod 2012, regarding the decision of Synod 2009, were present during the decision making in 2009. During Synod 2009 these brethren vehemently protested against the proposed wording of the decision, namely; that the decision had been made “according to Scripture”. They ensured that the wording was changed to read that the decision was made “according to the report”. They knew it would allow them an opportunity for later appeals. However, we all know that the decision taken was based on exegesis presented by one specific point of view in the report (the reformed view since 1859).

10. And now we are in 2012 and the Trojan horse is amid the ranks of the GKSA.

11. The question is: Should we not admit that our views on Scripture in essence differ from each other? The logical conclusion is that when it comes to exegetical issues we will arrive at different answers. By acknowledging this crucial difference we do not charge each other of committing heresy. At least we are honest with each other.

12. We need to ask ourselves if the current situation within our churches is maintainable within one denomination. From history of other reformed denominations, we know what consequences we can expect. Can we honestly be one denomination if we are not ONE *de jure* (in principle) AND *de facto* (in practice) on the grounds of Scripture, confession and church order?

13. If we decide to allow women in the GKSA in the office of elder and minister, even if we let the decision be made by local churches, the mutual bond within the GKSA churches will be severed. Without a doubt in my mind, this will happen. Should the decision be left to the local church, the unity is broken at the root level where congregants within the local church practise their faith. To leave the decision to the local church would be a cowardly decision, made out of fear to take a stand for the truth.

14. Synod 2012 followed the cautious route. Or we can call it the “easy” way. Is it not also the dishonest way? Is it not because we are afraid to openly admit that we disagree from one another on grounds of Scripture? That we cannot honestly and without fear say we do not look at and interpret Scripture the same? How will delaying of a decision help us to come closer with regard to the understanding of Scripture? Are we busy playing politics in the Church of the Lord? How many times did it not occur that some groups at Synod 2012 caucused about which “strategy” should be followed? And that in the Church of the Lord!? Of this, account will have to be given to the King of the Church. And consequently yet another “compromise decision” is agreed to. The decision is: Not to decide! That merely delays the eventual pain and suffering on both sides!

15. Those who are actually propagating the case of women in the special offices within the GKSA (even to ordain women in the office of elder and allow women to “preach” so called “devout words”): Is this an expression of love towards your brethren to whom you pledged to honour the mutually agreed upon decisions founded on Scripture, confession and church order? Is this obedience to the Lord? Can you honestly give account before the Lord and his Word? Of course you must be able to answer “Yes” to these questions, if you honestly believe that you are dealing with the Word of the Lord correctly, and honestly believe that

that is the way to go. But then your view differs from the Reformed view and meaning of God's Word. Then you have a *different* view of Scripture with a *different* understanding of the truth of Scripture.

16. You have said "Yes" the day when you made confession of your faith.

You have said "Yes" the day when you were ordained into office.

Your "Yes" had then meant that women may *not* be ordained in the special offices. So we believe based on Scripture, confession and church order.

Have your "Yes" changed to a "No" ?

17. With love: If you do not want to be Reformed anymore, be honest about it. Therefore: turn back to the Reformed understanding of Scripture since 1859. Else say goodbye to us and join yourself honourably to a denomination where you find yourself at home.

That is the honest and honourable route to follow.

Your brother in Christ

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