WOMEN AND ECCLESIASTICAL MINISTRIES IN PAUL

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The problems with reference to the question about the nature of the ministries and the ministerial structure also holds good for the question referring to women and the ministries in the New Testament. The question about women and the ministries is however more difficult to answer because it is very closely related to the position of women in the Church in general. From a survey of the information found in the New Testament concerning the position of women with regard to that of men, it seems as though the former were not regarded as suitable for service or the holding of an office in the Church. On the other hand it appears that no hindrance existed that could withhold a male from the ministries, merely on the grounds of being a male. Moreover, information about women and the ministries in the New Testament is extremely limited and some references on this subject lack clarity. It must however also be pointed out that the references to the ministries in the New Testament do not definitely state that office-bearers have to be men. In these cases there are also no grounds to claim that this is the supposition. Although our investigation is limited to the Pauline literature, we shall have to, where necessary, refer to other New Testament data in case this may help to clarify the matter.

Our point of departure is the question about Paul's view on the position of women in the Christian community and the relationship of a woman to her husband in particular. Did Paul perhaps allot a more emancipated status to the Christian woman than the position that her Jewish or Hellenistic counterpart held? And if so, did it enable her to play a more active role in religious matters than which up till now especially was the case with regard to Jewish women? We can certainly accept the fact that a more equal position with regard to men, would have opened the door for women to a more active participation in religious practices, while it of course does not have to or should not be the only consideration for such participation.

1. PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

It is not the purpose of this study to enter into details concerning the question about the position of a woman with regard to her husband according to Paul.1) It is however necessary by means of a short survey to try and answer the question whether women, as seen by Paul, held an
inferior position to that of men and whether a woman’s position could have prevented her from rendering service of some nature in the Church.

The first problem which we have to contend with in this connection is namely to determine which literature should be brought into consideration when seeking Paul’s view on this subject. It is common knowledge that at present the Pauline authorship of quite a number of the so-called Letters of Paul is being opposed by several researchers. This does not only apply to the Pastoral Letters and the Letter to the Ephesians, which is certified with reasonable certainty as un-Pauline or deuto-Pauline, but also to the Letter to the Colossians and the Second Letter to the Thessalonians.\(^2\)

If we now look at the remaining Letters of Paul, we note that the word that usually designates subordination, namely \textit{hupotassesthai}, is not used where the relationship between man and woman is raised. In the Letter to the Colossians, whose Pauline authorship is not opposed by everyone with equal certainty, the word is only used once with regard to women in the “Haustafel” Col 3:18. The word is also used in 1 Cor 14:34 but attention will be given to this reference at a later stage.

Where the relationship man:woman is discussed in 1 Cor 7 there is no indication of inequality, but rather of mutual and equal responsibility and goodwill that man and woman are indebted to one another. Men and women are also addressed on equal terms here by Paul.\(^3\) In 1 Cor 11:2 ff where Paul expresses himself in favour of the maintenance of the existing social customs, he also does not leave an impression of woman’s subordination to man. It is however clear that Paul wishes to see the maintaining of the positions that God allotted to man and woman respectively. For this purpose he refers to the order of creation and he emphasises in verse 11 “in our life in the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman was made from man, in the same way man is born of woman; and all things come from God” (verse 12). Although man is called the \textit{kephalē} of woman in verse 3, the same as Christ is of man and God of Christ, it seems as though Paul did not so much aim to express subordination as exactly the position in the order of creation. Kähler is of opinion that Paul only reasons in verses 7—9 from the point of view of the order of creation and that the apparent subordination of woman that is thence brought forward, is rectified in verses 11 and 12.

According to Kähler Paul no longer reasons in verses 11 and 12 from the viewpoint of the order of creation, but from the viewpoint of the “\textit{Erlosungsordnung}”. If the order of redemption is taken as the point of departure, one may according to Kähler, perceive in verses 11 and 12 the actual intention of Paul and understand what he had in mind, namely: “dass er die Gleichwertigkeit von Mann und Frau betont.”\(^4\)
ist also sicher, dass Paulus mit den Versen 11 und 12 etwas korrigieren möchte, was in der vorhergehenden Darlegung nicht klargeworden ist. Letzlich wollte er nämlich doch die Gleichrangigkeit von Mann und Frau herausstellen".5) In verse 11 the formula en kuriō is of importance, which at least points out that neither man nor woman hold a position of precedence with reference to the redemption in Christ.6) This is completely in accordance with Paul’s well-known saying in G 3:28, where he does not advocate that a distinction be made between man and woman, but emphasises their equality in the new dispensation in Christ.

Even if we take the hupotassesthai cases into consideration, the question remains whether the intention is subordination and moreover subordination of such a nature that it excludes women from certain services in the Church of Christ. Leenhardt is of opinion that we should not choose between the two alternatives subordination or full equality, but should rather speak of "Zuordnung"7) or "Beiordnung".8)

If it is Paul’s conviction that women have an equal share with men in the salvation in Christ, upon which grounds could women then be excluded from the gifts of the Spirit, whilst this on the other hand would be the exclusive privilege of men? There is indeed no saying in the New Testament which excludes women from the charismatic gifts.9) To claim however that women could not be excluded from the charismatic gifts, does not necessarily imply that women in fact rendered official service. The question thus remains: Did women render service in the Pauline congregations or hold offices and what was Paul’s view in this connection? To facilitate our investigation to some extent we shall firstly raise the question concerning the role women played in public worship and subsequently direct our attention to the sayings and references to women rendering certain services in the Church. We shall however not limit our investigation to the so-called authentic Letters of Paul, but also trace the information found in the disputed Letters.

2. WOMEN AND PUBLIC WORSHIP

I Cor 11:3 ff

Of interest to us in this section is not the covered or bare head of women in public worship, but rather the fact that a woman like a man prays or prophesies (verse 5). The manner in which Paul describes the praying or prophesying women does not leave the impression that he is referring to an accidental occurrence, but rather to a practice that was in common use. Does Paul have the public appearance of a woman in mind here or is he referring to a private appearance at home or in the family circle? We could accept that certain prayers were limited to the family circle, but the same does not apply to prophēteuein. It is
extremely clear that the charisma of prophēteuein was held in high esteem in the early Church and also in the Pauline Churches. As a charisma with special value it is only given a second place after the apostleship in the list of ministries in 1 Cor 12:28 and Eph 4:11. In 1 Cor 14:1 (cf. also verses 19,39) it is described as the most outstanding of the charismata and on which a believer had to set his heart. The gift of prophecy helps to build up the Church spiritually, encourages and comforts (verse 3). It is also through prophecy that an unbeliever when entering public worship and hearing God’s message can be convinced of his sin and brought to a self-examination so that he will confess “Truly God is here with you!” (verses 24,25).

Without having to determine the precise nature of prophēteuein, its public character and how it functioned in the congregational public worship is very clearly derived from the Pauline information. In addition to this, the impression is not that these were momentary prophetic utterances, by which this charisma was characterised, but rather a continuous function or ministry in the early Church. This fact is indeed emphasised in 1 Cor 12:28 and Eph 4:11, both of which refer to people who were endowed with the gift of prophesying in a continuous and not a sporadic sense. The public character of prophēteuein can also be derived from the fact that Paul in 1 Cor 11:5 ff. would not have stated that the head-covering of a woman was a requirement if it was not that he was referring to public appearance. For a Jewish woman a veil or head-covering was only a requirement in public and not at home. Only the most orthodox women also wore veils at home.

I Cor 11:5 thus bears witness not only of women who were endowed with the gift of prophecy, but also of the public exercising of this gift in public worship.

I Cor 14:33 ff

Taking our survey up to this point into consideration and especially with reference to Paul’s view on the appearance of women in public worship, a certain problem arises with reference to the saying in I Cor 14:34,35. This so-called command to silence seems to be in direct contradiction to I Cor 11:5. Are we to accept that Paul could have contradicted himself so easily in the same letter? Do these different sayings contradict one another and if so what is the solution? It is not necessary to mention that in the history of exegesis this command to silence gave rise to many questions and problems. It is as a result not surprising that many divergent solutions and explanations have been suggested. To illustrate the complexity of the problem it is necessary to mention a few of the most important attempted solutions.

(i) One approach is that the nature of the meetings in I Cor 11:3 ff
and 14:34,35 differ from one another respectively. The first-mentioned apparently refers to domestic meetings and the latter to Church meetings.\(^{12}\) As ground for this argument it can be pointed out that there is no reference to \textit{en ekklesia} in I Cor 11:3 ff. We have already endeavoured to indicate that at least \textit{propheeteia} was exercised in public. But why should a woman have been allowed to exercise this charisma in public, though not in public worship?\(^{13}\)

(ii) A second conception is namely that in 1 Cor 14:34 a different form of speaking is used to that in 11:5. As Kähler puts it: \textquote{Wir meinen, von einem, "anderen Reden" als in Kap. 11 sei zweifellos die Rede".}\(^{14}\)

With this is meant that it is not the inspired form of speaking or \textit{propheteuein} in 11:5 which is referred to, but some other form of speaking. Kähler furthermore indicates that Paul is not concerned with charismata in this chapter, but with the arrangement of public worship, that is to say, the order of the charismata in public worship.\(^{15}\) The prohibition that is imposed here is not on prophesying women, but rather on talkative (\textit{lalein}) or even better, chattering women.\(^{16}\) With all this talking they cause a disturbance in the order. But what is this talking all about? The answer can be found in verse 35 (\textit{ei de ti mathein thelousin} ....). They wish to understand more of the preaching and subsequently ask questions. They are also not present at public worship to perform any function. They disturb the order of public worship with a \textquote{Dazwischenfragen}.\(^{17}\) This untimely questioning of the women did not only disturb public worship, but it was moreover behaviour that was not in accordance with their position as allotted with regard to their husbands. \textquote{Es kommt also eine Art des Redens vor, durch die die Frau nicht in ihren Range bleibt. In diesen Falle soll sie schweigen.}\(^{18}\) The command to silence would especially be applicable if the women were to censure their husbands during the questioning or discussion. \textquote{Es handelte sich also um Frauen, die Fragen stellten, die Erklärungen verlangten die vielleicht Einwürfe erhoben.}\(^{19}\) Kähler\(^{20}\) furthermore points out that the command to silence is aimed at married women and not the others and that \textit{hupotassesthasan} concerns the order of public worship and does not apply to the \textit{oikos}.\(^{21}\)

There can be no doubt that Paul’s discussion in chapter 14 is meant to be an arrangement of the order of public worship. That public worship, however, could have been disturbed by women as described above, is highly improbable. There are no grounds to assert that \textit{lalein} in verse 34 merely suggests talking or senseless chattering. This meaning cannot simply be implied by \textit{lalein}, neither can it be deduced from the context. We do not have to look further than chapter 14 to determine that \textit{lalein} can purely and simply imply meaningful speaking.
The exercising of the prophetic gift is also described by Paul as \( \text{lalein} \) (verses 3,19,29). In 1 Cor 2:6,7 Paul uses this verb to designate the proclamation of the \textit{sophia} of God, in Phlp 1:14 the Word of God and in 2 Cor 2:17 \( \text{lalein} \) is used in the absolute sense of the proclamation of the gospel. In 14:34,35 \( \text{lalein} \) is used without qualification, but why should it refer to another form of speaking than that which is self-evident in the context, namely prophesy or the speaking in tongues? We must concede that the expressions \textit{mathein thelousin} and \textit{tous idious andras eperotatosan} do not give the impression that women made a contribution during public worship, but that they were desirous of acquiring knowledge. On what grounds are we to accept that men were not interested in acquiring knowledge and why should only the women and not also the men interrupt the order by asking questions in such a manner so as to cause disturbance? Why should that which took place in public worship be not clear only to women and not also to men? Must the behaviour of women be attributed to their temperament which differs from that of men?\(^{22}\)

Also this attempt to explain the command to silence is not satisfactory. It gives rise to more questions than it is able to solve.

(iii) Another conception which has attempted to smooth out the inconsistency is namely that Paul in 11:5 \textit{reluctantly admits} that a woman \textit{is allowed to pray or prophesy}, while he gives his true opinion about the matter in 14:34. ‘Anscheinend ist K.11 das ‘Beten’ und ‘Prophezeien’ der Frau ungern konzediert, aber der Schleier unbedingt gefordert. Hier dagegen kommt die eigentliche Meinung des Apostels zutage: die Frau soll überhaupt schweigen .....

One only has to refer to the apparatus of the latest text editions on textual criticism to be brought to the conviction that 14:34,35 were not unanimously accepted in the history of textual tradition. Together with smaller variants in content the problem particularly concerns the placing of the concerned verses in the context of chapter 14. Although the vast majority, as well as the most significant textual witnesses, place the verses in their present position, which is accepted as correct by all the text editions,\(^{24}\) a few manuscripts, among which DFG, have moved these verses to the end of the chapter.

Even if the external textual evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of the present placing, variant placing nevertheless implies that the matter was open to doubt in at least a certain circle or circles of the early Church. Why this doubt? Evidently because the conviction existed that the verses were not in their appropriate position between 33 and 36. The other manuscripts and text editions however maintained the verses in their present position, among others also because they cannot be
appropriately placed after verse 40 and cannot replace verse 40 as the conclusion of chapter 14.

Whether the verses are maintained in their present position or placed after verse 40, it is very certain that all the evidence accepts the verses as Pauline. As a result nothing externally can be brought in against the Pauline origin of the verses. The fact that some were of the opinion that the coherence and line of thought in chapter 14 are disturbed by the verses in their present position and the fact that they are not able to be placed after verse 40, does however give rise to the question whether the verses based on internal evidence are tenable in the context.

Already in 1863 J.W. Straatman was the first to delete these verses as a conjecture and he was followed by people like Hilgenfeld, Holstein, van de Sande Bakhuyzen, Michelsen, Baljon, Schmiedel, Weiss and Leipoldt. Recently from a critical literary, historical and theological point of view G. Fitzer\(^{25}\) made a thorough investigation of these verses and came to the conviction that they are un-Pauline and a later addition. Conzelmann\(^{28}\) also supports this conviction, although he is not only in favour of deleting verses 34 and 35, but also verses 33 and 36.

It is impossible to treat this matter at length, but it is necessary for us to outline the most important arguments.

On stylistic grounds, the first objection is that *en pasais tais ekklesiais* (33b) and *en tais ekklesiais* (34a) are in direct conflict with one another. The linking-up with verse 33b is just as problematic. "Vollends schroff ist der Übergang", is the opinion of Weiss.\(^{27}\) The viewpoint is consequently that the stylistic problem is solved if 34 and 35 are deleted from the context. In the light of 4:17 and 7:17, verse 33b can just as well be connected with 33a or else an extension, e.g. *houtos kai en humin*, must be added to 33b. From a stylistic point of view verse 36 can be more readily connected with 33b than with verse 35, so that "keine Narbe oder Nahtstelle sichtbar wird".\(^{28}\)

Another stylistic objection is raised against the phrase *kathōs kai ho nomos legei*, since Paul, when not referring to concrete citations in the Scriptures, uses *graphai* instead of *nomos* (cf. I Cor 15:3,4).\(^{29}\)

Furthermore the instructions directed to the women sound strange in the context of chapter 14. While chapter 14 is concerned with the order of public worship, the women are warned to be subordinate to their husbands and the command to silence is moreover grounded on a peculiar phrase, *aischron gar estin gunaiki lalein en ekklēsia*, which has no connection with *pneuma* or *propheteuein*. The motive for the command to silence is as a result not the order of public worship, but submission to men and the disapproval of a woman talking during public worship,\(^{30}\) without indicating why this conduct is bad behaviour.
From a historical point of view, it is a question whether the command to silence found in 14:34,35 can be reconciled with the position of women in the environment of the New Testament. We are familiar with the fact that Jewish women played a passive role in religious practices as well as in the cult. This does not only apply to the temple service and the synagogue, but also to the studying of the Tora. Women did not act as teachers of the Tora or play a part in the Jewish Council. We also know that in the Hellenistic world, the position of women in the religious field differed greatly from that in the Jewish sphere. In the Hellenistic religions women were not considered unsuitable for service in the cult and there were even cults where only women served as priestesses. With which situation does Paul associate himself? What was the position that Paul met with in the early Church?

Already the women that followed Jesus are a strange phenomenon to the Jewish world at that stage. It is however true that it is nowhere reported that any woman acted as a disciple like one of the twelve. On the other hand it is equally true that Jesus never showed a negative attitude towards women or the manner in which they followed or served him. This explains their presence in the company of Jesus. The book of Acts also leaves no impression that an inferior position was allotted to women in the early Church. There is no reference here to instructresses, but the fact that the four daughters of Philip were endowed with the gift of prophesy (Acts 21:9), confirms that such a possibility cannot be excluded.

We have already pointed out that Paul in no way showed a negative attitude towards women, neither did he allot an inferior position in Christ to them in comparison with men. This applies according to 1 Cor 11:5 also to their participation in public worship. If Paul experienced problems with reference to the head-covering of women when they were praying or prophesying, he could have solved the matter very easily, already in 1 Cor 11:3 ff by the command to silence found in 14:34,35. Against the background of this conception of Paul, with regard to the position and role of women in the Christian community, the command to silence of 1 Cor 14:34,35 is therefore historically regarded as un-Pauline.

A third objection against the command to silence found in 14:34, 35 concerns the theological content of these verses. From the Christological view of Paul, with regard to marriage and the relationship, man and woman, it is in conflict with the Pauline Theology. The point we are trying to make is that Paul drastically contradicts his own conception about man and woman in Christ, as it, among others, is expressed in Gl 3:28.

How are we to reply to all these arguments? Should we accept
I Cor 14:34,35 as authentically Pauline, merely because it appears in all the manuscripts, or may we assume that it is likely that it was inserted here at a stage for which there is no textual evidence. Those who are in favour of the deletion of these verses as un-Pauline obviously also believe that they were inserted here under the influence of I Tm 2:11 at a time during which the attitude reflected by I Tm 2:11 was the order of the day in the Church. This notion is also furnished by the phrase *ou gar epitrepetai autais lalein*. The passive voice of the verb here indicates clearly that it refers to an already existing arrangement in the Church and not to one made by Paul himself.

We must admit that the deletion of these verses from the text is a very radical move. But we must also admit that the arguments for the deleting of these verses are formally and factually based on firm grounds. As long as these verses are retained in the text, whether in the present position or after verse 40, they will remain in conflict with 11:5. Every attempt to retain these verses and to reason the contradiction away in some other way, will be dependent on auxiliary constructions, which in their turn will meet with many objections. These verses definitely reflect a different spirit and attitude to that of Paul. If expositors were compelled to make a choice between the spirit reflected in 11:5 and 14:34,35 respectively, they will, with a few exceptions, decide upon 11:5 to be more Pauline of nature.

It thus appears that the deletion of these verses on the grounds of being un-Pauline, not only offers the best solution, but also detracts nothing from the Theology of Paul. On the contrary, it confirms the Pauline conceptions found elsewhere.

I Tm 2:11 f

After what has been stated above with reference to I Cor 14:34,35, especially also in connection with the influence exercised by I Tm 2:11 f, it is necessary for us to give further attention to this well-known command to silence.

While there is considerable difference of opinion about the command to silence in I Cor 14:34,35, the majority of expositors agree that we definitely are confronted with such a command in I Tm 2:11 f. Although Schlatter has no doubt that Paul in I Cor 14:34,35 forbids participation in public worship, he is of opinion that I Tm 2:11 f does not amount to an absolute command to silence. He sees the key to the interpretation of the matter in *en hēsuchia*. The intention hereof is thus that women must not talk precipitately, but wait for their turn and talk in a calm and restful way. "Die Frau soll nicht reden, bis sie ruhig reden kann." Also Huls is of opinion that we are not concerned with an absolute prohibition on teaching or speaking. He points out that we can
only understand this pericope correctly if we place *boulomai proseuchesthai* after *hōsautos* in verse 9, seeing that it runs parallel with verse 8. While verse 8 relates how the men should pray, we learn in verse 9 about the manner in which the women should pray. The leading of prayer by women is thus taken for granted. Women are however prohibited from *didaskein*, but this cannot refer to teaching in the broadest sense. It should have only had a bearing on a subdivision of a congregational gathering and in this case on something in connection with an *authentein andros*. The conclusion is “ook al blijven er dus verschillende punten in deze pericoop vooralsnog onopgehelderd, een algemeen leer en spreekverbod voor de vrouw is in deze tekst zeker niet te vinden”.401

If we now compare I Tm 2:11 f with I Cor 14:34,35, it appears as though it supports the command to silence in I Cor 14. On closer examination, however, it is evident that there are remarkable differences between the two texts. Instead of the impersonal *ou gar epitrepetai* in Cor we find this personal command *ouk epitrepō, lalein* there is here replaced by *didaskein*. It also does not seem as though the arrangement of matters in public worship is the point at issue, but rather women who wanted to dominate their husbands. In addition, the theological foundation here of the command to be subordinate to men, is not only strange in the New Testament, but even more so in Paul. Nowhere does Paul give evidence that Eve was more guilty of the fall of man than Adam.411 2 Cor 11:3 cannot apply to Eve alone, neither can we hold Adam alone responsible for the blame found in Rm 5:12. “Hier wird eine Unterscheidung getreffen, die in dem paulinischen Denksystem der Rechtfertigung völlig unmöglich ist.421 Also the view that women will be saved by childbearing, is found nowhere in Paul. We do not have to query the fact whether a command to silence is definitely concerned here. The occasion is to be found in the practice during which women exceeded their limits in certain circles and tried to dominate their husbands. The foundation of this command to silence is however so strange that Leenhardt makes the following comment in this connection: “Ein anderer Geist weht durch diese Seiten. Woher kommt er? Er scheint uns weder biblisch noch evangelisch”.431 In the light of all that has been said above with reference to I Cor 11:3 ff and 14:34,35, we must point out that the command to silence in I Tm 2:11 cannot be accepted as Pauline. Notwithstanding the question of authorship, it is our conviction that this command to silence cannot be used as argument when judging Paul’s view on a woman’s place in public worship. Taking Paul’s view as a whole, the impression is rather that this command to silence reflects a post-Pauline development or otherwise just represents the approach of a certain group in the early Church.
Paul himself did not forbid the participation of women in public worship. On the contrary he considers this to be quite normal.

3. WOMEN AND CERTAIN MINISTRIES

We must now direct our attention to the question whether women held certain offices or rendered service in the Pauline communities. In his letters Paul mentions certain women to whom he conveys his gratitude for their rendering of certain services in the Church. It is however not easy to determine whether these women held offices in the present sense of the word and whether they were ordained in these ministries. In this connection the questions which apply to the ministries in the New Testament in general, also apply here. We are however going to examine the different cases in connection with this subject.

Rm 16

In the sixteenth chapter of his Letter to the Church at Rome, Paul mentions quite a number of women. Of the 27 people mentioned in his list of greetings nine are women. They represent a considerable percentage of the mentioned names. Firstly he mentions Phoebe in verse 1, whom he calls a deaconess of the Church at Cenchreae. Besides the fact that he calls her a diakonos, he adds that she was a prostatis to many people as well as to himself. Expositors are not in agreement about the question whether she was a deaconess in the official sense of the word, or simply a helper who took pity on her fellow-believers and took care of them and showed hospitality towards them. In his commentary on the Letter to the Romans, O. Michel states ..... "diakonos ist hier schon als Amtstitel anzusehen". Huls points out furthermore that this fact is strengthened by the participium ousan, as well as by the genitive tes ekklesias instead of the dativus commodi.

We are aware of the fact that diakonos in the New Testament is a fairly common term and can be used to denote any type of service in the Church. The question is however whether Paul had something else in mind with the term diakonos in the case of Phoebe than with the term diakonos in Phlp 1:1. In Phlp 1:1 there is also no indication that Paul only had the male diakonoi in mind and if this was the case, there is certainly no reason to have to assume that the term had an additional meaning to that in the context relating to Phoebe. Even if we do not accept the fact that Phoebe was a deaconess in the official sense of the word, could there be any fundamental difference with regard to the service that she rendered? Or must we, like E. Käsemann, assume that the service that she rendered was "mindestens eine Vorstufe zum späteren kirchlichen Amt"? Does the fact that she was a prostatis to Paul and to others explain something of the nature of her service as
**diakonos?** Does *prostatis*, which is a hapax in the New Testament, indicate something more than a helper? The matter does not easily lend itself to settlement because nowhere where the term *diakonos* is used or where the office of the deacon is presupposed, is the nature or character of this office defined. Except for Rm 16:1 and Phlp 1:1, Paul uses the term solely to signify servants of God, Christ or the gospel and in a few cases also referring to Christ.

Whatever the function of a *diakonos* was in the Pauline communities, whether it was an already established office or in an initial stage thereof, Phoebe was a *diakonos* like all the others. We thus have to accept that Phoebe rendered service as expected by Paul of a deaconess, whether it was official or not. The Acts of the Apostles already acquaints us with the role and function that Prisca played. Together with Aquila she explained the Way of God more accurately to Apollos (*akribéteron autō exethento tēn hodōn tou Theou* Ac 18:26). Together with Aquila Paul calls her in Rm 16:3 his *sunergos en Christo lesou* (fellow-worker in the service of Christ Jesus). In like manner he also speaks of Timothy (Rm 16:21), Epaphroditus (Phlp 2:25), Clement (Phlp 4:3), Philemon, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke (Phlm 1,24). With this term Paul places Prisca obviously on equal terms with her husband and the other male fellow-workers. She must have indeed played an active role because not only Paul, but also all the other churches of the gentiles, were greatly indebted to her and Aquila. This gratitude could not only refer to the fact that she and Aquila risked their lives for the sake of Paul. 49)

With regard to the meaning of *sunergos* in the other mentioned cases and on the grounds of what we learn about her in Acts, it is certain that Prisca also and especially performed missionary work. Leenhardt is even of opinion that on these grounds she may be called a female apostle, seeing that she performed all the functions of an apostle. 50)

It is furthermore significant what Paul mentions about Mary (16:6) and about Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis (16:2). He relates how Mary toiled in the interest of the Church at Rome and of the latter three how they laboured in the Lord and of Persis even *polla ekopiasen en Kurió*. In the New Testament and especially in Paul *kopiaō* developed the meaning of work done for the sake of the gospel in and directed to the Church. 51) In these terms Paul speaks about his own work with reference to the gospel. 52)

We are not acquainted with all the duties that these women performed. Their work must have however comprised more than the mere granting of assistance to believers. This must have also been the case with Euodia and Syntyche (Phlp 4:2,3), who together with Paul, were involved in the same struggle to spread the gospel. Their role in this struggle must without doubt have been beneficial to the gospel. The
total impression given especially by Rm 16 is that women, not only in Rome, but also in other communities, performed important functions in the epoch of Paul. They did not only fully participate in the growing Christian community, but like Prisca definitely partook in the proclamation of the gospel.53) We cannot assume, neither is there evidence in the Letters of Paul, that only the unofficial and not the official charisma was granted to women in the Church.54) "Ook de allerbelangrijkste functies in de gemeente worden dus door vrouwen vervuld."56)

We must admit that the explication given above in connection with women and the ‘ministries’ rests mainly upon that which Paul relates in one chapter in only one of his Letters and moreover in a list of greetings. We must furthermore acknowledge the fact that textual criticism raises many objections against Rom 16 as being part of the Letter. Even if it is accepted that chapter 16 does not belong with the rest of the Letter,56) we cannot query the Pauline authorship of chapter 1657) on any firm grounds. If, as presumed by some, it was part of a Letter to Ephesus, Paul’s views on women remain established. Although the Pastoral Letters give a different impression with regard to the offices in comparison with the other Letters of Paul, we shall nevertheless direct our attention to them in so far as they may bring clarity in connection with women and the ministries in the early Church. It is a well-known fact that researchers are of opinion that we are concerned with a ministerial structure in the Pastoral Letters, which represents a later phase in the Church than the time of Paul. These Letters however do not shed any valuable light on the whole issue of women and the ministries. The texts that require our attention here are I Tm 3:11; 5:9 f and Tt 2:3—5.

I Tm 3:11

It is difficult to determine whether I Tm 3:4 concerns the wives of deacons or whether deaconesses are the point at issue.56) If the author however was referring to the wives of deacons why did he not impose the same requirements upon the wives of the episkopoi? The argument that this held good for the wives of deacons because they had to assist their husbands in the ministry (von Soden) is not valid. The same qualities would certainly have been desired of the wife of an episkopos. The matter under discussion in verse 11 has nothing to do with a ‘Haustafel’, but with the regulations and requirements for the fulfilment of an office. If the author had the wives of deacons in mind, why did he not state the matter more clearly by adding autôn after gunaikes?

It appears furthermore as though the hōsautos of verse 11 equates the content of this verse essentially with verse 8 ff. In verse 12 the author proceeds with his regulations as though he is still concerned with
the same matter, namely the office of a deacon, which was the point at
issue from verses 8—11. Indeed, it is not required of women that they
should be *henos andros gunē*, but this could be covered by the
requirement which in verse 12 is imposed upon men. It is not possible
to attain complete clarity, but it would appear as though deaconesses
are here at stake. Neither the text nor the context give conclusive
evidence here that deaconesses were entirely excluded.

I Tm 5:3—16

This section gives rise to a problem of similar extent. Is the office
or status of a widow-(deaconess) the point under discussion? Ridderbos
is of opinion that the author has indeed widows in mind who had to
comply with certain requirements for a “geïnstitueerde amptelijke
dienst”.50 Verses 3—8 do not create the impression that the point at
issue here is a widow-ministry. Obviously these verses are concerned
with the care for widows who really have no other means of provision.
The matter becomes problematic however, when we attempt to explain
what is the meaning of *katalegesthō* in verse 9. It can simply mean “to
enlist”. But why only when she reaches the age of sixty? Is there perhaps
a connection here with the Jewish view that old age only begins at sixty and
does this consequently imply that a widow can come in to consideration
for assistance and care only at sixty years of age? Or is the age of
sixty years and thereafter a qualification of experience for the rendering
of charitable services? Huls reckons rightly that it is absurd to think of
*katalegesthai* as a list of supported widows, because this would mean
that the widows under sixty years of age would have to remain uncared for.

It is furthermore remarkable which requirents are imposed upon
these widows. Here is the well-known *henos andros gunē* which is
required in a reversed form for male office-bearers. Moreover a widow
had to be known for her good deeds (*erga kala*): good care for her
children, hospitality, care for her fellow-believers, assistance to those in
distress, pursuit of every good deed. Would such qualifications be
demanded of widows in need of help?

A further question is why the younger widows could not be taken
into consideration. The possibility of remarriage could surely not exclude
them from assistance for the period during which they remained alone
and in need of help. And what does *hotan gar katastrēniaςσοιν tou
Christou* in verse 11 mean and *tēn protēn pistin ētheēsan*? Is the author
recalling the words of 1 Cor 7:32 ff? Is he thinking of the everyday
dedication of free people? If a young widow marries, in which respect
does she transgress against Christ and bring a *krima* on herself? Is this
in connection with her confession of faith or with a promise which she
has made with regard to the rendering of service or the holding of an
office?

The answering of the above questions brings one involuntarily to the conviction that the point at issue from verse 9 onwards is not needy widows, but indeed widows who were chosen for a particular ministry. Whether we should already speak of a widow-ministry is difficult to decide. It is probable that we are simply concerned here with charitable service for which certain widows were suitable owing to their experience and reliability as well as the fact that they were no longer responsible for any dependants.

It is however certain that more than sporadic assistance was implied. The nature of the office for this service, in so far as we may speak of the nature of an office with reference to this specific era, forces itself strongly to the fore.

Tt 2:3

It appears as though Tt 2:3 does not shed much light with reference to a widow-ministry or office. Presbutidas in verse 3 stands parallel with presbutas in verse 2. Here we are simply concerned with old women. It is required of them to be kalodidaskalous, apparently with regard to what they have to teach the young women. The intention here is obviously not official service, but ordinary guidance which they had to give as Christian women. This had to be based on their experience and was not intended as a function.

4. CONCLUSION

It is clearly evident out of the preceding survey that the apostle Paul's view about women and their position in the Christian community was of such a nature that nothing withheld them from the salvation in Christ. Although Paul never abolishes the distinction between man and woman and is aware of the position that a woman has to occupy in the Christian community, he nevertheless did not allot her an inferior position in comparison with her husband. Paul therefore thoroughly realised that women were not excluded from the gift of the Spirit. He acknowledged and never discouraged this fact; neither during public worship nor with regard to ministry in the Church. This spirit and attitude Paul met with in the Church. It originated with Jesus Christ. It is true that information concerning women who rendered service is very limited in Paul and this applies also to the rest of the New Testament. This can be ascribed to the fact that up to that time women had been pushed into the background and could not come to the fore as a result of the social circumstances. The same as today women were more confined to the home and were held responsible for the household and the upbringing of children. The fact that women were not equally as prominent as men in the early Church, presents no reason whatsoever why they should
have been excluded from the ministries in the Church or regarded as unsuitable and incapable for this purpose. There are no grounds presented by Paul upon which a Christian woman can be excluded from any type of service or ministry in the Church.

REFERENCES

1) For this purpose the following can be recommended: E. Kähler, *Die Freu in den paulinischen Briefen*, Zurich 1960.
3) See for a thorough investigation of I Cor 7, E. Kähler, op. cit., 14 ff.
5) E. Kähler, *op. cit.*, 51.
6) G. Huls, *De Dienst der Vrouwen de Kerk*, Wageningen 1951, 41.
9) See also G. Huls, *op. cit.*, 30.
14) E. Kähler, *op. cit.*, 75; also W.G. Kümmel by H. Lietzmann, *op. cit.*, 190.
15) C.K. Barrett, *op. cit.*, 76; also F.J. Leenhardt, *op. cit.*, 39.
16) E. Kähler, *op. cit.*, 76; F.J. Leenhardt, *op. cit.*, 41. "Er sagt dass die Frau nicht reden soll, aber nicht, dass sie nicht prophesieen soll. Es kam also unter den Frauen von Korinth eine Art des Redens vor, die die Ordnung verwirrte und die sich nicht mit der prophetischen Rede deckte ....."
18) F.J. Leenhardt, *op. cit.*, 42; see also N.J. Hommes, *De Vrouw in de Kerk*, Franeker 1951, 62 "Het zwijggebod van 1 Cor 14:34, 35 heeft betrekking en alleen betrekking op het charisma der profetie en wel het critiseren en het toetsen der gedane profetie. Hij (P) wil de vrouwen volledig uitslakken bij de discussie, bij de toetsing der eventueel gedane profetie".
19) F.J. Leenhardt, *op. cit.*, 42.
20) E. Kähler, *op. cit.*, 74; also G. Huls, *op. cit.*, 174; N.J. Hommes, *op. cit.*, 60.
21) E. Kähler, *op. cit.*, 79.
22) E.g. F.J. Leenhardt, *op. cit.*, 43 f.
23) H. Lietzmann, *op. cit.*, 75.
24) E.g. also Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies.
26) H. Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (Meyers Kommentar), Göttingen 1969, 289 f; C.K. Barrett, *op. cit.*, 333 is also of opinion that it is preferable to delete verses 34,35, although there is no certainty about the matter.


29) *Id.*, 12.

30) *Id.*, 13.

31) *Id.*, 25.

32) *Id.*, 26 ff.


38) G. Huls, *op. cit.*, 46 f.

39) *Id.*, 48; see also N.J. Hommes, *op. cit.*, 117, 119 ff, who maintains that women were not allowed to teach because *didasklein* also includes reprimanding and this would give a woman the opportunity to dominate her husband.

40) *Id.*, 49,175.


42) G. Fitzer, *op. cit.*, 37.

43) F.J. Leenhardt, *op. cit.*, 49.


45) G. Huls, *op. cit.*, 50. The use of the participium is customary for the designation of well-known functions. Cf. Jh 10:12; Ac 18:12; 24:10; Rm 13:1.

46) See C.H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, ad loc.


52) 1 Cor 15:10; Gl 4:11;Php 2:16.


54) See also H.N. Ridderbos, *Paulus*, 515.


56) W.G. Kümmel, *Einleitung*, 225 accepts the authenticity.

57) E.g. E. Lohse, *op. cit.*, 48 “Am paulinischen Charakter des Kapitels besteht kein Zweifel”.

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60) G. Huls, *op. cit.*, 53.

61) Thus all the commentaries.