



## Articles and Sermons :: The Role of Women in Church Leadership

### The Role of Women in Church Leadership - posted by Shanu, on: 2011/1/16 11:34

#### A. Theories of the Da Vinci Code

Brown claims that Jesus appointed Mary Magdalene as His successor as head of the church. But the Catholic Council of Nicea, led by Emperor Constantine, wanted male leadership. So, they claimed that Jesus intended for Peter to be the head of the church, they denied the canonicity of Scriptures that contradicted their views, and then rewrote the rest of the Bible to conform to their views.

Teabing: "According to these unaltered gospels, it was not Peter to whom Christ gave directions with which to establish the church. It was Mary Magdalene ... Jesus was the original feminist. He intended for the future of His church to be in the hands of Mary Magdalene" (p. 248).

"Women, once celebrated as an essential half of spiritual enlightenment, had been banished from the temples of the world. There were no female Orthodox rabbis, Catholic priests, nor Islamic clerics" (p. 125).

Now we see the ultimate agenda. Feminists are determined to have women church leaders, so they claim Jesus wanted a woman to be the head of the church. If they can't prove this by the Bible, they will declare that somebody changed the Bible.

Instead, we are told we should imitate pagan views of exalting women. However, Kirkwood shows that no society has ever been found that was ruled predominately by women: not even among pagans. While individual women may have had influence, the basic pattern of every society has been a patriarchy run by men. In fact, most pagan societies treated women as property and slaves. (See p. 62). So, Brown's appeal to paganism does nothing to exalt women to leadership roles in society.

#### B. The Bible Teaching

Catholicism falsely exalts a different Mary.

Brown repeatedly (perhaps unintentionally) equates Catholic teaching with Christianity. The only choices he considers are Catholicism or pagan goddess worship. He often characterizes "Christianity" by citing Catholic traditions that are nowhere found in the Bible. He never examines the possibility that the truth might be found someplace other than either Catholicism or pagan feminism.

Catholicism agrees with Scripture on some points, and disagrees with it on others, including many points Brown does not mention. But that does not mean that our only alternative is pagan feminism. Following Scripture can lead us to recognize both the errors of Catholicism and the errors of paganism and feminism.

For example, Brown makes greatly exaggerated claims that Christianity killed and tortured millions of women in ancient witch hunts. But these were acts of the Catholic Church and other false religions. True Christianity does not advocate killing any people for their religious beliefs.

However, Brown never discusses the error the Catholic Church makes in exalting Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Catholicism views this Mary as sinless, co-redemptrix and co-mediatrix with Christ, virtually unlimited in power and authority over the church, such that people should pray and bow to her in religious honor. They have, in effect, exalted her to the status of a goddess higher than any position Brown claims for Mary Magdalene!

If, as Brown claims, the Catholic Church was so determined to avoid exalting women, then why would they exalt Jesus' mother to an even higher position than Brown attributes to Mary Magdalene? The fact is that the Bible does not grant Mary the exalted position that Catholicism gives; instead, it contradicts and forbids giving such positions to any mere human, not even to Peter or the apostles. If Catholicism was really willing to change the Scriptures to deny exalting Mary Magdalene, then why have they not changed the Scriptures to justify the exaltation they give to Jesus' mother?

The error of the Catholic Church regarding Jesus' mother emphatically disproves Brown's contention that the Catholic Church was biased against exalting women. And it likewise disproves his contention that the Catholic Church has change

d the Bible to defend their views. In fact, the Scriptures place very real limits on women as leaders in the church, but the Catholic Church has chosen to exalt a woman far beyond what the Scriptures allow.

For further information about Mary the mother of Jesus, see our article on our Bible Instruction web site at [www.gospelway.com/instruct/](http://www.gospelway.com/instruct/).

Mary Magdalene added nothing to Jesus' claim to be king.

At times Brown's book attributes political motives to Jesus, claiming He intended to establish an earthly kingdom. This is supposedly why He married Mary Magdalene.

Teabing says: "Mary Magdalene was of royal descent ... Jesus was of the House of David. By marrying into the powerful House of Benjamin, Jesus fused two royal bloodlines, creating a potent political union with the potential of making a legitimate claim to the throne and restoring the line of kings as it was under Solomon" (pp. 248,249).

So, by marrying Mary, Jesus supposedly combined the lineage of King Saul of the tribe of Benjamin with that of David of the tribe of Judah, thereby establishing His claim to be king of Israel. This is so ludicrous it would be laughable, were it not so tragic.

First, there is no real evidence that Mary Magdalene was of the tribe of Benjamin. Still less is there proof she was of any royal descent. Brown could not prove this to save his life - or his soul.

1 Samuel 13:11-14; 15:18-28 - Because of King Saul's sins, God said his kingdom would not continue, then he rejected Saul himself from being king. God totally rejected Saul and his lineage. So, even if Mary had been a descendant of Saul, it would give her no right to rule. After Saul's death, the tribe of Benjamin had no claim whatever to the throne. Jesus is the only head of His church.

Brown never attempts to deal with Jesus' resurrection. He assumes when Jesus died someone else would be the head of the church. But the Bible says that, after Jesus died, He arose from the dead and ascended to God's right hand. There He continues to live and serve as head of His church.

Ephesians 1:22,23 - Long after Jesus died, we are told that He is head over all things to the church (cf. Col. 1:18). So how can Mary, Peter, or any other human be head of the church?

Ephesians 5:22-24 - A husband is head of his wife as Jesus is head of the church. For a wife to submit to two husbands is adultery (Rom. 7:2,3). Likewise, for the church to submit to two heads (both Jesus and Mary or Peter) would be spiritual adultery.

Matthew 28:18-20 - Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth. He is the one lawgiver (James 4:12). To claim that Mary, Peter, or any human has authority over the church would be to deny the unique power of Jesus.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the living, unique head of the church. Catholicism is wrong when it says Peter was head of the church, and people like Brown are wrong when they say Mary would be head of the church.

This fact again disproves the claim that the Catholic Church changed the Bible. If they had changed the Bible, wouldn't the Bible now teach that Peter was head of the church, since that is what Catholicism believes? But the Bible does not agree with Catholicism or with Brown's theory. So, the Catholic Church did not change it at all. Jesus is now King of His kingdom.

Jesus' right to be king had nothing whatever to do with the tribe of Benjamin or with any marriage to Mary or to any other woman.

Psalms 132:11; 89:3,4; 110:1-4 - God swore to David that his son would sit on God's right hand and rule in the midst of His enemies.

Luke 1:31-33 - Jesus was the rightful heir of King David (Matthew 1, Luke 3). So, the angel promised to Jesus' mother Mary that her Son would receive the throne of David, reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom would have no end.

Matthew 2:2 - The wise men said Jesus was born King of the Jews.

Matthew 27:11; John 18:37 - In His trial before Pilate, Jesus admitted he had come to be a king.

Acts 2:30-36 - Peter explained that David had predicted that God would set David's descendant on his throne (v30; cf. Psalm 16:8-11). This was fulfilled at Jesus' resurrection (v31). Peter quotes Psalm 110:1 and said Jesus is now exalted at God's right hand (vv 33,34). We should therefore recognize Jesus to be Lord and Christ - the anointed ruler of God's people (v36).

1 Corinthians 15:25,26 - Jesus must rule at God's right hand till all enemies are put under His feet. That will be completed when death is defeated at the final resurrection of all men.

Colossians 1:13 - Those who have been delivered from the power of darkness are now in the kingdom of God's Son.

Revelation 1:5 - Jesus is now ruler of the Kings of the earth (hence, "King of kings").

Jesus is now ruling as King of His kingdom. He did not need Mary Magdalene or any woman to establish this right. It was determined by the will of God.

Furthermore, He still is king. No one will succeed Him. He has and needs no successors.

Jesus' kingdom is spiritual, not political

Jesus never had political ambitions. His kingdom was spiritual. Brown makes the same mistake that the Jews and premillennial folks make, thinking Jesus came to establish an earthly kingdom.

Psalm 110:1-4; Zech. 6:12f - Jesus was prophesied to be King and Priest at the same time. But the work of a priest is spiritual.

Luke 1:32,33 - The angel promised Mary that her son would be King. But He came to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21), to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28), and to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32). His role as king pertains to man's salvation from sin.

Acts 2:30-38 - When the apostles preached that Jesus was ruling at God's right hand, they taught people to receive remission of sins (cf. v40). From then on all saved people were added to that body of people (v47). The kingdom is the church, and people enter it to be saved from sin.

John 3:3-7 - To enter the kingdom, one must be born of water and the Spirit. This was a spiritual birth that puts a person in a spiritual kingdom.

John 18:36 - Christ's kingdom is "not of this world." His kingdom is "not from here."

Colossians 1:13,14 - We are translated out of darkness into Jesus' kingdom. Through Him we have redemption, even for forgiveness of sins. The kingdom is concerned with man's spiritual salvation.

Jesus' kingdom refers to the same relationship as the church (Matthew 16:18,19; Hebrews 12:23,28; etc.). But the church is a spiritual body that exists to help men be saved, worship God, have a right relationship with God, and receive eternal life. It is not a political government.

All leaders in church worship and decision-making were men.

In Bible teaching, women are just as important or valued as men. They are honored and rewarded for their work as highly as men are for their work (Gal. 3:28; 1 Peter 3:7; Prov. 31:10-31).

Yet, many passages teach the subjection of women to men in general. (See Genesis 2:18; 3:16; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12-14; 3:4,12; Titus 2:4,5; 1 Peter 3:1-7.) Specifically:

Positions of authority and leadership in the church are reserved for men.

Acts 1:2,11,13 - The apostles were all men.

Note Acts 1:21,22 - When an apostle was chosen to replace Judas, the one to be chosen was expressly required to be a man (v21). Only males were considered for this role (v23). No consideration was even given to a woman as an apostle.

1 Timothy 3:1,2 (Titus 1:5,6) - Elders, who oversee local churches (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3), must also be men.

Women are subject to men in spiritual teaching and leadership.

Women are expressly forbidden to take a leading role over men in the church in any circumstance of leadership or teaching God's word.

1 Timothy 2:11-14 -- Women must not teach over or exercise authority over men. Two reasons are given.

V13 - Man was formed before woman. At creation woman was made to be a helper or companion to man, not a leader or authority figure over him. Man was created with the position of leader and his nature suits that position (Gen. 2:18ff).

V14 - Eve tried to take the leadership role and made a decision to disobey God without consulting her husband. She was deceived, so God required that she would always be subject to her husband (Gen. 3:16). Her punishment reminds her that she left her role of subjection. Both Adam and Eve sinned and both were punished, but in different ways. But God made the punishment fit the sin.

1 Corinthians 14:34,35 - Women are forbidden to speak when the local church is assembled as a body.

Vv 34, 35 - Women must keep silence "in the churches," because it is shameful for them to speak "in the church." The context defines "silence" to mean not speaking, not even to ask a question.

The context also shows that "in the church" refers to an assembly in which the whole church is called together in congregation as a body. See vv 23,26 (cf. vv 4,5,12,19,28,33,34,35). Compare the similar usage in 1 Cor. 11:17-34 regarding the assemblies in which the Lord's Supper was offered (cf. 11:17,18,20,33).

Women are never allowed to take a leadership role over men in the church, either in teaching or in decision-making. When the whole church is gathered as a congregation, they are not to individually speak out to the group. This is the inspired explanation of women's role of submission in the church.

Was this a Divine requirement or just an opinion or custom of that day?

\* It is based on the principle of subjection of women to men. This was a principle established by God and revealed through various inspired teachers, not just Paul. It is a universal principle binding on all Christians. Gen. 2:18; 3:16; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18; 1 Cor. 11:3; Tit. 2:4,5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7; 1 Cor. 14:34.

\* 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 says the same was also taught in the law (Gen. 2:18; 3:16). Hence, it was not just opinion nor a temporary or local custom; it had been the rule even under the Old Testament.

\* V33 says that this teaching applies "in all the churches of the saints."

\* 1 Corinthians 14:37 expressly states that these teachings were "the commandment of the Lord." Hence, they were not just local, temporary customs. Paul was an inspired apostle (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11,12; 1 Cor. 9:1-5; 15:4-8; Acts 9:15; 26:16). To reject this teaching is to reject the commands of God. See also 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:8; Eph. 3:3-5; Gal. 1:6-12; 1 Cor. 2:1-5,10-16; 2 Peter 3:15,16; Luke 10:16; John 16:13,14; Matt. 18:18.

God values people for their service, not their authority.

This is a fundamental point missed by Brown and all radical feminists. They think that, if women cannot exercise authority over men, then they are somehow second-class citizens less important than men.

Matthew 20:25-28 - Jesus said that the attitude of Brown and the feminists - that people are more valuable if they have authority - is typical of Gentiles. But it not the way God and His people should think. We must value people for their service, not their authority.

This does not deny the existence of valid authority. Jesus used Himself as the example, and He possessed authority (Matt. 28:18; 7:29). The point is that possession of authority does not inherently make one great. People without authority can be just as great as those who have it. We are great to the extent that we serve, regardless of whether or not we possess authority. Since women can serve as usefully as men, it follows that women can be just as important as men.

The Bible, which Brown criticizes and rejects, actually exalts women to equal importance with men in God's eyes and demands that men treat them with respect. They were created to follow the leadership of men, yet they are to be loved, honored, and appreciated. The Bible, not paganism, gives true honor to women.

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Perhaps Shanu, you can introduce yourself.