

# **WHAT CAN WOMEN DO IN CHURCH?**

A STUDY INTO THE SCRIPTURES CONCERNING  
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH AND  
MINISTRY

Part A

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## 1. Introduction

The role of women in the Church and ministry has been the subject of much study and discussion. Two main opposing views have come to dominate the debate: Male Headship<sup>1</sup> and Egalitarianism. On the one hand, the Male Headship view holds that man's purpose is to lead while the purpose of woman is to follow man's leadership.<sup>2</sup> This view contends that although men and women are equal in value before God they nevertheless have different divinely-ordained roles<sup>3</sup> with women confined to the performance of auxiliary functions under the authority of men.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Egalitarianism holds that it was always God's intention for man and woman to share equally in His worship and service. This view contends that gender is not a divinely appointed consideration upon which individuals' spiritual roles and responsibilities are allocated or exercised.<sup>5</sup>

This study will undertake its own investigation into the role of women in the Church and ministry by considering current research into the issue, and in some cases building on that research, as well as offering some new insights.<sup>6</sup> Particular consideration will be given to passages such as 1 Corinthians 11: 3, 14: 33 – 35 and 1 Timothy 2: 12 – 15 which are commonly cited by Male Headship proponents to support their position. The study will show that the Male Headship interpretation of these passages contradicts their original intent. It will be seen that such passages were written in response to the specific situations of the particular communities concerned and were never intended to be applied to circumstances beyond those they were originally written to address. Consequently, in the absence of the relevant original conditions the passages in question should not be used to diminish or limit the meaning and application of other passages which indicate that the role of women in the Church and ministry should be broader than that proposed by Male Headship proponents.<sup>7</sup>

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1 Some writers refer to this view as the Complementarian position (for example Grudem 2006, p. 13) while others identify it as the Hierarchicalist or Traditionalist position (for example Blomberg 2001, p. 330n4; Osburn 2001, pp. 19 – 20; Grenz 1995, pp. 17 – 18). Given the diversity of labels for this view, the term "Male Headship" will be used as a descriptor throughout this study since it is considered to succinctly encapsulate the basic philosophy and intent of this particular approach.

2 Belleville 2001, p. 79; Schreiner 2001, p. 200

3 Schreiner 2001, p. 228; Grudem 2002a, pp. 19 – 23; Grudem 2006, pp. 13, 20 – 21

4 Knight 1985, pp. 2, 28, 87; Grudem 2006, p. 21. The following comment from two prominent Male Headship proponents is representative of views in this regard: "... *male authority and female submission are integral to the 'deeper differences', the 'underlying nature' and the 'true meaning' of manhood and womanhood*" (Piper and Grudem cited in Groothuis 2004, p. 301).

5 Groothuis and Pierce 2004, p. 13

6 This is the latest edition of a continuing study by the writer. By its nature, all biblical study should be an ongoing process of learning due to the new findings and understandings that are constantly occurring or being developed. This has certainly been the writer's experience in undertaking this study into the role of women in the Church and ministry, which originally began out of a desire to understand biblical teachings in this area more fully. As a "living" document this study will continue to develop over time with this latest edition incorporating some new material as a consequence of further research that has occurred in this field.

7 Such universal passages are discussed in section 4 of this study. In accordance with the principles of biblical interpretation, which will be considered in section 3 of this study, the universal passages should be used to interpret and enlighten one's understanding of the situational passages, not vice versa.

From the outset it is important to dispel any notion that the purpose of this study is to assert homogeneity between men and women. There are noticeable areas of difference between the genders that would render any such argument untenable.<sup>8</sup> Rather, the underlying premise of this study is that God purposely created men and women to be different, intending not only that the differences between male and female be honoured but also celebrated for enriching human experience and allowing members of the respective genders to complement each other.<sup>9</sup> As this study progresses it will become evident that He never intended for these differences to be used to institute or justify hierarchical distinctions between men and women.<sup>10</sup>

Martin Luther (1483-1546), a leading figure in the Protestant reformation movement, is known to have said, “*A woman’s place is in the home.*”<sup>11</sup> Contrary to such views this study will conclude that faithful Christian women may, indeed they should be encouraged to, exercise the gifts and abilities they possess for building up their fellow believers irrespective of whether this involves them in “public” (whole-of-church) or “private” (outside whole-of-church) activities. Furthermore, the study will conclude that women may share fully with men in all aspects of the life, worship and organisation of the Church. These conclusions will be seen to be supported by the teachings of the New Testament and the practices of the Church during the first century AD.<sup>12</sup>

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8 Brizendine (2006) writes, “*More than 99 percent of male and female genetic coding is exactly the same. Out of the thirty thousand genes in the human genome, the less than one percent variation between the sexes is small. But that percentage difference influences every single cell in our bodies – from the nerves that register pleasure and pain to the neurons that transmit perception, thoughts, feelings, and emotions. To the observing eye, the brains of females and males are not the same. Male brains are larger by about 9 percent, even after correcting for body size. In the nineteenth century, scientists took this to mean that women had less mental capacity than men. Women and men, however, have the same number of brain cells. The cells are just packed more densely in women – cinched corsetlike into a smaller skull. For much of the twentieth century, most scientists assumed that women were essentially small men, neurologically and in every other sense except for their reproductive functions. That assumption has been at the heart of enduring misunderstandings about female psychology and physiology*” (pp. 23 – 24). Another writer, Groothuis (2004) remarks, “*Male and female are not identical. Sexual differences exist, and these differences make a difference. Sexual roles, therefore, are not interchangeable between men and women*” (p. 307). By way of clarification Groothuis included the following footnote: “*A sexual role has to do with sexual functions (marriage, parenthood, etc). Ministries such as teaching the Bible and shepherding a church are not sexual functions*” (p. 307n20).

9 Groothuis (2004) notes that “*... the differences between men and women are complementary and mutually beneficial*” (p. 307).

10 Groothuis (2004) has observed, “*The existence of gender role differences neither entails nor justifies a permanent hierarchy of male authority*” (p. 314). In the division of household tasks and labour, for example, members of the respective genders should be able to agree to specialise in different tasks and functions according to their respective skills and abilities rather than such matters being determined on the basis of “male=authority” and “female=submission”. Interestingly, there is evidence from the first century AD Roman world that this was the approach taken in relation to the allocation of household management tasks (Torjesen 1995, pp. 55 – 56, 80 – 81).

11 Spake

12 Claims have been made that Church tradition and practice throughout succeeding centuries, in which Church leadership roles have generally been denied to women, is a strong indication of support for the Male Headship position (for example Schreiner 2001, pp. 178 – 179; Schreiner 2005b, pp. 266 – 267; Grudem 2006, pp. 52, 53, 262). However, later tradition and practice are not necessarily a good guide to,

This study has been divided into two parts to facilitate the reader's deliberations. Part A includes a discussion of the rules of biblical interpretation and the universal New Testament teachings relevant to the subject. Part A also discusses the ministry activities of women during the early days of the Church in the first century AD. In addition, Part A considers the proposition that any instance of a woman involved in leadership or other deemed male-only roles during the biblical period was an "exception to the rule" before exploring the nature of authority and its relevance to the question of the role of women in the Church and ministry. These discussions set the scene for Part B which examines the particular passages commonly used by Male Headship proponents to support their argument that women should have auxiliary roles under the authority of men.

## 2. Why study this subject?

There are several reasons for undertaking a study of this subject. Firstly, studying any biblical topic is a worthwhile and rewarding activity. As 2 Timothy 2: 15 (King James Version [KJV]) explains: "*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" It is by studying the Scriptures that Christians are able to obtain a full

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or decisive in, the interpretation of Scripture since such have not always been correct in a scriptural sense (Keener 2001, pp. 65 – 67; Keener 2005, pp. 242 – 244; Henrichsen and Jackson 1990, pp. 170, 171). On this point one Male Headship proponent has also observed, "*Writings from the early Fathers contain a great deal of teaching on men and women and not all of it is the clear handing on of a tradition going back to Christ and the apostles*" (Clark 1980, p. 318). Similarly, another Male Headship proponent has noted, "*... we must remember that Jesus and the New Testament apostles gave much more affirmation to women's ministries and to women's value in the church than many churches have done historically*" (Grudem 2006, p. 159). Regarding arguments in favour of women participating fully in the life, worship and organisation of the Church, other claims have been made that such arguments lack credibility because they have appeared only relatively recently and have not been part of the Church's historic approach (for example Grudem 2006, pp. 269 – 271). With respect to such claims it should be noted that "recency" is not of itself sufficiently compelling to dismiss or reject the validity of any particular argument (Keener 2001, pp. 65 – 66; Beck and Blomberg 2001a, pp. 167 – 169; Beck and Blomberg 2001c, p. 324; Blomberg 2005, pp. 178 – 180). If it was then even Male Headship arguments based on the alleged "order of creation" principle, which holds that man has authority over woman because man was created first, could be challenged simply on "recency" grounds since use of this argument does not appear in any commentary or book prior to World War II (Giles cited in Osburn 2001, p. 236). Also, such claims are highly questionable given the evidence of women having in fact undertaken public ministry and leadership roles during the subsequent history of the Church (Fraser 1984, pp. 274 – 297, 402 – 425; Grenz 1995, pp. 36 – 62; Keener 2001, p. 66; Tucker 2004, pp. 23ff; Hassey 2004, pp. 39ff; Blomberg 2005, p. 179). Nevertheless as noted above, irrespective of later Church history or practice the question that should be asked in relation to the role of women in the Church and ministry is: What do the Scriptures allow for? On this point a basic principle of hermeneutics is that, "*The believer is free to do anything that the Bible does not prohibit ... The Bible sets boundaries on what cannot be done, not on what can be done. All things are lawful unless specifically prohibited*" (Henrichsen and Jackson 1990, p. 163) (emphasis in text). (NB: It is noted that the scriptural basis for this conclusion is reflected in passages such as Romans 3: 20, 4: 15, 5: 13 and 7: 7). If this was not so then post-New Testament innovations such as hymn/song books and specially constructed church buildings, which are now widely accepted by Christians, could be called into question simply on the grounds that use of such innovations is not provided for in the Scriptures. In consideration of the principle that "*all things are lawful unless specifically prohibited*" this study will show that the Scriptures do not prohibit faithful Christian women from exercising their talents and abilities for the benefit of the Church publicly or otherwise.

knowledge and understanding of what God's Will is for them (Psalm 119: 105, 127: 1; Hosea 4: 6; 2 Peter 1: 3 – 15, 3: 18). Also, studying the Scriptures enables Christians to be prepared to answer anyone who may question them about their beliefs (1 Peter 3: 15). Christians are encouraged to imitate the Bereans who were commended because they did not just take the Apostle Paul at his word and searched the Scriptures daily to verify the truth of the things that he spoke (Acts 17: 11).

Secondly, one of the universal principles enunciated in the New Testament is that each Christian should use his or her gifts and abilities for the building up of fellow believers (1 Corinthians 14: 26, 39; Matthew 25: 14 – 29). Given that its membership is often comprised of a higher proportion of women than men,<sup>13</sup> the Church cannot afford not to utilise the gifts, abilities and talents of its female members to their fullest extent. As has been observed, "... *when women are denied their gifts and callings, men suffer from the omission as well.*"<sup>14</sup> A study of this subject will reveal how it is God's intention that faithful Christian women should not be limited in the exercise of their gifts and abilities. Furthermore, it will show that the Church can benefit from the release of the full range of gifts, talents and abilities that are possessed by all Christians irrespective of gender.

Thirdly, the effectiveness and appeal of the Church's witness and ministry to the world will be enhanced as a result of studying this subject. This is because, "*A recovery of [the biblical ideal of the role of women] would permit the church to demonstrate a biblically and theologically solid understanding of male/female relationships to a confused and troubled world.*"<sup>15</sup>

The importance of understanding the truth about the role of women in the Church and ministry and its relevance to the effectiveness of the Church's witness to the world is further highlighted in the following observation:

*"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8: 31 – 32). So promised Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church and the cosmos. The cause of Christ is advanced only as truth is recognised, affirmed and lived out with wisdom and integrity. Truth must be brought to the world as well as to the church. Doctrine that falls short of the truth not only impedes believers from walking in the full freedom of the gospel of grace and truth but also hinders unbelievers from coming to salvation through the work of Jesus Christ.*<sup>16</sup>

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13 One study has found that the typical American congregation is comprised of 61% female and 39% male (Internet 1). Similarly, church membership in Australia is made up of a higher proportion of women than men (Internet 2). This pattern was also evident during the first few centuries of the Church's existence (Fox 1986, p. 310; House 1995, p. 90; Pederson 2006, pp. 102 – 103, 123). One early skeptic of Christianity, Celsus (second century AD), criticised it for reasons including the large number of female adherents it attracted (Hart 2009, p. 159). It is well known that women were particularly drawn to Christianity in response to the high value it placed on them (Pederson 2006, pp. 83, 95, 104 – 105).

14 Groothuis and Pierce 2004, p. 14; also, Kimball 2004, pp. 479 – 480

15 Osburn 2001, p. 267

16 Groothuis and Pierce 2004, p. 13

Paul encouraged Christians to "... *make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive*" (Titus 2: 10) (Today's New International Version, 2005 [TNIV]). If the Gospel message is about the good news of freedom in Christ (Luke 4: 18 – 19; John 8: 32; 2 Corinthians 3: 17; Galatians 5: 1), then studying this subject will show that the truth about the role of women in the Church and ministry is as much a part of the Gospel message as any other aspect. Indeed, more people will be drawn to Christianity if they realise that irrespective of gender, their talents and abilities will be highly valued and fully utilised in the service of God.

Thus, a study of this subject should be embraced with enthusiasm since it will allow one to become more knowledgeable concerning the Will of God and unlock the vast and full potential of all God's people in the service of His Church.

### 3. Rules of biblical interpretation

Given the need to "*rightly divide the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2: 15 KJV), it is essential to observe the commonly accepted rules of biblical interpretation when undertaking any study of the Scriptures. These have been outlined by one writer as follows:

- rule of definition – define the term of words being considered and then adhere to the defined meanings;
- rule of usage – do not add meanings to established words and terms. What was the common usage in the cultural and time period when the passage was written?;
- rule of context – avoid using words out of context. Context must define terms and how words are used;
- rule of historical background – do not separate interpretation and historical investigation;
- rule of logic – be certain that words as interpreted agree with the overall premise;
- rule of precedent – use the known and commonly accepted meanings of words, not obscure meanings for which there is no precedent;
- rule of unity – even though many documents may be used there must be a general unity among them; and
- rule of inference – base conclusions on what is already known and proven or can be reasonably implied from all known facts.<sup>17</sup>

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17 Trombley 1985, pp. 135 – 136

Of particular importance in any biblical study are the principles that Context determines Meaning and Scripture interprets Scripture.<sup>18</sup> Of the former principle it has been said:

*One of the most important principles of handling the Word properly and studying the Bible inductively is to interpret Scripture in light of its context. Why? Because context always rules in interpretation.*<sup>19</sup>

Of the latter principle it has been observed:

*The Bible is one revelation without contradiction. Therefore, when studying any particular book of the Bible, ultimately that book must be evaluated in the light of the entire Bible. Because context rules in interpretation, both the immediate context of the chapter and book must be considered, as well as the remote context of the whole Bible. Because Scripture will never contradict Scripture, the best interpretation for Scripture is other Scripture.*<sup>20</sup>

As noted above, considering a Scripture in light of its overall context, not in isolation from that context, and in view of other relevant Scriptures is essential in determining the Scripture's meaning. The importance of this particular interpretative rule will be highlighted in section 9 of this study (Part B), for example, when consideration is given to the meaning of 1 Corinthians 14: 34 – 35. In this instance, having regard to the need to consider the context of a Scripture not only means that verses 34 to 35 should be understood in consideration of their overall context (verses 26 to 40 as well as other relevant Scriptures) but also that they should not be used as the lens through which to come to a conclusion about the meaning of verses 26 to 40.

Understanding background historical and cultural factors is also important in illuminating the context and meaning of Scripture. In this regard one writer has noted, "*The New Testament letters ... were written to first-century churches in the ancient Roman Empire. To understand them, we need to take into account the culture into which the biblical authors wrote; that is, we need to consider the historical context.*"<sup>21</sup> This is an important point to appreciate when interpreting passages such as 1 Corinthians 14: 34 – 35, as will be seen in section 9 of this study (Part B).

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18 Belleville 2001, p. 131; Henrichsen and Jackson 1990, p. 152

19 Arthur 1994, p. 18 (emphasis in text); also, Henrichsen and Jackson 1990, pp. 186, 189

20 Arthur 1994, pp. 73, 74; also, Marshall 2004, p. 201. Similarly, Henrichsen and Jackson (1990) note, "A doctrine cannot be considered biblical unless it sums up and includes all that the Scriptures say about it" (p. 214). This principle has a biblical basis: "The sum of thy word is truth" (Psalms 119: 160) (Revised Standard Version [RSV]).

21 Payton 2002, p. 13. One Male Headship proponent, Schreiner (2001) has also emphasised this point: "The Bible, not our culture, must reign supreme. On the other hand, we must interpret the Scriptures in their historical and cultural context. They were written to specific situations and to cultures that differed from our own" (p. 219). Osburn (2001, pp. 101, 103 – 105) and Henrichsen and Jackson (1990, pp. 146, 203 – 210) have also pointed out the importance of interpreting Scripture in light of its historical context.



For this reason it has been observed: *“We should never lift one verse out of context and build a doctrine on it, ignoring its historical setting. Nor should we build a teaching around one verse, disregarding biblical statements that contradict our interpretation of an isolated verse.”*<sup>22</sup>

It has also been observed, *“Whenever an interpretation to a verse contradicts the rest of the teaching of the Bible, we know this interpretation is incorrect, for the Holy Spirit will never contradict His own Word.”*<sup>23</sup> Thus, it is axiomatic that clear Scriptures should always be used to interpret the meaning of those that are less clear or more difficult.<sup>24</sup>

The literal reading rule is another important interpretative principle. There are numerous instances where the truth of the Scriptures can be discerned from a simple, straightforward reading of its words. Nevertheless, the literal interpretative rule is subject to the following important caveat: *“It is a stated rule in interpreting, never to depart from the plain, literal sense, unless it implies an absurdity.”*<sup>25</sup>

Accordingly, reason and common sense must be used when applying the literal interpretative rule in order to avoid drawing incorrect conclusions from Scripture (2 Timothy 2: 15). As has been observed, *“... Christians are responsible to develop sound theology that honours Logic and the Truth. The onus lies on us to labour with our minds, as an act of love for God (Matthew 22: 37) and by the help of the Holy Spirit, to reason through our reading of his Word. The dictum ‘sola Scriptura’ does not mean that Christians are to disregard reason in our*

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22 Cunningham, Hamilton and Rogers 2000, p. 61

23 Internet 3. It is impossible for the Scriptures to contain any contradictions because God does not lie (Numbers 23: 19; John 10: 35; Titus 1: 2; Hebrews 6: 18).

24 Or as noted by one writer, it is important to *“... interpret unclear passages in light of passages that are clear”* (Jacobs 1998, p. 228). Another writer has similarly noted, *“Difficult texts must be interpreted in the light of the clear teachings of the whole Bible. Therefore, study all that Scripture teaches on a given subject before coming to a conclusion on any single verse”* (Sequeira).

25 Sumner 2003, p. 209. Similarly, Henrichsen and Jackson (1990) note, *“When at all possible a passage should be interpreted literally. Only if the literal meaning of the word does not fit should it be interpreted figuratively. The literal meaning of a word is always preferred, unless the context makes it impossible”* (p. 195). This principle and its associated caveat are particularly important to remember when interpreting the writings of Paul which even during the first century AD were recognised to contain some things that were hard to understand and thus open to misinterpretation (2 Peter 3: 15 – 16). More recently, one scholar has described Paul’s letters as being *“... like listening to one end of a phone conversation”* (Bruce cited in Viola and Barna 2008, p. 239). As will be seen when this study considers 1 Timothy 2: 12, this is because Paul did not always include all the necessary explanatory background in his letters which would have enabled the modern reader to be more informed about the circumstances of the problems he was addressing. The aptness of this comment is illustrated by Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians in which he responded to a series of questions asked by the Corinthians themselves (note 1 Corinthians 7: 1, 8: 1, 12: 1, 16: 1), the specific details of which he did not reiterate as part of his response and as a result are no longer available for the benefit of modern readers. While he doubtless had pragmatic reasons for doing so (notably, the original intended readership had full knowledge of such matters which would have made their repetition unnecessary), it nevertheless highlights the need for modern readers of Paul’s letters to *“rightly divide the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2: 15 [King James Version]) and apply the rules of biblical interpretation in order to correctly understand his meaning.

*reading of the Word. It means, rather, that all Christian doctrine should be founded on the Word of God.*"<sup>26</sup>

If a literal reading of a passage results in an understanding that is contrary to other relevant Scriptures then a more complete understanding of the passage needs to be determined in consideration of those Scriptures, not in isolation from them. In fact, a literal reading which results in a meaning that is absurd or otherwise contrary to other relevant Scriptures is a strong indication that the passage in question is one to which the full range of interpretative rules should be applied, not just the literal reading rule. An example of a passage in this regard is 1 Timothy 2: 12 – 15, which will be examined more closely in section 10 of this study (Part B).

Male Headship proponents generally use two or three particular passages that are highly proscriptive in nature in an attempt to substantiate their position (notably 1 Corinthians 14: 34 – 35; 1 Timothy 2: 12 – 15).<sup>27</sup> The problem with such an approach is that:

*... the biblical text one chooses for one's starting point in the study of a doctrine or issue in Scripture becomes the lens through which one looks at all other texts. If, for example, an interpreter chooses 1 Timothy 2: 12 as the starting point, then other texts will be evaluated and interpreted (consciously or unconsciously) in light of Paul's restrictive statement.*<sup>28</sup>

Another problem with this approach is that placing significant, even primary emphasis on two or three particular texts ignores the weight of evidence that a consideration of all relevant biblical texts, such as those discussed in sections 4 and 5 of this study, would bring to bear. Consequently, in adopting this approach one may neglect to apply all the rules of biblical interpretation and thus risk arriving at conclusions that are inconsistent with the totality of the Scriptures' teachings on the subject.

The principles of biblical interpretation are foundational to any study of the Scriptures and will be referred to in this study of the role of women in the Church and ministry. Their consistent application will show that God never intended for

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26 Sumner 2003, p. 295 (emphasis in text). Applying one's mind is certainly necessary when using the full range of biblical interpretative tools to weigh and test the veracity of any teaching received (Deuteronomy 13: 1 – 5, 18: 20 – 22; Jeremiah 28: 5 – 9; Matthew 7: 15 – 20; Acts 17: 2, 11; 1 Corinthians 10: 15, 11: 13, 14: 29, 37; Galatians 1: 8 – 9; 1 Thessalonians 5: 21; 2 Peter 2: 1 – 3; 1 John 4: 1; Revelation 2: 2).

27 For example Schreiner 2001, p. 218; Grudem 2006, p. 33; also as noted by Belleville 2001, p. 111. The fact that such passages are proscriptive in nature suggests that they were written originally to deal with specific problems, not to provide generalised information and advice. Indeed, texts such as 1 Corinthians 14: 33 – 34 and 1 Timothy 2: 11 – 12 have been described as belonging to "... the category of 'corrective texts' whose purpose is focused toward a local situation ... One must be careful therefore not to immediately jump to the conclusion that Paul's injunction has implications for all women in all churches" (Kaiser, Davids, Bruce and Brauch 1996, p. 614). This observation will become more evident when these passages are considered later in this study (Part B).

28 Mathews 2004, pp. 496 – 497

faithful Christian women to be denied the opportunity to exercise their talents and gifts fully in His service.

#### 4. Universal New Testament teachings

A number of clear, unambiguous New Testament passages refer to the important role that each and every member of the Church has a right, indeed an obligation, to play. This role involves exercising one's gifts and abilities to build up and edify the Church.<sup>29</sup> Four particular passages will be discussed in this regard.

##### 4.1 Romans 12: 4 – 8

The New International Version [1978] (NIV) translation of this passage reads:

*Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

Three points may be made concerning this passage. Firstly, the references to "man", "him" and "his" should not be understood to mean that this passage only refers to gifts that males may exercise for the good of the Church. All Christians regardless of gender should exercise gifts associated with giving encouragement and showing mercy.

Secondly, the words translated by the NIV into the masculine sense in this instance ("man", "him" and "his") are in fact gender-neutral in the original Greek text. This passage should have been translated along lines such as: "... *if a person's gift is prophesying, let them use it in proportion to their faith. If it is serving, let them serve; if it is teaching, let them teach; ...*" (etc). In more recent translations, such as The Bible for Today (Contemporary English Version), the word "we" is used rather than "he". Similarly, the TNIV translates the word as "your" rather than "man".

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29 The New Testament refers to "spiritual gifts" (such as prophesying, healing, and tongue speaking) and "ministry gifts" (such as teaching, leading, and serving) (Cunningham *et al* 2000, pp. 49 – 51). All such gifts were given for the edification of the Church (Romans 14: 19; 1 Corinthians 12: 7; Ephesians 4: 12; 1 Peter 4: 10). There is a divergence of views as to whether the spiritual gifts, which particularly characterised the early Church, are still available for the contemporary Church. However, it is not the purpose of this study to explore the merits or otherwise of the arguments in this regard. While not all Christians possessed the same gifts even during the New Testament period (Romans 12: 6; 1 Corinthians 12: 29 – 31; Ephesians 4: 11), the aim of this section of the study is to show that "gender" was not a consideration in their allocation or exercise regardless of whether they were spiritual or ministry gifts.

Thirdly, it should be noted that the Greek text regularly uses plural and singular masculine forms (including masculine pronouns such as “he”) when people (without distinction as to gender) are being referred to or addressed. The use of such masculine forms is inclusive of the feminine.<sup>30</sup> Masculine words such as *diakonos*, which is found in passages such as 1 Timothy 3: 8, Philippians 1: 1 and Romans 16: 1, also include the feminine.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, when masculine terms are used in the New Testament they often can be understood to include women in their scope of application despite the fact that feminine words of similar meaning may exist.<sup>32</sup> As noted by one writer:

*Some traditionalists protest that the Greek term diakonos is masculine. But this overlooks the fact that there was simply no feminine form in use at this time – diakonissa (“deaconess”) is post-apostolic. Nor was it needed, for the masculine singular in Greek often did double duty. This was especially the case with nouns that designated a particular leadership role such as apostle (apostolos), prophet (prophetes), or evangelist (euangelistes). Context made the gender clear... The leadership list in Ephesians 4: 11 (NIV) is a good example of the gender inclusivity of the Greek masculine. “[Christ] ... gave some to be apostles [tous apostolous], some to be prophets [tous prophetas], some to be evangelists [tous euangelistas], and some to be pastors and teachers [tous poimenas kai didaskalous].” Women are named in each of these roles (eg Junia [Rom 16: 7]; Philip’s daughters [Acts 21: 9]; Syntyche and Euodia [Phil 4: 2]; and elderly widows at Ephesus [1 Tim 5: 9 – 10]).*<sup>33</sup>

Thus, a case cannot be made to exclude women from the scope of any particular passage simply because it may utilise masculine terminology (unless, of course, the context indicates that only males are in view).

The exercise of the particular gifts described in Romans 12: 4 – 8 is elsewhere enjoined upon Christians irrespective of gender or setting (for example Romans

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30 Carson 1996, p. 39; Belleville 2001, p. 101; Sumner 2003, p. 125; Cunningham *et al* 2000, p. 262n32  
 31 Belleville 2001, p. 101; Bowman 2001, p. 283; Belleville 2005a, p. 61; Blomberg 2005, pp. 147 – 148; Cunningham *et al* 2000, p. 150; Osburn 2001, pp. 139 – 140, 145

32 An example of this is the Greek word for “disciple” (Griffiths 1986, p. 117; Thompson 2006, pp. 27, 119, 130). While the feminine form of the word (*mathetria*) is found only once (Acts 9: 36), in every other case the masculine form (*mathetes*) is used. Despite this, it would be unreasonable to argue that the woman mentioned in Acts 9: 36 was the only female disciple in the early Church since passages such as Matthew 28: 19 – 20; Acts 1: 12 – 15, 5: 1, 14, 6: 1, 8: 3, 9: 1 – 2, 22: 4 make it plain that not only was the early Church comprised of men and women but that *mathetes* was used to refer to both if this was relevant to the context. Similarly, the Greek word translated as “brothers” or “brethren” (*adelphos*) was commonly used to address groups inclusive of men and women (for example Acts 1: 14 – 16). While on this point it is also important to note that passages such as Matthew 12: 46 – 50, Luke 6: 12 – 17 and John 6: 60 – 67 demonstrate that the group of Jesus’ disciples was larger than just the Twelve. A disciple was a person who studied and followed the teachings of their master (Vine n.d., p. 318). On numerous occasions the Gospels use the word “follow” to show that following Jesus meant being His disciple (for example Matthew 4: 19; Mark 1: 18; Luke 5: 11, 27 – 28). Women are identified as followers of Jesus (Mark 15: 40 – 41; Luke 8: 1 – 3) and as studying at His feet (Luke 10: 39). Thus it may reasonably be concluded that women were likely numbered among the wider group of Jesus’ disciples.

33 Belleville 2005a, p. 61

15: 14; Ephesians 5: 19; Colossians 3: 16; 2 Timothy 2: 2; Hebrews 5: 12, 10: 24 – 25). The New Testament does not distinguish between the “private” and “public” ministry of Christians. It expects that each Christian will use his or her gifts, talents and abilities in the furtherance of the Kingdom regardless of the context or setting of their efforts.

Given these points, it is evident that Romans 12: 4 – 8 envisaged a Christian community in which each member played an important part by exercising their respective gifts and abilities for the building up and encouragement of the Church as a whole. Each member was expected to fully exercise their capability with no gender or setting restrictions being imposed in this regard. While there may be different gifts, such are nevertheless allocated “*according to the grace given to us*”. Gender is nowhere identified in this passage as a criterion in their distribution or exercise.

#### 4.2 1 Corinthians 12: 4 – 13, 27 – 31, 14: 1 – 5, 26

This passage is translated by the NIV as follows:

*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.*

*All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each man, just as he determines. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink...*

*Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts...*

*Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement*

*and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified...*

*When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.*

Four main points can be drawn from the above passage. Firstly, all Church members were granted particular gifts, that is, both male and female – there were no masculine forms used in the original Greek text. While not everyone had the same gifts, there is nothing in the context of the passage to suggest that gender was used as a basis for their distribution or subsequent exercise.

Secondly, it was expected that the gifts would be used for the good of the whole Church, which by definition would include “public” ministry (1 Corinthians 14: 1ff). In other words, there is no suggestion in the passage that women were to be prevented from exercising their gifts in the presence of men, irrespective of whether the setting was “public” or “private”.

Thirdly, the gifts were given for the strengthening of the Church, not to distinguish between the roles that men and women could play in the Church. Thus, allocation of the gifts and their subsequent exercise was not designed to signify that men had authority over women, nor was it designed to signify that women should be subordinated to men. As has been noted:

*God gives His gifts as He chooses, and all believers are to use their gifts for the good of the ‘body’, His church. There is no suggestion that men get ‘leadership gifts’ and women get ‘service gifts’. Such passages are clear and do not need abstract theological language to explain them. They fit the Genesis account of men and women alike being created in the image of God and sharing responsibility for God’s world.<sup>34</sup>*

Finally, it should not be assumed that the reference to “apostles” in this passage only has in view the Twelve Apostles who were selected by Jesus. There were others who were also known as apostles in the early Church (for example Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14: 1 – 7, 14). For Gentile Christians especially, such apostles were no less significant or influential than the Twelve who remained in Judea to minister to the Jewish Christians (Acts 8:1, 13: 46 – 48, 18: 6, 28: 25 – 28; Romans 11: 13; 1 Corinthians 1: 1, 9: 1 – 2; 2 Corinthians 1: 1; Galatians 1: 1, 2: 7 – 10; Ephesians 1: 1; Colossians 1: 1; 1 Timothy 1: 1, 2: 7; Titus 1: 1). This point will be important when consideration is given in section 5.1 of this study to the question of whether women ever served as apostles in the early Church.

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34 Haddad and Mickelsen 2004, p. 484

#### 4.3 Ephesians 4: 11 – 13

The NIV translates this passage as follows:

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

The message in this passage is very similar to that found in those discussed previously in this section of the study. The gifts that were given were intended for use in the building up of God's people, not to hierarchically distinguish between them. Certainly, not all were appointed to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers. Nevertheless, these provisions should not be read as excluding women from their scope of application. In fact, there is nothing in the passage to suggest that only men should hold the roles of apostle, evangelist, pastor and teacher.<sup>35</sup> The use of the Greek article *ho*, translated as "some" in the passage, reinforces this message since it includes the feminine.<sup>36</sup>

Additionally, the fact remains that not all men have the necessary ability (and/or desire) to occupy leadership positions in the Church. Moreover, the case of Diotrephes in 3 John throws doubt on any suggestion that men are automatically (or innately) qualified or suited for Church leadership merely as a consequence of their gender. Some Male Headship proponents nevertheless insist that men (by virtue of gender) are appointed by God to be Church leaders while women's divinely appointed function is to be subordinate to male leadership.<sup>37</sup> Such contentions do not withstand passages such as Romans 12: 4 – 8 and 1 Corinthians 12 – 14 where it is clear that gifts and abilities are allocated on the basis of what is good for the whole Church. The question of gender is simply not an issue.

#### 4.4 1 Peter 4: 10 – 11

The NIV translates this passage as follows:

*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.*

This passage echoes the sentiments expressed in the previous passages. Again, despite the use of masculine pronouns by the NIV, there are no

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35 Refer to footnote 33 of this study.

36 Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (Greek dictionary, # 3588, p. 50)

37 For example Knight 1985, pp. 2, 88; Grudem 2006, pp. 26, 39

masculine forms used in the original Greek text. The conclusion to be drawn is that the passage was intended to apply to all of God's people, irrespective of gender or setting. That is, it applied regardless of whether the gifts were exercised publicly or privately by members of either gender.

In concluding this section of the study one main point stands out: nowhere in any of the passages under discussion is gender explicitly or implicitly cited as a consideration in the allocation of gifts and abilities or in their subsequent exercise. What is clear is that all Church members were given various gifts which were to be used fully for the building up of the whole Church. If a woman did not receive a particular gift, there is nothing in any of these passages to suggest that gender would have been the reason for her not receiving the gift. Similarly, there is nothing in these passages that limits or places conditions on faithful Christian women in the exercise of their gifts.

As children of God, all Christians are heirs of the Kingdom and are priests in His service (Romans 8: 16 – 17; 2 Corinthians 5: 20; 1 Peter 2: 5, 9; Revelation 1: 6, 5: 10, 20: 6). The New Testament Christian priesthood is radically different from the Old Testament male-only priesthood that it superseded. Believers now do not need male priests to mediate between them and God. In particular, the High Priest has been replaced by Jesus (Romans 8: 34; 1 Timothy 2: 5; Hebrews 4: 14, 5: 10, 7: 27; 9: 11 – 15, 10: 1 – 22). All Christians are “priests” in the same way that all Christians (irrespective of gender) are “saints”.

Likewise, the special mark of the covenant between the Old Testament community and God (the mark of male circumcision [Genesis 17; John 7: 22]) has for the New Testament community been replaced by another mark which all believers, regardless of gender, can receive to symbolise their relationship with God under the new covenant – the mark of baptism (Romans 6: 1 – 14, 8: 1; 1 Corinthians 7: 19; 2 Corinthians 5: 17; Galatians 3: 26 – 29; Colossians 2: 11 – 15; 1 Peter 3: 21). Given their priestly status all believers, irrespective of gender or other social distinctions, can use their gifts and abilities in the service and worship of God (Romans 12: 1, 15: 14; Hebrews 10: 19 – 22, 13: 15 – 16; 1 Peter 2: 5). For instance, in exercising their priestly function Christians serve God by offering sacrifices of praise and selfless giving (Hebrews 13: 15 – 16) and by proclaiming the Gospel message (Romans 10: 14 – 15, 15: 16).

The passages considered in this section of the study show that there is no gender-based distinction in the allocation and exercise of the gifts and abilities given to Christians.<sup>38</sup> This is a fundamental principle that cannot be ignored, limited or otherwise constrained, and other New Testament passages that have specific situations in view, such as 1 Corinthians 14: 34 – 35 and 1 Timothy 2: 12 – 15, must be interpreted accordingly. This approach is consistent with the rules of biblical interpretation as discussed in section 3 of this study.

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38 Belleville 2000, p. 41. Some Male Headship proponents have acknowledged that such gifts are given to both men and women “*for the common good*” (for example Schreiner 2001, pp. 191, 231; Bowman 2001, pp. 271, 279; Blomberg 2001, pp. 339, 350; Grudem 2006, p. 160).



## 5. What did women do in the early Church?

As the universal passages discussed in the previous section of this study reveal, there is no divinely-sanctioned gender-based distinction in the allocation and exercise of gifts and abilities. Consequently, the question may be asked: Are there any instances recorded of women who exercised such gifts and abilities for edifying and building up the early Church? Evidence from the New Testament period indicates that women did indeed fully participate in the life, worship and organisation of the Church.

### 5.1 Women apostles

An apostle was one sent forth on a particular mission. The Greek word *apostolos* is used to denote someone directly appointed by the Lord (such as the Twelve Apostles), but it also is used in a wider sense such as in relation to those who were appointed as apostles of the churches (for example Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy and Titus).<sup>39</sup> Apostles, in this wider sense, were “church planters” or missionaries.<sup>40</sup> While such apostles were not of the original Twelve, their function and influence in the churches was no less important.

In Romans 16: 7 (NIV) reference is given to two such apostles:

*Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.*

Although these two people were not members of the original Twelve, the indication is that they belonged to the wider circle of “apostles to the churches”. Paul states that they had been “in Christ” before he was (Romans 16: 7). Given that he had been converted within only a few short years of Jesus’ ministry (Acts 9), it is possible that they had become Christians around the time that the Church began (Acts 2: 10 – 11, 41) or soon thereafter. By the time of the writing of this letter they would have been Christians for quite some time.

While there has never been any doubt about the masculine gender of Andronicus, Male Headship proponents have asserted that there was uncertainty as to the gender of the person identified in the NIV by the masculine name of “Junias”, or in some translations such as the TNIV by the feminine “Junia”.<sup>41</sup>

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39 Vine n.d., p. 65. There is no evidence that the designation of “apostle” was reserved solely for the twelve Jewish men who were selected by Jesus (Luke 6: 12 – 16). Others who were identified as an apostle include Matthias, Timothy, Titus, Silas, Barnabas, Paul, James (Jesus’ brother) and Epaphroditus (Acts 1: 26, 14: 14; 2 Corinthians 8: 3; Galatians 1: 19; Philippians 2: 25; 1 Thessalonians 2: 7). The designation is even used of Jesus Himself (Hebrews 3: 1). In 1 Corinthians 15: 5, 7 Paul refers to the “Twelve” and then to “all the apostles” which further suggests that the word did not have exclusive applicability to the twelve particular men chosen by Jesus.

40 Belleville 2000, p. 54; Belleville 2001, p. 85. This sense is supported by 1 Corinthians 3: 10, 4: 15, 9: 2. One Male Headship proponent, Grudem (2006) appears to agree with this understanding (p. 135).

41 For example Hurley 1981, pp. 121, 122; Knight 1985, pp. 71, 72; Grudem 2006, p. 134. It should be noted that a study by Piper and Grudem, which concluded there was uncertainty about Junia being a

Consequently, because of this alleged uncertainty they have argued that no clear case could be made for the existence of a female apostle.<sup>42</sup> In response, some writers have suggested that Male Headship proponents found it necessary to make such an argument since it did not suit their position for a woman to have been an apostle, and that had the person in question been a male they would not have had a problem with them being identified in this regard.<sup>43</sup> In any event, if there was indeed uncertainty about the gender of this person the question could be asked as to why the NIV has necessarily translated the name in the masculine form without at least including a footnote pointing out the possibility of it being a woman's name.

Despite arguments by Male Headship proponents, the evidence strongly indicates that the name does in fact belong to a woman. Indeed, the name was accepted to be that of a female until at least the 1200s.<sup>44</sup> The following is a more complete list of early theologians who acknowledged "Junia" as a female apostle:<sup>45</sup>

- Origen of Alexandria (c.185-253 AD), who is considered one of the greatest of all Christian Scholars. His learning and his works were encyclopaedic. He is reputed to have written six thousand books. He accepted Junia as a female apostle.
- Jerome (340-419 AD) was the translator of the Vulgate – the Latin translation of the Bible that was the standard Bible for Western Christendom for many years. Jerome based his translation of the Old Testament on the oldest Hebrew texts available and the New Testament on the oldest Greek texts available. He identifies the apostle as "Julia," but it is still a woman's name.
- John Chrysostom (344 or 354-407 AD), also known as John of Antioch, was a notable Christian bishop and preacher during the fourth century in Europe. He is famous for his eloquence and his denunciation of the abuse of authority by the Church at the time. The Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church both honour him as a saint. Of Junia he said: "*Oh how great is the devotion of this woman that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle.*"<sup>46</sup>
- Hatto of Vercelli (924-961 AD) was the Bishop of Vercelli and was well versed in Greek and legal history. He wrote Capitulare, a series of

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woman's name, has been found to have been limited in scope since its search was confined to a Greek literary database that included only the names of famous people (Belleville 2005a, p. 39n40).

42 For example Hurley 1981, pp. 121, 122

43 For example Keener 2001, p. 35; Belleville 2001, p. 86

44 Grenz 1995, p. 95; Trombley 1985, pp. 190, 191; Morris 1988, p. 533; Belleville 2000, p. 55; Belleville 2001, pp. 85, 86; Belleville 2005a, pp. 39 – 45; Viola 2009, p. 163n3

45 Unless otherwise indicated, the following material is drawn from Pederson 2006, pp. 18, 228 – 229.

46 Cited in Grenz 1995, p. 95; Trombley 1985, p. 190; Morris 1988, p. 534; Belleville 2001, p. 85

instructions for the clergy, as well as a lengthy commentary on the Pauline epistles and eighteen sermons. He was considered a foe of superstition and a voice for education. He is in agreement that Junia was a female apostle.

- Theophylact (c.1050-1108 AD) became a deacon at Constantinople, attained a high reputation as a scholar, and became the tutor of Constantine VII, for whom he wrote *The Education of Princes*. He later became Archbishop of Achrida in Bulgaria. His commentaries on the Pauline epistles are esteemed for “appositeness, sobriety, accuracy and judiciousness.” He described Junia as a female apostle.
- Peter Abelard (1079-1142 AD) may be best known today for his ill-starred romance with his pupil Heloise, but during the twelfth century, he was renowned as a French philosopher and theologian. Abelard is considered the founder of the University of Paris and wrote extensively on Paul’s works. He named Junia as a female apostle.
- Other early theologians who understood the second person mentioned in Romans 16: 7 to be a woman included Ambrosiaster (c.339-397 AD), Theodoret of Cyrrihus (c.393-458 AD), Primasius (sixth century), John Damascene (c.675-749 AD), Haymo (d. 1244 AD), Oecumenius (sixth century), Lanfranc of Bec (c.1005-1089 AD), Bruno the Carthusian (c.1032-1101 AD), and Peter Lombard (c.1100-1160 AD).

It appears that the female name “Junia” first began to be interpreted as the male name “Junias” from the time of the thirteenth century. The individuals responsible for doing so were Giles of Rome, who was the first to start referring to Andronicus and Junia as “honourable men” (because he did not think it was possible that a woman could be an apostle), and Pope Boniface VIII who was known widely for his opposition to women having any role in the Church and actively sought to remove them from such.<sup>47</sup> Not only did this change ignore the fact that the early Christians regarded Junia as a woman, it was made despite there being no first century AD inscriptional evidence for “Junias” as a man’s name, only “Junia” as a woman’s name.<sup>48</sup>

More recently, some Male Headship proponents have begun to acknowledge that “Junia” was indeed a woman.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, while conceding this point other Male Headship proponents have still contended that she was not an apostle either in the sense of the original Twelve or even as how the word is used in 1 Corinthians 12: 28 and Ephesians 4: 11. They have also argued that the original Greek text is ambiguous on the point of whether Andronicus and Junia were apostles at all (it is suggested the text could mean that they were just

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47 Pederson 2006, pp. 127, 128, 130

48 Ibid, pp. 19, 164; Belleville 2001, p. 85; Belleville 2004a, p. 117

49 For example Schreiner 2001, p. 198, although Grudem (2006) is one who still appears to be prepared to debate the point (p. 134).

“well known” to the apostles).<sup>50</sup>

In response to such arguments, one writer has pointed out that “... *the most natural and common sense of ‘among’ a group means that they are members of that group (see for example Romans 1: 13, 8: 29), hence here ‘well-known apostles’, which was how the Greek fathers (and most modern scholars) take the phrase.*”<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, another writer has concluded:

*Andronicus and Junia are also outstanding among the apostles, which might mean that the apostles held them in high esteem or that they were apostles, and notable apostles at that. The former understanding seems less likely; it “scarcely does justice to the construction in the Greek” (Harrison). It is fairly clear from the New Testament that there was a wider circle of apostles than the Twelve, and it would seem that this couple belonged to that wider circle.*<sup>52</sup>

Others also have considered such arguments by Male Headship proponents and have found them to be lacking in exegetical support.<sup>53</sup>

However, the question may be asked: If Jesus intended for women to be leaders in the Church, why did He not select any to be among His Twelve Apostles? Male Headship proponents often argue that Jesus’ selection of men as His Twelve Apostles shows that He did not intend for women to fill leadership roles in the Church.<sup>54</sup> However, as has been pointed out, “... *although this is a common way of thinking today, it is not particularly logical. For Jesus did not merely choose twelve men but twelve Jewish men; he himself was not merely a male but a Jewish one. Yet no one argues that Jewish leadership is thereby*

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50 For example Hurley 1981, pp. 121, 122; House 1995, p. 87; Schreiner 2001, p. 198; Grudem 2006, pp. 134 – 135

51 Keener 2001, p. 35

52 Morris 1988, p. 534

53 For example Preato; Belleville 2001, p. 84; Belleville 2005a, pp. 41 – 43. Keener (2001) responds to another Male Headship argument by observing, “*To say that Andronicus and Junia are both simply called by the husband’s proper title is to deny that Paul stated correctly what he meant, for he specifically employs a plural pronoun and verb in making the point*” (p. 36n13). It is interesting that in the writings of some of the intellectual leaders of the early Church in the years following the first century AD, the so-called Church Fathers (notably Hippolytus [170-235 AD]), and in some other ancient texts Mary Magdalene appears with the title “*Apostle to the Apostles*” because of her role following the Resurrection of Jesus in convincing His male disciples of His rising (Trombley 1985, p. 230; Torjesen 1995, pp. 10, 33, 34; Grenz 1995, pp. 76, 77; Green 2005, p. 118). This was not an unreasonable approach given the message of Psalm 68: 11 which prophesied that women would play a major role in the proclamation of the Word of the Lord. It should be noted that the word for “company” used in the original Hebrew text of Psalm 68: 11 is feminine and would be better translated, “*great was the company of the women that heralded it*” (Grenz 1995, pp. 67 – 68, 70; also, Jacobs 1998, p. 195; Cunningham *et al* 2000, pp. 13, 243n3; Kaiser *et al* 1996, p. 276; Jeffries 2011, p. 26). Indeed, the Bible for Today (Contemporary English Version) translates Psalm 68: 11 as “*You gave the command, and a chorus of women told what had happened*”. Some have seen in Psalm 68: 11 a prediction of Jesus’ command to Mary Magdalene to announce the good news of His Resurrection (for example Hagin 1983, pp. 40 – 41).

54 For example Schreiner 2001, p. 196; Grudem 2006, pp. 50 – 51, 93, 98 – 101

*legislated.*"<sup>55</sup>

Another writer has observed:

*When scholars disqualify women from church leadership by using the twelve male apostles as precedents, they ignore the significance both of their number (twelve) and of their Jewishness ... Why choose the Twelve and not, for example, the loyal Galilean women as paradigmatic of all leadership, since after Pentecost the rest of the Twelve (after Judas) are not replaced after their deaths in Acts (e.g. Acts 12: 2)? If their particular ministry was not perpetuated, how can the Twelve serve as a precedent for church leadership today?*<sup>56</sup>

Similarly, it has been noted that:

*Jesus embraced Samaritans against all odds, yet he did not choose any Samaritans as apostles. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, breaking down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles, yet Jesus did not choose any Gentiles as apostles. In Christ there is no longer male and female, yet Jesus did not choose any women as apostles. Jesus was no "respector of persons," but his ministry had to be conducted within the constraints of a particular historical context. Furthermore, the number (12) and kind (Jewish men) of the apostles function symbolically to recall the twelve tribes descended from the sons of Jacob, thus designating Jesus' new community of followers as the New Israel descended from twelve. In the final analysis, the "demographics" of the apostles no more suggest exclusively male leadership as Jesus' vision for the church than they suggest exclusively Jewish leadership as Jesus' vision for the church.*<sup>57</sup>

Some Male Headship proponents also have argued that under the Old Testament only men could be priests and from this conclude that women were not intended to occupy apostolic or other similar leadership roles in the Church.<sup>58</sup> However, the argument that only men were priests fails to recognise that not all men were qualified in this regard (for example such officials could only come from the tribe of Levi while men from the tribe of Joseph could never serve in this capacity).<sup>59</sup> Even Jesus was not qualified to fill this role since He was a

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55 Belleville 2001, p. 110; also, Keener 2001, p. 45; Keener 2005, p. 223. Interestingly, regarding those whom Jesus appointed to go forth as His ambassadors (Luke 10) it has been noted that "... while Jesus did not have a woman among his immediate Twelve, it was commonly assumed by the church fathers from Origen in the third century to Herveus Burgidolensis in the twelfth century that Jesus did include women among the group of seventy-two who were commissioned and sent out" (Belleville 2005a, p. 45).

56 Spencer 2004, p. 140; also, pp. 135 – 136

57 Internet 4. It is important to note that while Jesus was happy to associate with Samaritans and to incorporate them as lesson illustrations (for example Luke 10: 25 – 37 and John 4: 7 – 9), He did not include a Samaritan as one of the Twelve.

58 For example Blomberg 2001, p. 332; Grudem 2006, pp. 50 – 51

59 Belleville 2004a, p. 115. Hurley (1981, p. 52) and Schreiner (2001, p. 201) are two Male Headship proponents who have recognised that not all Israelite men were qualified to be priests. The general

descendant of Judah (Luke 3: 23 – 30; Hebrews 7: 14). Consequently, it has been observed that Male Headship proponents need to be more consistent in their arguments: “... *if we restrict ministry to men because priests were male, why should we not restrict it to a particular tribe, as the law clearly did?*”<sup>60</sup>

In any event, while women may not have been priests during the Old Testament period they were certainly not passive worship spectators since they were known to have:

*... actively used their gifts in and for worship. They helped build and furnish the tabernacle (Ex 35: 22 – 26). They played musical instruments in public processions (Ps 68: 25 – 26). They danced and sang at communal and national festivals (Judg 21: 19 – 23). They chanted at victory celebrations (1 Sam 18: 6 – 7). They sang alongside men in the temple choir (2 Chron 35: 25; Ezra 2: 65; Neh 7: 67). One of the more intriguing Old Testament ministry references is to women who served at the entrance to the tabernacle (Ex 38: 8; 1 Sam 2: 22), for the Hebrew word translated ‘served’ is used elsewhere in the Old Testament of the work of the Levites in the tabernacle (Num 4: 23, 8: 24) and of Israel’s warriors (Num 31: 7, 42).<sup>61</sup>*

One Male Headship proponent, Hurley (1981) has acknowledged that women “... *appear to have had certain roles in the public worship.*”<sup>62</sup>

Thus, it is inappropriate to draw conclusions in support of the Male Headship position based on the Old Testament male-only priesthood particularly since this model has now been replaced by the gender inclusive Christian priesthood of the New Testament (1 Peter 2: 5, 9; Revelation 1: 6, 5: 10, 20: 6). As has been noted, “... *the Old Testament prophets, who lived during the days of the all-male priesthood, anticipated a time when the Spirit would work through both women and men (e.g., Joel 2: 28 – 29). According to Luke, the promised era dawned with Pentecost (Acts 2: 14 – 18).*”<sup>63</sup>

The Scriptures are silent as to why Jesus chose only Jewish males as His Twelve Apostles. Yet despite this silence, Male Headship proponents still insist that the reason why women were not selected was because it was inappropriate for them to fill such roles and from this assert that it is inappropriate for women to fill the role of teacher or leader in the Church today.<sup>64</sup>

It is important to note that arguments from silence are usually considered by

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argument by Male Headship proponents in this regard has been critiqued by Groothuis (2004) who found it to be “... *flawed both analogically and theologically*” (p. 326).

60 Keener 2001, p. 30

61 Belleville 2001, pp. 81 – 82; also, Belleville 2004a, p. 115; Belleville 2005a, p. 36; Pierce 2004, p. 103

62 Hurley 1981, p. 51; also, pp. 191 – 192

63 Grenz 2004, pp. 284 – 285

64 For example Schreiner 2001, p. 196; Grudem 2006, pp. 50 – 51, 93, 98 – 101. Schreiner (2001) acknowledges that on its own “*a male apostolate does not prove that women should not serve as leaders*” and needs to be combined with “*other evidence*” to support his particular contention (p. 196).

scholars to be “*weak*” and that “... *various fallacies can attach themselves either to arguments from silence or to the construction of contexts used to give arguments from silence some force.*”<sup>65</sup> Given the silence of the Scriptures as to why no women were included among the Twelve, their non-inclusion could have been for any number of reasons other than that asserted by Male Headship proponents. However, a statement by Peter in Acts 1: 21 – 22 provides insight as to one strong possibility. A pre-requisite for being a member of the Twelve was that the person had to be an “eyewitness” of Jesus from the beginning until His Resurrection. Certainly, this is the claim the Twelve Apostles subsequently made for themselves in their preaching (Luke 24: 48; John 19: 35; Acts 2: 32, 3: 15, 5: 30 – 32, 10: 39 – 43, 13: 31; 2 Peter 1: 16). To claim to be an eyewitness was particularly important in Jewish society where the truthfulness of any matter was decided on the testimony of two or three witnesses (Exodus 20: 16; Deuteronomy 5: 20, 17: 6, 19: 15; John 8: 17; 1 Corinthians 15: 12 – 15; 2 Corinthians 13: 1; 1 Timothy 5: 19; Hebrews 10: 28). The fact that the preaching of the Gospel was to be first undertaken with the Jews (Matthew 10: 5 – 7; Luke 24: 47), together with the fact that the primary mission of the Twelve Apostles was to the Jews (Acts 8:1, 13: 46 – 48, 18: 6, 28: 25 – 28; Romans 11: 13; Galatians 2: 7 – 10), made it all the more imperative for these appointees to be able to claim eyewitness status. Their preaching would have been enhanced and made more effective as a result of them being eyewitnesses of the events concerning Jesus.<sup>66</sup>

Jesus’ female followers were certainly as qualified as the men in that they had accompanied Him from the beginning of His ministry with some being the first witnesses of His Resurrection (Mark 15: 40 – 41; Luke 8: 1 – 3, 23: 49; Matthew 28: 5 – 10; John 20: 10 – 18). However, while Jesus personally did not doubt the reliability or trustworthiness of His female followers (as indicated by Luke 10: 42 and John 20: 11 – 18), there was a general mistrust in the first century AD Jewish community concerning the testimony of women and the value of their evidence as witnesses.<sup>67</sup> Even Jesus’ own disciples were surprised on one early occasion to find Him talking with a woman (John 4: 27). Consequently, if women had been included as members of the Twelve it could have been counterproductive to the spread of the Gospel among the Jews.

Thus, rather than being a role for which they were not intended, a more reasonable explanation is that the non-inclusion of women among the Twelve Apostles was simply a pragmatic response to the societal attitudes of the time – Jesus would not have wanted the Jews to dismiss the Gospel message merely

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65 Carson 1996, p. 139

66 It has been noted that, “... *according to literary convention of the time the most authoritative eyewitness is the one who was present at the events from their beginning to their end and who can therefore vouch for the overall shape of the story as well as for specific key events*” (Bauckham cited in Barnett 2009, p. 56).

67 Siddons 1980, pp. 41 – 42; Schreiner 2001, p. 185; Bowman 2001, p. 278; Grudem 2006, pp. 94 – 95; Goodman 2008, pp. 328, 329; Dickson 2008, pp. 126, 152n15; Barnett 2009, pp. 100, 144, 218n5; Spencer 2004, p. 140. The first century AD Jewish historian Josephus stated that Jewish law did not admit women as legal witnesses in courts because it could not be guaranteed that they would tell the truth, although no such stipulation is contained in Israel’s law code (Belleville 2000, pp. 185n5, 191n12).

because of the gender of the primary witnesses.<sup>68</sup> One Male Headship proponent has rejected this as a possible explanation by stating, “... to say that *Jesus gave in to cultural pressures on this and thus failed to model and teach what He knew was God’s ideal is to call into question Jesus’ integrity and courage.*”<sup>69</sup> On the contrary, the non-inclusion of women among the Twelve Apostles on such grounds is entirely consistent with accepted missionary practice, both ancient and modern, where in order to achieve maximum evangelistic results it may sometimes be necessary to accommodate the constraints of local cultures and customs so as not to unduly offend or alienate listeners (Acts 16: 3, 21: 20 – 26; 1 Corinthians 9: 19 – 23, 10: 32 – 33). This is also the likely reason why only Jewish males were chosen: it was to the Jews that the Gospel was to be first preached and a non-Jew, such as a Samaritan, would not have been accepted (note John 4: 9, 8: 48).

However, outside Judea there were not the same cultural impediments to women participating in and undertaking religious leadership roles, particularly in the more Romanised areas of the empire where such participation and leadership was generally more accepted and “visible”.<sup>70</sup> As demonstrated in this section of the study, Romans 16: 7 provides evidence of such activity within the Christian community at Rome.

## 5.2 Women prophets

In Acts 2: 17ff (NIV) Peter referred to the following Old Testament prophecy:

*In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.*

In his Pentecost address Peter informed his listeners that this prophecy was in the process of being fulfilled. Certainly, there is evidence in the New Testament of women actively serving as prophets in the early Church. For instance, Acts 21: 9 refers to the four daughters of Phillip who all possessed the gift of prophecy. While nothing further is said of these women in the New Testament, the fourth century AD Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea described an earlier report that referred to them as “mighty luminaries”, which indicates both the respect they received from all who knew them and their prominence in the early Church.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore,

*... the lasting influence of these women prophets was so powerfully and*

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68 Matthew 19: 8 and Mark 10: 1 – 12 relate a similar pragmatic response with respect to the issue of divorce which Jesus said was tolerated by God because of the hardness of men’s hearts.

69 Grudem 2006, p. 99

70 Belleville 2000, pp. 31, 50, 155; Belleville 2001, pp. 95, 96; Belleville 2004a, p. 116; Belleville 2005a, pp. 45, 56; D’Ambra 2007, p. 166

71 Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapter 31



*generally accepted in the early church that their burial place was used to verify certain claims of apostolicity in a dispute with the Bishop Polycrates against Pope Victor 1.*<sup>72</sup>

Another example is the reference in 1 Corinthians 11: 4 – 5 to the female prophets of the Corinthian church. Women continued to serve as prophets in the early Church even into the second century AD. In approximately 148 AD Justin Martyr wrote to Trypho:

*From the fact that even to this day the gifts of prophecy exist among us Christians ... Now if you look around, you can see among us both men and women endowed with gifts from the Spirit of God.*<sup>73</sup>

A further example is contained in a second century AD manual on church organisation, “The Statutes of the Apostles”, in which churches were instructed to ordain widows for the ministry of praying and receiving revelations:

*Let them ordain three widows, two to continue together in prayer for all who are in trials, and to ask for revelations concerning that which they require.*<sup>74</sup>

Thus, the presence and activity of women prophets during the New Testament period and shortly thereafter was considered to be acceptable by the Church at that time.

Despite this evidence, some Male Headship proponents have minimised the presence of female prophets in the early Church by suggesting that they would never have been in a position of authority nor would they have prophesied publicly while men were present.<sup>75</sup> Others have asserted that while women may have prophesied publicly in the Church,<sup>76</sup> it was not on the same level as teaching and preaching with men present.<sup>77</sup> By this the suggestion is that prophecy was not as authoritative as teaching and preaching since, allegedly, it did not involve the same level of thinking or preparation.<sup>78</sup>

Furthermore, some Male Headship proponents have held that prophecy was spontaneous rather than deliberative and that this distinguished it from public teaching which, according to the Male Headship view, was an activity solely able to be undertaken by men.<sup>79</sup> Some Male Headship proponents also have argued that because Paul required prophetic messages to be evaluated this meant that prophecy should not be raised to the same level of authority and inerrancy as

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72 Trombley 1985, p. 193. NB: Victor 1 held office from 189-198 AD.

73 Cited in Paul 1998, p. 106

74 Cited in Torjesen 1995, p. 30

75 For example Roberts 1964, p. 23

76 For example Bowman 2001, p. 281; Blomberg 2001, p. 341; Schreiner 2001, p. 228

77 As noted by Belleville 2001, p. 97

78 For example Grudem 2006, pp. 138 – 139; Schreiner 2001, pp. 189, 190

79 For example Schreiner 2001, pp. 189, 190, 228; Blomberg 2001, p. 336; Grudem 2006, p. 46

Scripture.<sup>80</sup> Other Male Headship proponents have suggested that prophecy is distinct from teaching because the latter involves the explanation of tradition that has already been transmitted, whereas the former constitutes “fresh” revelation.<sup>81</sup>

In response to such views a number of points may be made. While the gift of prophecy could be exercised in the presence of only a few people (for example Anna in Luke 2: 36ff), it is important to note that Paul specifically directed that those with this gift at Corinth (including women) were to use it for the good of the whole church during their Assemblies (1 Corinthians 11: 4 – 5, 12: 7 – 11, 14: 1 – 6, 22, 24, 26, 39). Furthermore, when anyone spoke they were to do so with authority, as if their words were the very oracles of God (1 Peter 4: 11; 2 Peter 1: 21). This applied irrespective of whether many people were in attendance during the prophetic activity or only a few.

Moreover, it has been noted that gender segregation would have been impossible in the house churches of the first century AD so men would invariably have heard women’s prophecies.<sup>82</sup> As has been mentioned, some Male Headship proponents have acknowledged that women prayed and prophesied publicly in New Testament times, albeit such acknowledgment comes with some qualification, namely that any prophesying by women was conducted “under male authority”.<sup>83</sup> In response to this point it has been said:

*Some traditionalists argue that first-century female prophets were subject to the male leadership of the church. Yet Paul treats the prophetic activity of women as identical to the prophetic activity of men (1 Cor. 11: 4 – 5). Plus, he states that prophecy is subject to the control of the individual prophet (and not to some outside source, 1 Cor. 14: 32).*<sup>84</sup>

The question as to whether passages such as 1 Corinthians 11: 3 do in fact establish male authority over women will be considered later in this study (Part B).

Contrary to Male Headship assertions that prophecy did not carry the same authority as teaching or that prophecy was unthinking and lacked preparation (supposedly in contrast to teaching), the Scriptures indicate that prophecy did involve conviction of sin (1 Corinthians 14: 24), instruction (1 Corinthians 14: 19),

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80 For example Bowman 2001, p. 281

81 For example Schreiner 2001, p. 190; Grudem 2006, p. 137

82 Keener 2001, pp. 30, 40. While some have suggested that the Assemblies of the early Church were modelled on the Jewish synagogue in which men and women supposedly did not mix (for example Siddons 1980, p. 66; Jamieson, Fausset and Brown 1979, p. 1481), it should be noted that this view first appeared only from around the time of the seventeenth century and has been disputed on the basis that there is “... little evidence to suggest that the first Christians attempted to perpetuate the style of the synagogue” (Viola and Barna 2008, p. 51n8). It should also be noted that there is no evidence for the supposed gender segregation in synagogues (Belleville 2000, p. 22; Keener 2001, p. 40n18).

83 For example Blomberg 2001, pp. 341, 345; also, Schreiner 2001, p. 190

84 Belleville 2001, pp. 97 – 98

exhortation (1 Corinthians 14: 31) and guidance (Acts 13: 3 – 4, 16: 6). Furthermore, prophecy was subject to the control of the individual prophet and not to some external source (1 Corinthians 14: 32). The gift of prophecy enabled the prophet to fathom all mysteries and all knowledge (1 Corinthians 13: 2). Thus, it was to the apostles and prophets that the mystery of Christ has “now” been revealed, not to people in other generations (Ephesians 3: 4 – 5 TNIV). Accordingly, it has been suggested that the New Testament prophet carried on the “*Thus saith the Lord*” task of the Old Testament prophet.<sup>85</sup>

In response to the Male Headship assertions it has also been pointed out that,

*... most of the Old Testament was written by prophets. In any case, prophets delivered God’s message; to voice the objection that women are allowed to deliver God’s message in prophecy but not by teaching Scripture is essentially to claim that they can minister as long as they do it without using Scripture!*<sup>86</sup>

Given these points it is not surprising that there have been some Male Headship proponents who have disagreed with those of their number who have asserted that prophecy did not involve thought and preparation.<sup>87</sup>

Finally, in response to the Male Headship assertion that the words of New Testament prophets were somehow less authoritative than those of teachers simply because prophecy was required to be evaluated, such an assertion ignores the fact that “prophets” were listed ahead of “teachers” in the list provided in 1 Corinthians 12: 28 (also note Acts 13: 1, Romans 12: 6 – 7; Ephesians 4: 11). It also ignores the fact that the need to test the veracity of any message is taught throughout the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 13: 1 – 5, 18: 20 – 22; Jeremiah 28: 5 – 9; Matthew 7: 15 – 20; 1 Corinthians 14: 29; 1 Thessalonians 5: 21; 2 Peter 2: 1 – 3; 1 John 4: 1; Revelation 2: 2). Indeed, Paul was comfortable with his own teachings being checked and tested against the Scriptures and the Berean Christians were commended for daily doing so (Acts 17: 2, 11; 1 Corinthians 10: 15, 11: 13, 14: 37; Galatians 1: 8 – 9). Even members of the Twelve Apostles were not exempt from the need to be accountable for their words and actions (for example Galatians 2: 11 – 14). Thus no one, be they apostle, prophet or teacher, was/is above the need to have their words constantly tested against the scriptural standard. The authority of the

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85 Ibid, pp. 86, 97. Barnett (2009) similarly notes, “‘*Prophesying*’ seems to have involved a Scripture-based ‘revelation’ intended to impart practical ‘wisdom’, ‘knowledge’, ‘instruction’, ‘comfort’, or ‘encouragement’ (1 Cor 12: 7– 11; 13: 2; 14: 3, 24, 29). Paul strongly encouraged ‘prophesying’ because it ‘built up’ the church and converted visiting unbelievers” (p. 183). Notably, Huldah the prophetess is described in the Scriptures as using the expression “Thus says the Lord” (2 Kings 22: 15; 2 Chronicles 34: 23) in the same way that male prophets did (for example Isaiah 48: 17 and Jeremiah 9: 23). This demonstrates that the authority of a prophet’s message was not predicated on, nor was it enhanced or diminished by, their gender.

86 Keener 2001, p. 32. The unique role of the prophet as the mouthpiece of God is reflected in passages such as Amos 3: 7 – 8. As indicated in the preceding footnote, both male and female prophets spoke on behalf of God and with His full authority through use of the expression “Thus says the Lord”.

87 For example Blomberg 2001, pp. 344, 345

message being communicated either through teaching or prophecy was not diminished simply because it was required to be evaluated.

### 5.3 Women teachers and evangelists

Within the New Testament there is substantial evidence for the teaching role of women in the early Church. Such is not surprising given that the exercise of this gift is frequently enjoined upon Christians irrespective of gender or setting (for example Romans 15: 14; Ephesians 5: 19; Colossians 3: 16; 2 Timothy 2: 2; Hebrews 5: 12, 10: 24 – 25). One notable woman in this regard was Priscilla who, together with her husband Aquila, is mentioned several times in the New Testament. Significantly, Priscilla is mentioned before Aquila on five of these occasions (Acts 18:18, 19, 26; Romans 16: 3; 2 Timothy 4:19). In these instances Priscilla and Aquila are described either as hosting the churches that met in their various homes or teaching the very knowledgeable Apollos, a man who was already a believer in the Lord though he knew only the baptism of John (Acts 18: 25).<sup>88</sup>

Rather than being a passive observer/ supporter while Aquila took the lead in teaching Apollos, the use of the plural verb (*they* instructed/explained) indicates the joint participation by Priscilla and Aquila in this undertaking.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, the mention of Priscilla before her husband has been understood to mean that she may have been the more prominent of the two in this activity.<sup>90</sup> Certainly, the Church Father John Chrysostom considered this to be the case as long ago as the fourth century AD.<sup>91</sup> Even some Male Headship proponents have recognised this point.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, one Male Headship proponent has observed:

*The word “explained” indicates that they gave him a thorough, step-by-step explanation of Christian doctrine. Priscilla was clearly involved in this teaching process. When Paul returned to Ephesus on this third missionary journey, he*

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88 With respect to Apollos it is important to note that he “... was not an unbeliever. On the contrary, Apollos was ‘mighty in the Scriptures’ and ‘fervent in spirit’, a man who taught ‘accurately’ about the ministry of Jesus. It’s significant that Priscilla taught a man who had already been ‘instructed in the way of the Lord’” (Sumner 2003, p. 52).

89 Osburn 2001, p. 152; Grudem 2006, p. 45

90 Morris 1988, p. 531; Walsh 1986, p. 116; Grenz 1995, p. 82; Trombley 1985, pp. 12, 190. Regarding the order of the names Grudem (2006) claims that “... the truth is that nobody is quite sure what to make of the order of names” (p. 106). However, it should be noted that there are other instances within the New Testament where the order of names clearly indicates priority or prominence of the individuals concerned (such as Barnabas and Saul/Paul and Barnabas [Acts 13: 1, 2, 7, 42, 43, 46, 50]). Belleville (2004a) also makes this point (p. 122). Grudem (2006) proceeds to claim that in 1 Corinthians 16: 19, “Paul puts Aquila first in connection with ‘the church in their house,’ which is surely a ministry connection” (p. 106). If this is the case then consistency would demand that the same conclusion be made in relation to Priscilla in Romans 16: 3 – 5 where she is mentioned before her husband in connection with the church that met in another of their homes. It is curious that Grudem (2006), when discussing Acts 18: 26, sometimes reverses the order of the names as given in the biblical text and instead refers to them as “Aquila and Priscilla” (pp. 44, 45).

91 Trombley 1985, pp. 193, 194; Cunningham *et al* 2000, p. 145

92 For example Schreiner 2001, p. 191; Bowman 2001, p. 280

*spoke of “the church that meets at their house” (1 Cor 16: 19), indicating their service as house-church leaders. The New Testament pictures Priscilla as a strong, well-respected leader in the early church. She was a skilled teacher with a thorough understanding of both the Old Testament Scriptures and the gospel message. As a leader in the early church together with her husband, she made a significant contribution to the spread of the gospel.*<sup>93</sup>

Such was the significance and influence of Priscilla that in the early Church she was described as “a teacher of teachers”.<sup>94</sup> Despite this, Male Headship proponents generally argue from Acts 18: 26 that a woman is only permitted to assist in teaching a man “privately” (outside of the whole-of-church setting), not teaching men “publicly” (within the whole-of-church context).<sup>95</sup> This argument is problematic for a number of reasons.

One of the most obvious is the need to explain why God would approve of a woman teaching a man “privately” yet not approve of the same woman teaching the same message to the same man “publicly”. Indeed, Male Headship proponents have never satisfactorily explained why “public” teaching of a man by a woman would be prohibited yet the same teaching involving the same woman and man in a “private” setting would be permissible. Certainly, Acts 18: 26 gives no indication of any divinely approved demarcation in this regard.<sup>96</sup> The question may be asked: What is more important, the message itself (which presumably should be directed at spreading the Gospel) or the setting in which the teaching of the message occurs and the gender of the person delivering it? Male Headship proponents often cite the so-called “order of creation” principle, in which the male as first created is claimed to have the right of leadership and to exercise authority, as the reason why women should not teach men “publicly”.<sup>97</sup> Yet if this was the case<sup>98</sup> then should not the principle also apply “privately”? Why would the principle only operate “publicly”? What is it about the principle that makes it important to be observed “publicly” but not “privately”? If God has an unchanging nature (Numbers 23: 19; Psalm 102: 27; Malachi 3: 6; Hebrews 1: 12, 13: 8; James 1: 17), why would He want or allow such a fundamental principle to be so inconsistently applied? Even if the “order of creation” argument was valid, it still does not satisfactorily explain why the “public” teaching of a man by a woman would be prohibited while the same teaching

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93 Bowman 2001, p. 281

94 Kroeger and Kroeger 1992, p. 55

95 For example Green 1964, p. 45; Knight 1985, pp. 28, 40; Schreiner 2001, p. 191; Blomberg 2001, p. 336; Grudem 2006, pp. 45, 103

96 As Osburn (2001) notes, “*There is no reason to suppose that Luke intended this account to mean that a woman can teach a man only with her husband or that it must be in private*” (p. 152; also, p. 154).

97 For example Grudem 2006, pp. 35 – 41, 78, 167; House 1995, pp. 164 – 165. The so-called “order of creation” principle will be further discussed later in this study. It is significant that this alleged principle and its use as an argument in support of the Male Headship position does not appear in any commentary or book prior to World War II (Giles cited in Osburn 2001, p. 236).

98 It will be shown in section 7 of this study that Paul elsewhere refutes such a principle as having any relevance to Christians, particularly in the context of whole-of-church worship activities (1 Corinthians 11: 11 – 12).

would be permissible when undertaken “privately”. What would make it wrong for the teaching to be conducted publicly but not privately? In fact, what would make it wrong for a woman to teach a believing man, such as in the case of Priscilla with Apollos, publicly but not privately?

Furthermore, on what basis is it assumed that it would only be in the context of whole-of-church gatherings that teaching is undertaken “with authority” when the statement in 1 Peter 4: 11, that anyone who speaks should do so as if speaking the oracles of God, would apply to teaching undertaken privately as well? Also, if women are not to teach men “publicly”, how are passages such as Colossians 3: 16 to be understood and applied (where the same Greek word for “teach” is used, and in the context is to be understood as operating in a whole-of-church setting)? Some have interpreted 1 Timothy 2: 14 to mean that a woman is prohibited from publicly teaching men because females are (allegedly) more prone to deception and doctrinal errors.<sup>99</sup> While this view will be further addressed in section 10 of this study (Part B), the question may be asked: Why would the risk of a female teacher being prone to deception and doctrinal error be reduced simply because she taught a man “privately”? Would not public teaching by a woman before a larger audience make it easier for any errors in her message to be exposed and corrected? It is certainly far more difficult for such scrutiny to be applied in a “private”, one-on-one setting. If Male Headship proponents were correct in their assertion that Acts 18: 26 only permits a woman to teach a man “privately”, then consistency would demand that such should also be the case for men since it was both Priscilla and Aquila who taught Apollos. It is instructive that this point is never contended by Male Headship proponents.

The problems associated with the Male Headship “public”/“private” argument are strong indicators which point to its human, rather than divine, origin. This argument could not possibly have arisen in the mind of God since it would go against His basic, unchanging nature to be so inconsistent.

Another difficulty with this particular Male Headship argument is that not only is there no specific direction in the New Testament for women to only teach men “privately”, but it simply makes no distinction between “public” and “private” teaching at all. The event recorded in Acts 18: 26 has been considered by one writer who concluded that “... *to draw a distinction between private and public forms of instruction or between informal and formal types at this stage in the church’s development is simply anachronistic.*”<sup>100</sup>

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99 For example Jamieson *et al* 1979, pp. 1358, 1359; Clark 1980, pp. 30, 203; Guthrie 1976, p. 77. The irony in such an argument is that Male Headship proponents assert that women are still fit to teach other women and children. On this point Groothuis (cited in Keener [2001]) observes, “... *those who prohibit women from teaching men because ‘women are more easily deceived’ often allow women to teach other women – the very people they would most easily lead into further deception!*” (p. 39n17). Also, Grenz (1995) has remarked on “... *the absurdity of permitting women to teach impressionable children but not men who should possess the spiritual acumen to discern heretical statements*” (p. 219). Similarly, Osburn (2001) notes, “*It seems odd that women would be presented as more easily led into heresy, yet still be entrusted with teaching the children(!)*” (p. 48).

100 Belleville 2000, p. 59; also Belleville 2001, p. 99

Similarly, another writer has observed:

*... The text of Acts will not allow us to transform this narrative into anything other than a clear indication of authoritative teaching by a woman in the church. The text gives no warrant to importing a distinction between private teaching in a home and authoritative teaching in the church...*<sup>101</sup>

Yet another writer has remarked: *“Neither Jews nor Romans in the first century CE had as strongly developed a sense of distinction between public and private life as we now take for granted...”*<sup>102</sup>

Even one Male Headship proponent has acknowledged that the distinction made between “public” and “private” church settings is a *“modern invention.”*<sup>103</sup>

Yet another difficulty with this particular Male Headship argument relates to the assumption that Priscilla was able to teach Apollos “privately” because the teaching supposedly occurred in the couple’s home.<sup>104</sup> This assumption overlooks a number of important facts. While the NIV translates this passage as indicating that the teaching of Apollos was undertaken in the couple’s home, other translations such as Phillips Modern English and the New King James Version simply state that Priscilla and Aquila “took him aside” to explain the new faith to him more fully. Irrespective of whether they took him to their home or to some other place, the point is that they engaged with him away from the venue where they first encountered him.

In this regard it should be noted that rather than teaching in a whole-of-church worship context, Apollos had actually been preaching at the Synagogue in Ephesus in an attempt to evangelise the local Jews. Priscilla and Aquila were in attendance for possibly the same reason which is why they were aware of what he had said.<sup>105</sup> While the Hellenistic culture of Ephesus would have frowned on a respectable woman speaking casually with a man in public even with her husband present,<sup>106</sup> there is no scriptural evidence to suggest that the decision to take Apollos “aside” to explain further the new faith to him was because it was contrary to God’s Will for Priscilla to be involved in teaching a man “publicly”.

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101 Grenz 1995, p. 83

102 Goodman 2008, p. 231

103 Schreiner 2001, p. 228

104 Blomberg 2001, p. 336

105 As they were close friends of Paul it is feasible that they could have imitated his practice in this regard (Acts 13: 14, 14: 1, 17: 2, 18: 4, 19, 19: 8). Given that there is no evidence for gender segregation in the Synagogues (Belleville 2000, p. 22; Keener 2001, p. 40n18), Priscilla’s presence at the Synagogue in Ephesus would not have been unusual.

106 Payton 2002, p. 14; Keener 2004, p. 166. It is important to note, however, that Hellenistic culture did not disapprove of a woman speaking publicly for religious purposes (Payton 2002, p. 15; Keener 2004, pp. 166, 168; Torjesen 1995, p. 28; Belleville 2000, pp. 31, 155). Having lived in Rome (Acts 18: 2), Priscilla and Aquila would have been familiar with Roman culture under which “... women had almost the same rights as men ... they could be seen and could speak in public without damaging their reputation” (Payton 2002, p. 13).

Rather, the probable reason for this decision would have been far more pragmatic: they most likely would have wanted to avoid any “background noise” that could have disturbed or distracted them while speaking about this very important subject. Furthermore, they most likely would have wanted to meet with him away from the Synagogue because to correct him publicly in that setting could have compromised the effectiveness of his ministry in the eyes of his Jewish audience. Such a strategy would have been vindicated in view of the subsequent success of Apollos’s evangelistic efforts (Acts 18: 27 – 28).

Whether or not Priscilla and Aquila taught Apollos “privately” in their house is irrelevant since it was common for the couple’s various homes to double as meeting places for the local churches (Romans 16: 3 – 5; 1 Corinthians 16: 19). Any teaching conducted in their homes, regardless of whether it involved many people or only a few, would not have been any less authoritative or valid simply because of the environment in which it was conducted.<sup>107</sup> As previously noted, anyone who spoke about the Gospel was to do so with authority, as if they were speaking the very oracles of God (1 Peter 4: 11; 2 Peter 1: 21). This principle applied irrespective of the gender of the speaker or the context and setting in which the speaking occurred. Thus Priscilla, together with her husband, expounded the way of God to Apollos and in so doing spoke the “very oracles of God”. It is notable that the word “expounded” as used in Acts 18: 26 is the same word that is used to describe Paul’s preaching to the Jews in Rome (Acts 28: 23).<sup>108</sup>

The tendency of some Male Headship proponents to minimise the significance of Acts 18: 26 is intriguing. For example, Grudem (2006) states that it “...gives warrant for women and men to talk together about the meaning of biblical passages and to ‘teach’ one another privately, outside the context of the assembled congregation” and that it “... provides an excellent encouragement for women and men to talk with each other about the meanings of Bible passages in private discussions and in small group Bible studies ...”<sup>109</sup> Elsewhere Grudem asserts that Priscilla simply “talked to” Apollos.<sup>110</sup>

Grudem’s claim that the passage allows women and men to “teach’ one another

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107 It should be reiterated that “... the distinction between public and private meetings of the church is a modern invention; in Paul’s day the church often met in homes for worship and instruction” (Schreiner 2001, p. 228).

108 Belleville 2001, p. 99; Belleville 2004a, p. 124; Liefeld 2004, p. 265. Grudem (2006) dismisses the use of the word “expounded” in Acts 18: 26 by stating that its use is different to how it is used in Acts 28: 23 since in the former the context is “private” while in the latter the context is “public” (p. 104). While the practice of making such artificial distinctions is dealt with in this study, it is interesting to note that when Paul taught the Jews in Rome he did so while he was under house arrest (Acts 28: 16, 23, 30). Thus, it is the content of the teaching that is relevant, not the setting in which the teaching is conducted. It is notable that not all Male Headship proponents would agree with Grudem on this point. As noted previously in this study, Bowman (2001) states, “The word ‘explained’ indicates that they gave him a thorough, step-by-step explanation of Christian doctrine. Priscilla was clearly involved in this teaching process” (p. 281).

109 Grudem 2006, pp. 45, 103

110 Ibid, p. 45



*privately, outside the context of the assembled congregation*” does not take account of the fact that its purpose was not about stipulating the roles of men and women in terms of the “assembled congregation”, “church governance” or “church worship activity”. Indeed, such matters are not even mentioned in the text. As mentioned earlier, Apollos had been evangelising at the local Synagogue, not preaching during whole-of-church worship. Grudem’s statements also do not take into account that Acts 18: 26 relates Priscilla and Aquila as having expounded to Apollos, someone already in possession of a high degree of knowledge of the Scriptures (Acts 18: 24), the way of God more adequately. They did not, as Grudem suggests, just “*talk together about the meaning of biblical passages*”.

Similar to Grudem, Schreiner (2001) observes, “... *a single occasion in which Priscilla taught Apollos in private hardly demonstrates that she filled the pastoral office,*”<sup>111</sup> while another Male Headship proponent, Blomberg (2001) states, “... *we actually know precious little about what Priscilla did, except for one occasion in which she joined with her husband in instructing Apollos in a context that suggests an informal, private encounter (‘they invited him to their home’, with no indication of anyone else being present, 18: 26).*”<sup>112</sup>

The statements by Grudem, Schreiner and Blomberg do not give due recognition to the significance of the event recorded in Acts 18: 26. Given the evangelistic zeal of the early believers (Matthew 28: 19 – 20; John 4: 39 – 42; Acts 1: 8, 8: 3 – 4; Philippians 4: 22; Colossians 1: 6, 23; 1 Thessalonians 1: 8; Philemon 6), the interaction between Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos would not have been the only one of its type. Yet of all the evangelistic encounters that occurred during the New Testament period, theirs must have been particularly memorable since of all such encounters it is one of only a few that is specifically recorded apart from those of well known figures such as Paul. This is a strong indication that it was regarded as a significant event in the life of the early Church. Indeed, given the widespread practice of the Christians to evangelise, it would be difficult to explain why this particular episode would have been recorded had this not been the case.<sup>113</sup>

Not only was Priscilla a teacher of Apollos, she was identified by Paul as a “fellow worker” (Romans 16: 3). In this regard there were other women who worked with Paul in spreading the Gospel and were similarly identified as his fellow workers (such as Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4: 2 – 3). The various Greek words used to describe such women as “fellow workers” indicate that they were jointly responsible *with* Paul *for* spreading the Gospel message.<sup>114</sup>

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111 Schreiner 2001, pp. 191 – 192

112 Blomberg 2001, p. 336

113 One writer has observed that the record in Acts 18 regarding the work of Priscilla and Aquila with Apollos “... *shows that they were so important to the history of the Christian mission that Luke could not overlook them*” (Haenchen cited in Osburn 2001, p. 152n47).

114 Grenz 1995, pp. 83 – 86; Walsh 1986, p. 115; Torjesen 1995, p. 16; Belleville 2000, p. 60; Belleville 2001, p. 88; Keener 2001, p. 38. Thompson (2006) notes, “*Paul referred to various women as his*

Importantly, the same words are used to describe Paul's male fellow workers (for example 2 Corinthians 8: 23; Colossians 4: 10 – 11) and any reasonable observer would accept Paul's male colleagues as teachers and evangelists.<sup>115</sup> According to 1 Corinthians 16: 16, "*everyone who joins in the works and labours at it*" (NIV), and gender is not listed as a consideration, were to be submitted to by the rest of the Church.<sup>116</sup> It would be incorrect to assert that when the New Testament refers to these women as "fellow workers" it only meant that they accompanied and worked with Paul in an auxiliary capacity. Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest that their evangelistic work was limited to dealing with only one or two sections of the population such as other women and children.<sup>117</sup> The use of the Greek word *anthropos* (generic for people) rather than *aner* (specific for male) in passages such as 2 Timothy 2: 2 is a strong indication that women were intended to serve as teachers and evangelists on par with men.<sup>118</sup> Priscilla's active involvement in the teaching of Apollos is evidence of such.

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*coworkers. The Greek word synergos is normally translated 'coworker.' It may also be translated 'associate' or 'coadjutor.' Synergos is used many times in Paul's letters and always has the same meanings. The coworkers are those who lead the community in Paul's absence. They are held responsible for the activities of the group and for remaining in contact with Paul. They teach and preach and conduct worship. They are active in spreading the gospel*" (p. 115). One Male Headship proponent, Bowman (2001), observes that Paul used the term *synergos* to refer to both men and women and that in doing so he "... is not simply using this term in a sociological sense; instead, it is a theological statement. He is saying that they are workers who serve together in the grand enterprise of extending the kingdom of God to the ends of the earth" (p. 279).

115 One Male Headship proponent, Grudem (2006) dismisses Paul's use of the same word to describe both his female and male coworkers as having any significance with his rationale being that "... *some coworkers do things that other coworkers do not do*" (p. 147). While not all Christians during the New Testament period possessed the same gifts, there is no indication as shown by the universal passages discussed in section 4 of this study that gender was a consideration in the allocation or exercise of either spiritual or ministry gifts. Also, if women were only to perform auxiliary work under the authority of men in spreading the Gospel message as Male Headship proponents assert, it is curious as to why Paul would not have used a more appropriate word like *huperetes* when referring to them. This particular word, such as used in Acts 13: 5 where it is translated by the NIV to describe John Mark as the "helper" of Paul and Barnabas in their missionary work, denotes "... *any subordinate acting under another's direction*" (Vine n.d., p. 754). Paul's description of Priscilla, Euodia and Syntyche as "fellow workers" (*synergos*), not as "helper" (*huperetes*), is a strong indication that he considered such women to be colleagues, not subordinates acting under his direction.

116 Grudem (2006) disputes that 1 Corinthians 16: 16 would have this meaning. One of his arguments is as follows: "*Another reason for taking this passage in a restrictive sense is that Paul also tells them to be 'subject to ... every fellow worker and labourer [participle of Greek kopiao] (1 Corinthians 16: 16). But surely Paul cannot mean they were to be subject to everyone referred to with the verb kopiao in his epistles. For example, he uses the same word to say, 'Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need' (Ephesians 4: 28). Surely Paul cannot be saying that the Corinthians should be subject to every thief who stops stealing and starts earning a living!*" (p. 150). A fundamental rule of biblical interpretation is that Context determines Meaning (see section 3 of this study). While elsewhere in his book Grudem appears to recognise the importance of this tenet (for example, p. 76), he fails to apply the rule in this instance. The context of 1 Corinthians 16: 16 shows that Paul was not talking about thieves, he was talking about people who were working to propagate the Gospel message and that it was to such people that the Church should submit.

117 As asserted by some Male Headship proponents such as Roberts 1964, p. 25

118 Cunningham *et al* 2000, p. 221; Payne 2008, p. 248

In Revelation 2: 20ff reference is given to a particular false teacher, a woman called “Jezebel”. The important thing to remember about this woman is that she was criticised not because she was a teacher, but because of the content of her teaching (which promoted sexual immorality). If, according to Male Headship proponents, women should and could not have been public teachers in the early Church, then why was Jezebel ever accepted by the Thyatiran church as a teacher? If previously it had been the rule in the early Church that women were not to publicly teach men then why, as part of the denunciation in Revelation 2, was the church at Thyatira not admonished for allowing her to teach? As it is, they were highly commended for their “deeds, love, faith, service and perseverance” and were criticised only for tolerating her false teachings, not because they allowed her to teach. It is notable that Jezebel was given opportunity to repent, not for being a teacher, but for what she was teaching.<sup>119</sup>

One other point that should be made about Jezebel is that women were no more capable of being false teachers than were men. In fact, many of the leading false teachers of the first and second centuries AD, such as the Gnostics, were men.<sup>120</sup> On one occasion Paul himself expelled two men from the Church on account of their false teaching (1 Timothy 1: 20; Acts 20: 30). Conversely, there were women in the early centuries of the Church who were notable for their zeal in exposing false teaching.<sup>121</sup> Thus, Revelation 2: 20ff is further indication that women were accepted as teachers by the early Church and that they were considered to have a legitimate right to serve in this regard. The only problem in Jezebel’s case was the subject matter of her teachings.

Finally, it should be pointed out that acceptance of women teachers in the Church continued for some time after the close of the first century AD. For instance, an Egyptian papyrus from the fourth century AD has been found which refers to a Christian woman, named Kyria, as a teacher (Greek: *didaskalos*).<sup>122</sup> It has been suggested that Greco-Roman social norms pertaining to the “ideal subordinated woman” influenced the Church’s attitudes in subsequent years,<sup>123</sup>

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119 Trombley 1985, pp. 57, 168, 193

120 One of the first Gnostic teachers was said to be Simon Magus (the Magician) who is referred to in Acts 8 (Walker 1983, pp. 136 – 138). Grady (2006) observes, “*Almost every false religion on the earth today, in fact, was founded by a man ... History proves that men have produced most of the world’s cults, false religions, and occult movements. Yet women have been unfairly stereotyped as deceivers ...*” (pp. 135, 138).

121 One such woman was Marcella (325-410 AD) who was commended by the great Latin scholar Jerome for her ability to identify and confront error (Belleville 2001, pp. 87, 111).

122 Torjesen 1995, p. 115

123 As evidenced by the writings of the early Church Fathers (Trombley 1985, pp. 201ff; Walker 1983, p. 72; Sumner 2003, p. 46nn30, 31; Viola and Barna 2008, pp. 61, 91, 117, 202). One Male Headship proponent, Clark (1980) has also noted, “*Writings from the early Fathers contain a great deal of teaching on men and women and not all of it is the clear handing on of a tradition going back to Christ and the apostles. Much of the Fathers’ teaching on men and women concerns the nature of men and women and the nature and role of sex in the Christian life, points which have drawn much interest in recent years. They are also the points which were most influenced by Greek thought, precisely because the questions posed were not so easily answered from scripture and universal tradition alone*” (p. 318).

leading to the decline and ultimate rejection of women's public teaching role.<sup>124</sup> However, based on the evidence discussed in this section of the study, this outcome was not consistent with the practice of the early Church.

#### 5.4 Women deacons and ministers

There is evidence of women exercising gifts of service in the early Church, one notable example being Tabitha (or Dorcas) in Acts 9: 36ff. While Tabitha may have acted on her own initiative in this regard, there is evidence of women also being officially appointed to undertake such duties in the Church.<sup>125</sup>

A specific case in point is Phoebe (Romans 16: 1). Paul described her as “a *diakonos* of the church at Cenchreae.” The following observation has been made regarding this woman:

*The reference to Phoebe is unique, however in two aspects. First, Paul refers to her using the specifically masculine noun form (diakonos), rather than some feminine alternative reflecting the more general idea of service. Second, the apostle places Phoebe's ministry within a specific congregation, for she is a diakonos “of the church at Cenchreae”. This is the only New Testament occurrence of the word followed by a genitive construction linking a person's service directly to a local church. Usually the biblical writers use the genitive appellation to denote a broader application as a “minister of Christ”. The idiosyncrasies of the apostle's commendation provide strong evidence that Paul intended to designate Phoebe as serving in some important official capacity in the Cenchrean church. She was a deacon, an office to which a congregation could appoint both men and women.*<sup>126</sup>

It is notable that the Church Fathers recognised Phoebe as a deacon in the Church, including Origen in the third century AD and John Chrysostom in the

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124 Torjesen 1995, p. 114

125 That women were so appointed is further indicated by 1 Timothy 3: 11 (Osburn 2001, pp. 144 – 147; Fair 2010a, p. 9). Post-apostolic writers such as Clement of Alexandria (second century AD) and John Chrysostom (fourth century AD) understood 1 Timothy 3: 11 to be referring to female deacons of the Church (Belleville 2004a, p. 122; Belleville 2005a, p. 62). Some Male Headship proponents have agreed that 1 Timothy 3: 11 is discussing female deacons, not the wives of male deacons (for example Schreiner 2001, pp. 193 – 194 and Bowman 2001, pp. 283 – 284).

126 Grenz 1995, pp. 88 – 89. Similarly, Fair (2010a, p. 3) and Belleville (2000, p. 62) point out that *diakonos* is not an exclusively masculine term and its use is inclusive of men and women. Furthermore, Osburn (2001) observes, “... Paul wrote ‘being a deacon of the church in Cenchrea,’ which suggests a role of some responsibility” (p. 141). One Male Headship proponent, Clark (1980) states, “The strongest indication within the text that Phoebe actually was a deaconess is the official-sounding nature of the phrase by which Paul identifies her: ‘a servant/deaconess of the church at Cenchreae” (p. 119). Another Male Headship proponent, Blomberg (2001) states, “... Paul's calling her a deacon ‘of the church which is in Cenchreae’ suggests a fairly formal role” (p. 337). Cenchrea housed a Roman naval station (Belleville 2000, p. 50) and as a result would have been exposed to Roman cultural values under which “... women had almost the same rights as men ... they could be seen and could speak in public without damaging their reputation” (Payton 2002, p. 13).

fourth century AD.<sup>127</sup> The word used to describe Phoebe (*diakonos*) is the same as that found in Philippians 1: 1 in reference to the deacons of the Philippian church. In view of its use in Romans 16: 1 it is reasonable to conclude that the Philippian diaconate could have included men and women.<sup>128</sup>

Furthermore, Paul's specific acknowledgement of "overseers and deacons" in the opening greeting to the Philippian church (Philippians 1: 1 NIV) suggests that he viewed them as having a joint role in that church's leadership.<sup>129</sup> This could have been the pattern for other first century AD churches as well, which may explain why the qualifications for elders and deacons are listed jointly in 1 Timothy 3. In this regard it has been noted:

*... during the first century the new Christian community eventually developed a twofold structure to provide leadership for God's people as they lived out the Lord's mandate. This structure was divided between leadership in oversight (bishops or elders) and leadership in service (deacons).*<sup>130</sup>

Some Male Headship proponents have noted that as a deacon Phoebe would have held a leadership role in the Cenchranean church.<sup>131</sup>

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127 Belleville 2000, pp. 62, 63; Belleville 2004a, p. 121; Belleville 2005a, p. 61

128 As Philippi was a Roman colony (Acts 16: 12; Payton 2002, p. 15) this also may have made its cultural atmosphere more amenable to women occupying the role of deacon. Furthermore, it is important to note that "*Whatever the 'deacons' were at Philippi, that Phoebe was at Cenchranea*" (Dodd cited in Osburn 2001, p. 144; also, p. 141). Of Phoebe's service for the church at Cenchranea there is nothing in the passage to suggest that it was confined to serving with only other women. In this regard it has been observed, "... to limit her role to the service of women misinterprets Paul's words" (Thompson 2006, p. 117). Osburn (2001) similarly notes, "*To suggest that Phoebe served only, or even primarily, women is to make a distinction that the biblical text does not make*" (p. 141). Certainly, when Paul commended Phoebe to the Roman church he did so not just to its female members but to the entire congregation.

129 Belleville 2000, pp. 53, 61, 146. Elsewhere it has been noted, "*Ignatius, a contemporary of the apostle John, declared that the deacons were not mere servers of meat and drink ... First Timothy 3 shows that deacons were not considered ordinary lay members of the church, and Paul's mention of deacons in connection with bishops (Php 1: 1) supports this view*" (Archaeological Study Bible, p. 1958).

130 Grenz 1995, p. 87. Similarly, one Male Headship proponent, Blomberg (2001) has stated, "*Based on a combination of the evidence of Acts 14: 23 that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders wherever they planted churches with Paul's greeting in Philippians 1: 1 that points to overseers and deacons as to the two leadership offices in those churches ...*" (p. 350n82).

131 For example Foh cited in Sumner 2003, p. 243n15; Bowman 2001, p. 284. On the other hand another Male Headship proponent, Grudem (2006) has stated that irrespective of whether Phoebe was a "deacon" or a "servant" she still would not have "... had any teaching or governing authority in the church ... which are functions given to elders, not deacons ... the office of deacon did not include the teaching and governing responsibilities that Paul reserves for men in 1 Timothy 2: 12" (pp. 154 – 155, 157). While the purpose of 1 Timothy 2: 12 was not to accord men the particular role that Grudem claims (as will be shown in section 10 of this study [Part B]), and although the Scriptures are silent as to whether or not Phoebe was a teacher in the Church, Grudem's insistence that Phoebe would not have "had any teaching or governing authority in the church" is highly likely influenced by his underlying premise (or "lens" through which he interprets the Scriptures) that there is no possibility she could have been involved in Bible teaching or church leadership since this was the responsibility of men only. Regarding another of Grudem's studies where he similarly appears to have reached a conclusion about what the passage in question cannot mean, Fee (2004b) notes, "*See, e.g. Wayne Grudem ... a marvellous example of a prior hermeneutical agenda's preceding the reading of texts – so much so that the plain reading of 1 Corinthians 12: 28 is*

It is generally believed that Phoebe was the carrier of Paul's letter to the Romans.<sup>132</sup> In accordance with the custom of the time with respect to the role of letter carriers it would not have been surprising if in this capacity she had read the letter to them, provided additional information, and answered any questions that they may have had about it.<sup>133</sup> If Phoebe was indeed the carrier of Paul's letter and in doing so complied with prevailing protocols relating to the responsibilities of letter carriers, then she played an important role in relaying the Word of God from Paul to the Roman church.

There is evidence following the first century AD that women continued to be appointed to official *diakonos* roles within the Church. On this point it has been written:

*Does church history affirm the place of women deacons? Records reveal that the Eastern Church continued ordaining women deacons into the fourth century while the Western Church continued well into the second century. The Ante-Nicene Fathers records the Apostolic Constitutions in which bishops were charged to ordain women deacons. "Ordain also a woman deacon who is faithful and holy". The Council of Nicea in 325, numbered women deacons among the clergy. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 listed the requirements for ordaining women deacons. Even earlier, the non-Christian historian Pliny the Younger, a Roman orator, naturalist and statesman, wrote a letter about his research among Christians to the Emperor Trajan, who reigned from AD 98 to 117: "I judged it so much the more necessary to extract the real truth with the assistance of torture, from two maidservants, who were called deacons: but I could not discover nothing more than the depraved and excessive superstition".<sup>134</sup>*

It is instructive to note that the ministry of widows (referred to in 1 Timothy) was regarded from early times as providing an important clerical function in the Church rather than simply being a domestic order.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, the official

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*subjected to, and thus rejected because of, language that is not biblical at all ("governing authority!")* (p. 247n13).

132 Belleville 2000, p. 61; Belleville 2001, pp. 100 – 101; Belleville 2004a, p. 116; Belleville 2005a, p. 60; Torjesen 1995, p. 32; Barnett 2009, pp. 100 – 101; Bowman 2001, p. 284. Morris (1988) notes, "*It seems likely that she was the person entrusted with the task of taking the letter to the Roman church, for a commendation of someone not with the letter normally refers to a future arrival (cf. 1 Cor 16: 10; Col 4: 10)*" (p. 528).

133 Richards 2004, pp. 77, 125, 182 – 187, 201 – 204, 207 – 209; Belleville 2000, p. 189n49; Keener 2001, p. 38; Belleville 2001, p. 101; Belleville 2005a, p. 60. It is important to note that in areas influenced by Roman culture there were not the same cultural impediments to women speaking publicly with men as there were in those areas influenced by Hellenistic culture (Payton 2002, pp. 13 – 17; Belleville 2000, pp. 31, 50, 155; Belleville 2001, pp. 95, 96; Belleville 2004a, p. 116; D'Ambra 2007, p. 166; Keener 2004, pp. 166, 168; Torjesen 1995, p. 28; Pederson 2006, pp. 92 – 93). Another example of a letter, the reading of which was accompanied by verbal elaboration/explanation/confirmation, is related in Acts 15: 22 – 32. Furthermore, Colossians 4: 16 and 1 Thessalonians 5: 27 exemplify how Paul's letters were read aloud to the churches (Richards 2004, pp. 56, 126; Archaeological Study Bible, p. 1941).

134 Trombley 1985, p. 196; also Grenz 1995, p. 39; Torjesen 1995, p. 115; Belleville 2001, pp. 101 – 102

135 Grenz 1995, pp. 39, 236; Belleville 2000, pp. 65 – 66; Belleville 2001, p. 90

role of women in exercising *diakonos* gifts is reflected in Christian art from the first, second and third centuries AD where they are depicted as performing various ministerial activities – administering the Lord’s Supper, teaching, baptising, caring for the physical needs of the congregation and leading in public prayers.<sup>136</sup> Such activities are asserted by Male Headship proponents only to be the province of males, yet the historical evidence indicates otherwise.

Another writer has commented on these points:

*In the third century AD East (not West), women deacons were receiving ordination from bishops by prayer and imposition of hands and were fulfilling a pastoral role in sick-visiting, anointing women at baptism, and giving instruction. Paradoxically the West, under necessity, allowed women to baptise, the East not.*<sup>137</sup>

Yet another writer has observed that the meanings of the word used by Pliny to describe the two female maidservants (“deacons”) range from:

*... associate or assistant in a religious office to a household servant. It is the Latin equivalent to the term New Testament writers use for the leader of the congregation.*<sup>138</sup>

The preceding evidence is clear that women not only exercised gifts of service as private individuals, but that the Church also officially appointed them in this regard. Notably, not only have some Male Headship proponents acknowledged that women such as Phoebe occupied a formally appointed role as deacon within the early Church but that women could be appointed to such roles today.<sup>139</sup>

## 5.5 Women leaders

As noted in section 4 of this study, the basis upon which the gift of leadership was made available to Christians was not gender, but what was for the common good (Romans 12: 4 – 8; 1 Corinthians 12: 4 – 11; 1 Peter 4: 10). That women can possess leadership skills and abilities and use them to advance God’s Will is well attested in the Scriptures (for example Judges 4: 4ff, 5: 7; 2 Kings 22: 14ff; 2 Chronicles 34: 22 – 28; Proverbs 1: 8, 31: 26, 30 – 31; Micah 6: 4; Romans 16: 1 – 15; Philippians 4: 3).

The Scriptures indicate that women performed important whole-of-church worship leadership roles. For instance, Paul anticipated that women, together with men, would pray and prophesy for the edification of fellow believers (1 Corinthians 11: 4 – 5, 12: 7 – 11, 14: 1 – 5, 22, 24, 26, 39). Also, the original

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136 Grenz 1995, p. 39; Torjesen 1995, pp. 8, 52

137 Chadwick 1993, p. 53

138 Torjesen 1995, p. 129n7

139 For example Blomberg 2001, p. 337; Schreiner 2001, pp. 193, 194

Greek text of 1 Timothy 2: 8 – 9 gives every indication that Paul’s reference in verse 9 to the attire to be worn by women was in the context of the need for appropriate conduct on the part of women when engaged in whole-of-church prayer activities in the same way (“likewise”) that verse 8 is concerned with the conduct of men when similarly engaged.<sup>140</sup>

It is well known that during the first century AD, churches met in private homes rather than in specially constructed “church buildings”.<sup>141</sup> From the New Testament the evidence of churches meeting in the homes of individual women who are named in their own right is particularly noticeable (for example Mary [Acts 12], Lydia [Acts 16] and Nympha [Colossians 4]).<sup>142</sup> Churches are also identified as meeting in the homes of couples (Romans 16; 1 Corinthians 16; Philemon 2). Such people were regarded as patrons of the respective church communities that met in their homes, and being a patron in that society was a much respected, authoritative and highly honoured role.<sup>143</sup> In the first century AD a home owner who opened up his or her home as a meeting place for a group did more than simply provide the refreshments. He or she was considered to be in charge of the group that met under their roof and was legally responsible for its activities (for example Jason was responsible for posting the bond for Paul and Silas [Acts 17: 5 – 9]).<sup>144</sup>

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140 Belleville 2000, pp. 64 – 65; Cunningham *et al* 2000, pp. 211 – 121, 272n18; Green Baggins (1); Osburn 2001, p. 240; Guthrie 1976, p. 74. In making his point in 1 Timothy 2: 9 Paul used what is known as an ellipsis, a literary device often employed in the New Testament which involves “... *the omission of a word or phrase necessary for a complete syntactical construction but not necessary for understanding. For example, it is not uncommon to say something like, ‘I’m going to the Store. Bob is, too.’ Though we don’t say it, we understand that ‘Bob is going to the store, too.’ If ‘Bob is, too’ were read by itself, you’d be clueless as to what Bob was doing. The ellipsis requires you to look back to the preceding statement in order to insert mentally the prior action into the sentence about Bob. Understanding the context is of paramount importance in this everyday example as it is in biblical interpretation*” (Cunningham *et al* 2000, p. 259n16; also, Belleville 2000, p. 65). Certainly, the early Church Father John Chrysostom understood Paul to have used an ellipsis in 1 Timothy 2: 9 since in his commentary he “... *added the words ‘to pray’ to this verse to complete its meaning*” (Cunningham *et al* 2000, p. 212). The need for Christian women in that society to be conscious of their mode of dress, particularly when engaged in whole-of-church worship activities, was due to the immoral sexual connotations often associated in that culture with “outward show”. As has been observed, “... *pagan (especially Stoic) moralists frequently described outward adornment as an indication of sexual seductiveness. This is understandable, since, as Epictetus notes, sexual attractiveness was the one power women were able to exert within their society. Moreover, such dress was also a mark of many cults, which were viewed as making women lascivious. Thus Christian women are being exhorted to avoid appearing morally improper by the standards of their culture*” (Davids 2004, p. 230; also, Osburn 2001, p. 241).

141 Viola and Barna 2008, pp. 9 – 47; Barnett 2009, p. 173; Osburn 2001, p. 153; Schreiner 2001, p. 228  
 142 In the case of Lydia the assumption of one Male Headship proponent is that she was the head of a “... *presumably maleless household*” (Blomberg 2001, p. 336). However, there is no biblical evidence to support such an assumption. Rather, it appears to be based on the underlying premise that a woman could not possibly have been in charge of a household that included men even though evidence exists for such households in the ancient world (Torjesen 1995, pp. 12, 55 – 59, 80 – 81; Belleville 2000, pp. 52, 94 – 95, 96). This was especially the case in areas that were influenced by Roman culture and Lydia’s home town, Philippi, was a Roman colony (Acts 16: 12; Payton 2002, p. 15).

143 Torjesen 1995, pp. 5 – 6, 101 – 105; Grenz 1995, pp. 80, 86, 87; Belleville 2000, p. 52; Belleville 2004a, p. 123

144 Belleville 2000, p. 52; Belleville 2001, pp. 83, 96; Belleville 2004a, p. 123; Belleville 2005a, p. 38



One notable example of a woman who is named as having a home that doubled as the meeting place for the local church is Nympha (Colossians 4: 15). The question may be asked: Why did Paul send his greetings to her and the “church in her house”? Was he simply being polite in mentioning her because she was the owner of the premises in which the church met, or is this reference indicative of something more significant? Surely, if the leaders of churches were only to be male (as argued by Male Headship proponents), then Paul would have been expected to address his greetings to, and through, them. But in this case it appears that:

- no males were included in the church membership (which would seem doubtful); or
- there were no male leaders overseeing the church that met in her home (which of itself would pose significant problems for the Male Headship position); or
- Nympha herself was a recognised leader of the church that met in her house.

Under Roman law “... *Nympha had legal responsibility for and hence authority over the church that met in her house.*”<sup>145</sup> Accordingly, would it be too difficult to interpret Paul’s greeting to Nympha as being recognition of her role as that of a leader of the church that met in her house? Had she been a male, would there be any argument from Male Headship proponents in this respect?

As well as being a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, with the leadership connotations that such a role involved (see section 5.4 of this study), Phoebe is described by Paul as a “patroness” of many early Christians (Romans 16: 2). The Greek word used to refer to Phoebe, *prostatis*, means “*a woman set over others, a female guardian, protectress, patroness, [a woman] caring for the affairs of others and aiding them with her resources*”.<sup>146</sup> The construction of the Greek text indicates that she had been appointed to this role by another person (it was not a self-appointed role), possibly even Paul himself.<sup>147</sup> It should be noted that *prostatis* is the feminine form of the Greek word that is translated “rule” in 1 Timothy 5: 17. While some Male Headship proponents have dismissed Paul’s use of *prostatis* as having any significance,<sup>148</sup> at least one has acknowledged that the word “... *carries with it the idea of leadership. It probably connotes Phoebe’s leadership in social and financial realms, with her social standing and wealth being used to the advantage of the church in Cenchrea.*”<sup>149</sup>

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145 Belleville 2004a, p. 124

146 Thayer 1979, # 4368, p. 549

147 Cunningham *et al* 2000, pp. 152, 263n54

148 For example Hurley 1981, p. 123; Knight 1985, p. 39; Schreiner 2001, p. 197; Grudem 2006, pp. 129 – 132

149 Bowman 2001, p. 284. Osburn (2001) notes how a patron in the first century AD was in a position to influence and render assistance as a result of their wealth and social status (pp. 142 – 143, 154).

Had Phoebe been a “helper” purely in an auxiliary sense, such as appears to be suggested by the NIV’s translation of *prostatis*, then Paul could have been expected to use a more appropriate word like that found in Acts 13: 5 and translated by the NIV to describe John Mark as the “helper” of Paul and Barnabas.<sup>150</sup> However, by using *prostatis* rather than some other word Paul was signalling to the Romans that Phoebe was indeed a person of special standing and status within the Christian community at Cenchreae.<sup>151</sup> Accordingly, they were asked to assist her in any way she needed.

Given the scriptural evidence which indicates that women occupied various leadership roles in the house churches of the first century AD, the question may be asked: Was the role of elder/bishop/overseer open to women?<sup>152</sup> On the basis of church council records, tombstone epitaphs, paintings and mosaics some have concluded as much.<sup>153</sup> However, based on one particular requirement out of all those listed in 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 and Titus 1: 6 – 9, namely that an elder is to be the “husband of one wife”, Male Headship proponents insist that this was and continues to be a male-only role.<sup>154</sup>

It is important to consider whether there is any scriptural support for the Male Headship argument that only men were, and are, meant to be elders. Did the inclusion of the “husband of one wife” criterion necessarily mean that the eldership was limited to men only? Could a woman still be qualified for the role despite this requirement? Does such a requirement necessarily disqualify women from the role today? What does the expression “husband of one wife” actually mean?

If the intent behind 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 and Titus 1: 6 – 9 was that only men were eligible for the eldership, the passages themselves are certainly not explicit about such intent. In fact, there are at least two reasons why the passages may be read as having potential applicability to both male and female eldership

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150 Footnote 115 of this study points out that in Acts 13: 5 the word “helper” (NIV) is translated from the Greek word *huperetes* which means “... any subordinate acting under another’s direction” (Vine n.d., p. 754).

151 Morris (1988) notes, “... Paul goes on to make it clear that Phoebe was someone special ... the word he uses [i.e., *prostatis*] ... is a word that points to an important person” (p. 530).

152 In the New Testament the terms elder/bishop/overseer are used interchangeably in reference to the same role (Keener 2001, p. 42; Schreiner 2001, p. 182; Viola and Barna 2008, p. 110n15).

153 For example Grenz 1995 pp. 39, 40, 89ff; Trombley 1985, pp. 197 – 198; Torjesen 1995, pp. 9, 10, 19, 20, 115; Kroeger and Kroeger 1992, pp. 90ff; Elwell 1991, p. 558; Belleville 2000, pp. 25 – 26

154 For example House 1995, p. 176; Grudem 2006, p. 44; Bowman 2001, p. 285; Hurley 1981, pp. 224, 229. Interestingly, Paul himself appears to have been somewhat more flexible with respect to the interpretation of the qualifications for elders. This can be seen from 1 Timothy 3: 6 where he stipulated that a candidate must not be a “recent convert”, yet the timing of his appointment of the elders in Acts 14: 23 indicates that the particular appointees could only have been “recent converts”. On this point, Viola and Barna (2008) suggest that the appointment of these people occurred only six months to one year after the churches in question were first established (p. 235). The likely explanation for Paul’s apparent flexibility in this regard lies in the definition of the word “recent”: how recent is recent? Again, this serves to illustrate the importance of taking care to avoid interpreting the Scriptures in a way that produces “absurd” conclusions (see footnote 25 of this study).

aspirants.

Firstly, what is notable about these passages is that in the original Greek text neither actually states that only males are eligible to be appointed as elders. While the NIV uses masculine pronouns in its translation of 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 and Titus 1: 6 – 9, the fact is that such masculine pronouns are absent in the original Greek text.<sup>155</sup> However, even if masculine pronouns had been used, male exclusivity for the role would still not be proven since in the Greek language masculine pronouns included the feminine.<sup>156</sup>

Furthermore, at the beginning of both passages the Greek word used is *tis* (“anyone”) rather than *aner*, the word for “male” or “man”. The significance of *tis* is that it “... is a neuter word meaning either male or female, someone or a certain one, usually meaning both sexes. If the Holy Spirit wanted only males for these church offices, Paul would have used *aner*, the unmistakable word for man.”<sup>157</sup> Similarly, Keener (2001) notes, “Despite the use of the word *man* in many translations of this verse, 1 Timothy 3: 1 uses a gender-neutral term, not the gender-specific *aner*, to designate one seeking the office of elder.”<sup>158</sup>

Notably, The Bible for Today (Contemporary English Version) translates the requirement in 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 2 as follows: “It is true that anyone who desires to be a church official wants to be something worthwhile. That’s why officials must have a good reputation and be faithful in marriage.” The Bible for Today (Contemporary English Version) translates Titus 1: 6 similarly.

Thus, if the intent was that only men were meant to be elders in the church then it would have been more likely that a clear masculine word would have been used rather than the gender-neutral word *tis*. The fact that *tis* is used rather than a clear masculine word like *aner* is highly instructive.

Secondly, the qualities required of an eldership aspirant in 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 and Titus 1: 6 – 9 are generally character-based with only one, “husband of one wife”, being gender-specific.<sup>159</sup> Yet it is on the basis of this one criterion that Male Headship proponents interpret all the other listed criteria as having application to male eldership aspirants only.<sup>160</sup> The question may be asked: Is this a reasonable interpretation and are only men capable of possessing the requisite qualities?

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155 Cunningham *et al* 2000, pp. 227, 276n2; Payne 2008, p. 248n38

156 Carson 1996, p. 39; Belleville 2001, p. 101; Sumner 2003, p. 125; Cunningham *et al* 2000, p. 262n32

157 Trombley 1985, p. 196

158 Keener 2001, p. 43n20. Payne (2008, p. 248), Cunningham *et al* (2000, pp. 227, 276n2) and Jacobs (1998, p. 189) note similarly to Trombley and Keener.

159 As also noted by Belleville 2001, pp. 103, 110; Belleville 2005a, pp. 63, 69

160 For example Hurley (1981) has stated, “The remainder of the set of qualifications is cast exclusively in male terms” (p. 229). The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, an organisation which advocates the Male Headship position, similarly contends the criteria to be “gender-exclusive” (cited in Belleville 2001, p. 110).

As noted above, of the qualities listed as being necessary for an eldership aspirant, “husband of one wife” is the only one that is not a character trait or ability. Apart from this one gender-specific qualification, all the other listed qualifications are non-gender, character-based criteria that are elsewhere enjoined upon all Christians. For example, the need for an elder to be hospitable (1 Timothy 3: 2; Titus 1: 8) and to not be a lover of money (1 Timothy 3: 3) are qualities that all Christians are called to exhibit (Romans 12: 13; 1 Timothy 6: 5 – 10; Hebrews 13: 2, 5; 1 Peter 4: 9). The requirements for an elder not to be “given to much wine” and to be able to teach (1 Timothy 3: 2 – 3; Titus 1: 7, 9) have application for Christians generally (Romans 15: 14; 1 Corinthians 14: 26; Ephesians 5: 18; Colossians 3: 16; 2 Timothy 2: 2; Titus 2: 3; Hebrews 5: 12). Other eldership qualities that apply to Christians generally include being upright and holy (Titus 1: 8, 2: 12; Hebrews 12: 14) and having a good reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3: 7, 5: 7, 6: 1; Ephesians 5: 3 – 7; Titus 2: 5, 8, 10). Thus, the qualifications required of an elder are not unique to the role and are, in fact, qualities that all Christians are called to possess.

Specifically with respect to the criterion of “being able to teach”, it is notable that the audience to be taught and the setting in which the teaching takes place are not specified in either 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 or Titus 1: 6 – 9. The generic nature of the criterion makes sense given that an elder would need to be able to teach a range of different audiences (from individuals to groups of various sizes) in a variety of settings. The manner in which the criterion is expressed does not limit the exercise of the particular ability to being able to engage only in “public” teaching. With this in mind, Priscilla readily exemplifies a person who was successfully able to engage in teaching (exhort, correct) Apollos, a man who already was a highly knowledgeable believer (Acts 18: 26). Irrespective of whether the setting in which the teaching was conducted was “private” or “public”, given her success in this regard Priscilla could be considered to have satisfied this particular eldership requirement.

One important qualification of an eldership aspirant was that they should be able to manage their own household (1 Timothy 3: 4 – 5). To possess such a quality was important for any leader in the first century AD because:

*The position of head of household also qualified an individual for leadership roles. Because household management involved administrative, financial and disciplinary responsibilities, it prepared an individual to assume corresponding responsibilities in the community. Greek political theorists held that the skills required for political leadership were first developed through the administration of a household.*<sup>161</sup>

One Male Headship proponent has asserted that “... a woman could not fulfill this strategic qualification for church office since she was not allowed such rule in

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161 Torjesen 1995, p. 15; also, Torjesen 1995, pp. 5, 6, 57; Belleville 2000, pp. 52, 148; Belleville 2001, pp. 103 – 104

*the home.*"<sup>162</sup> However, such an assertion is contradicted by none other than Paul himself who, only a few verses later, instructed the young women in the Ephesian church to marry, have children and "manage their homes" (1 Timothy 5: 14 NIV). The Greek word for "manage" in this instance is *oikodespoteo* which signifies to be master of a house or head of a family, to rule and guide the household.<sup>163</sup> This term is much stronger than the word *prostenai* which is used in 1 Timothy 3: 5.<sup>164</sup> Notably, the RSV translates this section of verse 14 as "rule their households". Other translations such as the American Standard Version, Darby Bible Translation, English Revised Version and World English Bible render this aspect of verse 14 similarly. Given the importance of an eldership aspirant being able to manage their family (1 Timothy 3: 4 – 5; Titus 1: 6), it is instructive that Paul elsewhere required children to obey their *parents*, not just their father (Ephesians 6: 2; Colossians 3: 20).<sup>165</sup>

The question may be asked: Could Paul have accorded men primary responsibility for the family given that he instructed fathers not to be too harsh when disciplining their children (Ephesians 6: 4; Colossians 3: 21)? Certainly under the so-called Aristotelian family code which underpinned ancient Greek and Roman culture<sup>166</sup> fathers held the pre-eminent role in raising and disciplining children, even to the point of being able to have them put to death.<sup>167</sup> However, the principle that both parents were jointly responsible for the upbringing and discipline of their children was established under the Old Testament, in fact from the time of Creation (Genesis 2: 24; Exodus 20: 12; Leviticus 19: 3; Deuteronomy 5: 16, 6: 7, 21: 18 – 20; Proverbs 1: 8, 6: 20). Paul affirmed the continuation of this principle under the New Testament (2 Corinthians 12: 14; Ephesians 6: 1 – 3; Colossians 3: 20). His injunction for fathers not to be too harsh in disciplining their children does not negate this principle. In effect, it functioned to moderate the prevailing influence of the Aristotelian family code by

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162 House 1995, p. 176

163 Vine n.d., p. 989; Bullinger 1975, p. 386; Belleville 2000, p. 116; Belleville 2004a, p. 123. During the first century AD women were increasingly expected to fill the role of household manager: "... *the trend during Roman times was to shift greater and greater administrative responsibilities on the shoulders of the mistress (e.g., managing the estates and business)*" (Belleville 2000, p. 192n42). Also, it is important to note that rather than being comparable to modern Western households which are generally comprised of two adults and two children, first century AD households not only included far more people among their number but running them was akin to managing a large organisation: "... *households in the first century included not only the immediate family and relatives but also slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, hired workers, and even tenants and partners in a trade or craft. This meant that the female head of the house had to possess good administrative and management skills*" (Belleville 2001, pp. 96 – 97).

164 Belleville 2000, pp. 52, 116, 148; Belleville 2001, pp. 97, 102 – 104; Belleville 2005a, pp. 57, 63

165 Also noted by Belleville 2000, p. 116

166 The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC) articulated a model for basic societal relationships (husband over wife, father over child, master over slave), now known as the Aristotelian family code, which was highly influential in Greece and later during the Roman Empire (Browning 2004, p. 4; Torjesen 1995, p. 60).

167 D'Ambra 2007, p. 49; Goodman 2008, pp. 217 – 219; Pederson 2006, p. 84. Even in the event of divorce the father automatically assumed custody of any children from the marriage (Goodman 2008, pp. 214, 227).

ensuring that fathers did not overstep the mark in such matters.<sup>168</sup>

Knight (1985) has suggested that the reference in 1 Timothy 5: 14 to women exercising authority over their households meant that they would be doing so “*under their husbands*”.<sup>169</sup> While under the Hellenistic culture of the time women “... *knew few legal rights or social opportunities [and] were defined legally as belonging to a man,*”<sup>170</sup> the passage is silent on whether Paul expected the women to manage their homes “under” their husbands.<sup>171</sup> What is clear is that Paul expected the women at Ephesus to be good household managers and since he had just instructed them to “marry and have children”, it was obviously intended that part of being a good household manager involved exercising responsibility that would be inclusive of their husbands. They would hardly be able to comply with Paul’s expectation if their husbands did not respect and abide by the decisions they made in the course of managing their households. Furthermore, they would hardly be able to comply with Paul’s expectation if there was a possibility of their husbands frustrating or countermanding any decision they made while managing their households. For the women at Ephesus to be responsible for managing their households as Paul had instructed, their husbands needed to allow them to exercise their agency accordingly.<sup>172</sup>

From the preceding discussion it is clear that apart from the one gender-specific criterion (“husband of one wife”) the other requisite qualities for an eldership aspirant were not limited to men only and could be held by Christians regardless of gender.

However, the question remains: Why did 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 and Titus 1: 6 – 9 specifically include the “husband of one wife” requirement? It is important to note that some other Bible translations render this expression as:

- “faithful to his wife” (TNIV);
- “be faithful in marriage” (The Bible for Today [Contemporary English

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168 It is important to note that in Ephesians 5: 21 – 6: 9 and Colossians 3: 18 – 4: 1 Paul radically reinterprets each of the fundamental tenets of the Aristotelian family code (husband over wife, father over child, master over slave) (Browning 2004, pp. 4, 6 – 7, 133; Belleville 2000, pp. 120 – 121). Section 11 of this study (Part B) discusses how Paul’s injunction in Ephesians 5 mitigated the impact of the code with respect to the husband and wife relationship.

169 Knight 1985, p. 41

170 Payton 2002, p. 14

171 It is also highly questionable whether Paul would have personally endorsed such Hellenistic attitudes given that elsewhere he radically reinterpreted the fundamental tenets of the Aristotelian family code and taught equality of authority and status between husband and wife. This will be explored later in this study. Furthermore, as will be shown in section 7 of this study, there is no explicit delegation from God for husbands to exercise unilateral authority over their wives (Belleville 2000, pp. 80, 114, 158; Belleville 2001, pp. 145 – 146; Nicole 2004, p. 358; Fee 2004b, p. 374; Belleville 2005a, p. 31; Sumner 2003, pp. 86, 163).

172 In Roman society the position of the wife within the household was virtually on par with that of her husband. There is no indication of the wife exercising authority in the household “under” the husband (Belleville 2000, pp. 91, 94, 95, 96, 116, 192n42; Siddons 1980, p. 35; Torjesen 1995, pp. 55 – 76, 80 – 81).

Version]); and

- “faithful to his one wife” (New English Bible).

Another translation, the English Standard Version, carries a footnote which indicates that the expression could be rendered “man of one woman” (which is the literal translation from the original Greek text). Similarly, the International Standard Version includes a footnote that the expression can be rendered as “*devoted to his wife; lit. a man of one woman.*”

This selection of translations is sufficient to show that the sense intended to be conveyed by use of the expression “husband of one wife” was the requirement for marital fidelity on the part of a male eldership aspirant.<sup>173</sup> Viewed through a contemporary Western cultural lens, such a requirement would seem self-evident. So why did it need explicating to the men of the churches for which Timothy and Titus were responsible? In consideration of the rule of biblical interpretation that the historical and cultural context of the time in question should be taken into account, the reason for the inclusion of this one gender-specific qualification is relatively straightforward: at that time and in that culture it was generally accepted that men could legitimately engage in illicit and extra-marital sexual relationships.<sup>174</sup>

In Hellenistic societies it was common for men to have wives, concubines and mistresses.<sup>175</sup> One ancient Greek orator, Demosthenes (384-322 BC), is known to have said: “*Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children.*”<sup>176</sup>

Of this custom one writer has noted: “*Greek married women simply were not prone to multiple marriages or illicit unions. But Greek men were. In fact, extramarital affairs were par for the Greek male but not tolerated for Greek women (because of the concern for legitimate sons).*”<sup>177</sup>

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173 Woods' (2004) study into the expression “the husband of one wife” in 1 Timothy 3: 2 also concluded that it is best to understand the phrase as meaning “... ‘a one woman man’ and to view the phrase as requiring fidelity in the character of a candidate for the office of elder” (p. 19). Keener (2001) similarly concluded that “... Paul may have been specifying marital fidelity ...” (pp. 43, 57n45). Likewise, Fair (2010a) concluded that Paul’s concern is with marital fidelity (p. 9; also Fair 2010b).

174 Belleville 2000, p. 91; Belleville 2001, p. 103; Cunningham *et al* 2000, p. 83; Belleville 2005a, p. 63; Hurley 1981, pp. 75 – 76; Woods 2004, pp. 16 – 17; Beard 2008, p. 235; Fair 2010a, pp. 9, 11; Fair 2010b 175 Siddons 1980, p. 34; Payton 2002, p. 14; Woods 2004, pp. 16 – 17. Similarly, in the Roman world, “*Sexual fidelity to a wife was not prized or even particularly admired*” (Beard 2008, p. 235). Indeed, the ancient Romans considered that a man could engage in extra-marital relations with whomever he liked provided that it was not with another man’s wife (Goodman 2008, p. 295; D’Ambra 2007, p. 49; Alston 1998, p. 291; Fox 1986, pp. 344, 345; Beard 2008, p. 235; Pederson 2006, pp. 85 – 86; Baker 2007, p. 178).

176 Cunningham *et al* 2000, p. 83. A similar concern for the need to ensure legitimate offspring motivated the attitudes of the ancient Romans (D’Ambra 2007, p. 47; Fox 1986, p. 344).

177 Belleville 2001, p. 103; also, Belleville 2000, p. 148; Belleville 2005a, p. 63; Siddons 1980, p. 34. While allowing men to engage in extra-marital and illicit affairs but not women represents a major double

Of the prevailing cultural expectations regarding women it has been noted: “*The ideal wife was sexual enough to get pregnant and bear three or so children but would give up sexual relations altogether by her mid-twenties and even before that would expect her husband to get his main sexual needs met elsewhere.*”<sup>178</sup>

It has been said that, “... *the culture of the first-century world was built on the foundational social values of honour and dishonour*”<sup>179</sup> and that, “... *the values of honour and shame are central in the Bible.*”<sup>180</sup> One writer has made the following comment on the honour-shame codes which operated in ancient Mediterranean cultures to regulate male sexual behaviour:

*... The codes reflect what many scholars call an “agonistic” culture, a culture organised around conflicts between men over issues of honour. In such cultures honour was associated with male dominance and agency while shame was associated with male weakness and passivity. A sign of male weakness and shame was permitting the violation of the women of a man’s household – wife, sister, or mother – without proper defence or retaliation. To keep such encroachments from happening, males enforced the systematic restriction of women to the domestic sphere. If such an offence did occur, any self-respecting male was to challenge and subdue the violator with physical force. At the same time, free men were entitled to a great deal of public, political, and sexual freedom. They also could gain honour if they could get away with shaming other men by seducing or offending the women in their households.*<sup>181</sup>

Were early Christians influenced by such attitudes? Given Christianity’s high moral standards and expectations it might, at first, be thought that this would have been extremely unlikely. However, sexual sin must have been a problem (or potentially so) for some in the early Church since there are constant exhortations throughout the New Testament writings for Christians to avoid illicit sexual activities (Acts 15: 20, 29, 21: 25; Romans 6: 12 – 23, 13: 13 – 14; 1 Corinthians 5: 1 – 11, 6: 12 – 20, 7: 2, 10: 8; 2 Corinthians 12: 21; Galatians 5: 19 – 21; Ephesians 4: 17 – 24, 5: 3ff; Colossians 3: 5 – 8; 1 Thessalonians 4: 3 – 8; Hebrews 12: 16, 13: 4; 1 Peter 4: 1 – 7; Jude 4; Revelation 2: 14, 20 – 23). For example, in his general letter to the Ephesians, Paul encouraged them not to “*let sexual sin, impurity of any kind, or greed even be mentioned among you, as is proper for saints ... For you know very well that no immoral or impure person, or anyone who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has an inheritance in the kingdom of the Messiah and of God*” (Ephesians 5: 3, 5) (International Standard Version). The continual iteration of such exhortations over the course of the first century AD to a variety of Christian communities would not have been necessary had

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standard from a contemporary Western perspective, it was the accepted norm in the ancient Greco-Roman world. We need to understand them through their eyes, not ours.

178 Davids 2004, p. 235n49

179 Internet 7

180 Cosner

181 Browning 2004, pp. 5 – 6; also, Torjesen 1995, pp. 137, 141; Jenkins 2011, pp. 28 – 29. NB: The term “agonistic” is derived from the Greek word *agon* meaning “contest” (Internet 7).



there been no problems or concerns in this regard.

Indeed, the Corinthian church is a notable case of one Christian community that did experience sexual immorality among its membership (1 Corinthians 5). It was precisely because of the incidence of sexual immorality in that church that Paul wrote that each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband in order to control temptation (1 Corinthians 7: 2 – 7). Of the problem at Corinth the following observation has been made:

*The prevailing laxity in sexual behaviour, the gluttonous and idolatrous feasts, the incessant holiday-making in honor of the emperor or of the gods, and the interchange of entertainment in pagan homes must have affected many Christians. Particularly are these pressures mirrored in 1 Corinthians, an epistle written to the church in a prosperous heathen city. The moral degeneration of Corinth had infiltrated the church so that one man had taken his father's wife and had consequently created a public scandal. Others had been so affected by the atmosphere of idolatry that they did not know whether they should eat food that had been offered to idols or not (1 Cor 10: 23 – 31). Living as they did under the constant influence of idolatry, it was easy for the Christian to lose sight of the niceties of distinction in ethical behaviour.*<sup>182</sup>

While Paul was not averse to Christians observing certain social conventions and customs (such as those relating to “head coverings” [1 Corinthians 11]),<sup>183</sup> he was implacably opposed to any practice that was sexually immoral or otherwise contrary to the monogamous ideal he espoused (Romans 6: 12 – 14; Ephesians 5: 3, 5; Colossians 3: 5; 1 Corinthians 6: 15 – 18, 7: 2). Paul's approach in this regard was consistent with the high moral standards and

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182 Tenney 2004, p. 138. In his letter Paul makes two observations about the particular sin at Corinth. Firstly, it was of a kind that even pagans found distasteful. In this regard, incest of the type that was manifested at Corinth was taboo among Romans. The ancient Roman orator Cicero stated that incest was practically unheard of in Roman society (Bruce 1980, p. 53; Archaeological Study Bible, p. 1868) while the Old Testament was explicit in its condemnation of such practices (Leviticus 18:8; Deuteronomy 22: 30). Secondly, the Corinthians were not ashamed themselves of such behaviour. In fact, Paul was aghast that they were actually proud of what their fellow believer had done. These observations, together with other references in the letter such as 1 Corinthians 6: 15, 18, strongly indicate that sexual sin was a major problem for the church at Corinth. However, sexual immorality was not only a problem at Corinth, since there are indications that it also was a problem elsewhere such as for some in the Thyatiran church (Revelation 2: 20). What could account for such attitudes and practices among some early Christians? One explanation is that they could have been influenced by the belief, known as *antinomianism*, that once a person was saved it did not then matter what the person did in a moral sense (Archaeological Study Bible, p. 1839). Paul constantly taught against such views (for example, Romans 3: 8, 6: 1, 15, 19; 1 Corinthians 6: 12; Galatians 5: 24). Nevertheless, that there was such a belief would explain why there are so many injunctions over the course of the first century AD against Christians engaging in sexual impropriety. Even subsequently, the problem of sexual misconduct among some Christians continued to be a cause for concern. For instance, writing about the church at Antioch in 390AD, John Chrysostom lamented, “... *the women have learned the manners of the brothel, and the men are no better than maddened stallions*” (Fox 1986, p. 374).

183 As noted also by Keener 2004, pp. 167 – 168. This was particularly the case if non-observance of such conventions and customs led to perceptions of sexual impropriety on the part of Christians, as will be seen when this issue is considered in sections 8 and 9 of this study (Part B).

expectations regarding marital fidelity as reflected in Jesus' teachings and Old Testament passages such as Proverbs 5: 15 – 23 and Malachi 2: 14 – 16.

Clearly, monogamy and sexual fidelity were essential values for Paul. While the customs of the day openly accepted that a man could have multiple sexual partners, in Paul's view doing so would bring a man into disrepute and make him ineligible for the eldership.<sup>184</sup> As noted by one writer: "... *marital faithfulness was a greater challenge for the males in that society. In a Greek city like Ephesus, where men were still by and large the initiators in matters of divorce (as well as in philandering), marital faithfulness would be an important part of a man's Christian witness.*"<sup>185</sup> It is for this reason that Paul included the one gender-specific requirement, "husband of one wife", for the benefit of male eldership aspirants. Making a similar requirement for potential female eldership aspirants would have been unnecessary given the general cultural expectations of the time that a woman should remain single or monogamous.<sup>186</sup>

Given the preceding material it is reasonable to conclude that there is scope for understanding the eldership qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 and Titus 1: 6 – 9 as having applicability to an eldership aspirant regardless of gender, and that the attributes required of elders are not such that only men can possess

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184 Paul was determined that no one should be given an excuse to malign the faith that he preached (1 Timothy 6: 1; Titus 2: 5, 8, 10). To this end he consistently instructed Christians to ensure that their lives were conducted in a manner that would not give cause for offence (Ephesians 5: 3 – 7; 1 Thessalonians 4: 11 – 12; 1 Timothy 3: 2, 10, 5: 7, 14, 6: 1; Titus 1: 7, 2: 5 – 10). This is the likely reason why the words "must be above reproach" and "must be blameless" are linked with "husband of but one wife" in 1 Timothy 3: 2 and Titus 1: 6 respectively.

185 Belleville 2000, pp. 143, 148; also, Belleville 2001, p. 103

186 Cunningham *et al* 2000, p. 83; Alston 1998, p. 291; Belleville 2000, pp. 114, 148; Belleville 2001, p. 103; Belleville 2005a, p. 63; Siddons 1980, p. 34. The ancient Romans held similar attitudes about women (D'Ambra 2007, p. 49; Baker 2007, p. 178). On this point one Male Headship proponent, Hurley (1981) has also observed, "... *one woman married to two men would have been unthinkable and would therefore not require comment*" (p. 229). It should be further noted that some Male Headship proponents have recognised that the "husband of one wife" requirement was made in response to the beliefs and practices of the time which accepted that men could have multiple sexual partners. For example, it has been suggested that the requirement was a prohibition "... *against polygamy. Polygamy was still practised among some Jews, and among the Greeks the keeping of hetaerae, or women other than the lawful wife, was common. Certainly this practice would be condemned by this Scripture*" (Roberts 1964, p. 27; also, Grudem 2006, p. 44). Polygamy was a long standing Hebrew/Jewish custom (Genesis 22: 24, 25: 6; Exodus 21: 10; Deuteronomy 21: 15ff; 1 Samuel 1: 2, 25: 43, 27: 3; 2 Samuel 5: 13, 12: 8; 1 Kings 11: 3; 1 Chronicles 4: 5, 8: 8, 14: 3; 2 Chronicles 11: 21, 13: 21, 24: 3). The ancient Jewish historian Josephus records that it was still practised among the Jews during the first century AD (Trombley 1985, p. 39; Grudem 2006, p. 44; Goodman 2008, pp. 227 – 228; Woods 2004). While it was accepted that men were not restricted from having multiple partners, rabbinical teachers specifically prohibited a woman from having more than one husband at a time (Trombley 1985, p. 39). It appears that Jesus' disciples originally thought that it was permissible for a man to have a succession of wives (albeit divorced) (Matthew 19: 8 – 10). While the polygamy explanation is suggested by some Male Headship proponents, it should be noted that the practice itself was not sanctioned by Roman law (Belleville 2000, p. 114; Fair 2010b, p. 8). Furthermore, doubt has been expressed as to whether polygamy was the specific problem at Ephesus: "*Polygamy was not an issue in Ephesus. It was uncommon in Roman society, in part because sexual encounters outside of marriage as well as divorces were easily obtainable*" (MacArthur cited in Woods 2004, p. 15; also Fair 2010b, p. 8). While Ephesus was noted as a place for sexual promiscuity, whether this included the practice of polygamy is open to question.

them. Indeed, the vast majority of the qualifications relate to qualities to which all Christians are called. As for the one gender-specific qualification (“husband of one wife”), this can be seen to have been necessary because of the particular cultural conditions of the time which carried implications for male eldership aspirants.

Some Male Headship proponents have objected to the potential of women being elders on the basis that the New Testament contains no specific mention of female elders nor does it record the name of any woman appointed in this regard.<sup>187</sup> Of itself, this is not a compelling argument against female elders since individual men are not named as elders either.<sup>188</sup> In any case, the absence of a woman who is specifically named as an elder is not conclusive evidence that there were no female elders<sup>189</sup> or that women were/are not eligible to be appointed as such.<sup>190</sup> This is not an unreasonable conclusion given the recognised principle of historical enquiry that “... *absence of evidence does not equal evidence of absence.*”<sup>191</sup>

Nevertheless, whether or not women are specifically named as elders in the early Church is not the issue. Rather, the issues to be considered are: (1) whether or not there is a prohibition on women from serving in such roles; and, (2) whether or not the Scriptures would allow for female elders to be appointed. While no woman is specifically identified or named in the Scriptures as an elder, the preceding discussion demonstrates that this would not prevent 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 and Titus 1: 6 – 9 from being understood as potentially allowing for such. As noted previously in this section of the study, apart from the one gender-

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187 For example Schreiner 2001, p. 190; Blomberg 2001, p. 350n82; Bowman 2001, p. 285

188 Griffiths 1986, p. 114; Grenz 1995, p. 90; Belleville 2000, p. 147; Keener 2001, p. 43; Belleville 2001, p. 95. While Peter is described as an “elder” in 1 Peter 5: 1, it is important to note that biblical examples are authoritative only when supported by a command and unless a biblical example is supported by a command it is not authoritative (Henrichsen and Jackson 1990, pp. 161, 162). If this was not the case then all churches would be obliged to follow, for example, the precedent set in Mark 14: 13 – 15 and Acts 1: 13 – 14 and always conduct their meetings in an upper room! Furthermore, while Peter was an “elder”, he was unique in that he was both an Apostle (in fact, a leading Apostle [Galatians 2: 9]) and an elder. Thus, given the absence of a general command of application to men in this instance, the naming of Peter as an elder in 1 Peter 5: 1 is not of itself evidence that only men were qualified for appointment as elders. The New Testament does not name any other individual male who held the role of elder, let alone the dual role of Apostle and elder. Nor in fact are any males specifically identified as deacons. Indeed, the only deacon of a specific church who is actually named as such is a woman, Phoebe (Romans 16: 1). Thus, contrary to the claims of Male Headship proponents, the fact that individual women are not named as elders does not self-evidently prove that women did not, or could not, qualify for the role.

189 Bowman (2001) recognises as much for in stating, “*In the New Testament no woman is cited as an example of an elder.*” she proceeds to say, “*This is not to say that [the New Testament church] did not have women elders; it is simply to say that we have no record of it*” (p. 285).

190 If the mere absence of references to female elders was to be taken as conclusive evidence that women could not be appointed as elders then the absence of references to post-New Testament innovations such as hymn/song books and standalone church buildings could see such developments also being called into question on the grounds that they are not mentioned in the Scriptures. It is noteworthy that despite the lack of scriptural support for such innovations and the lack of evidence for their use by Christians during the first century AD they are still widely accepted throughout the modern Christian world.

191 Dickson 2008, p. 16

specific criterion (“husband of one wife”), which can be explained by the particular cultural conditions of the time and which, in any event, does not necessarily confine the eldership to be a male role only, all the other requisite qualities are non-gender and character-based. As was also noted previously, all Christians regardless of gender are called to possess such qualities. Thus, apart from the one gender-specific criterion there is no warrant for interpreting the other criteria listed in 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 and Titus 1: 6 – 9 as necessarily restricting the role of elder to men only and excluding women from their scope of application. As nothing in the scriptural text specifically precludes or expressly prohibits a qualified woman from being appointed as an elder, it is reasonable to conclude that a faithful Christian woman who possesses proven managerial skills and abilities and who displays the other necessary character qualities would be just as eligible for appointment to the role as a faithful Christian man in possession of the requisite attributes.<sup>192</sup>

The question may be asked: Why did Paul not specifically provide for male and female elders in 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 like he appeared to do for male and female deacons in 1 Timothy 3: 8 – 12?<sup>193</sup> As the Scriptures are silent on this matter, it serves little purpose to speculate since any number of reasons could account for why he did not do so, although as noted previously in this section of the study it is instructive that gender-neutral words rather than masculine pronouns are used in the original Greek text. It also does not alter the fact that the character-based criteria would be applicable to both male and female eldership aspirants with the presence of the only gender-specific criterion (“husband of one wife”) being readily explained on cultural grounds.

Probably the most significant objection by Male Headship proponents to the concept of female elders is their contention that 1 Timothy 2: 12 precludes a woman from undertaking teaching and exercising “governing authority” in the

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192 This conclusion is consistent with a basic principle of hermeneutics, viz., “*The commandments of the Bible are authoritative for all people ... The believer is free to do anything that the Bible does not prohibit ... The Bible sets boundaries on what cannot be done, not on what can be done. All things are lawful unless specifically prohibited*” (Henrichsen and Jackson 1990, pp. 162, 163) (emphasis in text). As noted in footnotes 12 and 190 of this study, if this was not so then the use of hymn/song books during church worship and the construction of church buildings for the purpose of engaging in corporate worship activities could be challenged on the grounds that they are not specifically sanctioned by the Scriptures.

193 For example Blomberg (2001) states, “*Paul is restricting women in one (and in only one) way: They must not occupy the office of elder/overseer. This meshes with the fact that women are mentioned among the deacons in 1 Timothy 3: 8 – 13 (see verse 11), but not among the overseers in verses 1 – 7*” (p. 364). The underlying premise for Blomberg’s statement is that 1 Timothy 2: 12 prohibits women from exercising authority in the church. The validity of this premise will be considered later in this study (Part B). As to the existence of female deacons in the early Church this study has previously noted that 1 Timothy 3: 11 provided for the appointment of women in this regard (Osburn 2001, pp. 144 – 147). Post-apostolic writers such as Clement of Alexandria (second century AD) and John Chrysostom (fourth century AD) understood 1 Timothy 3: 11 to be referring to female deacons of the Church (Belleville 2004a, p. 122; Belleville 2005a, p. 62). Even some Male Headship proponents agree that 1 Timothy 3: 11 is discussing female deacons, not the wives of male deacons (for example Schreiner 2001, pp. 193 – 194 and Bowman 2001, pp. 283 – 284).

Church.<sup>194</sup> However, when this passage is examined in section 10 of this study (Part B) it will be seen that it does not place any such prohibition on women.

In concluding this section it is important to note that during the New Testament period each local church was overseen by an eldership that was comprised of a plurality of individuals (Acts 14: 23, 20: 17; Philippians 1: 1; Titus 1: 5), and that there is no instance recorded of any single individual being authorised as the sole elder of a local church.<sup>195</sup> Having a plurality of elders facilitates more effective decision-making (Proverbs 11: 14, 15: 22, 24: 6, 27: 17; Ecclesiastes 4: 9 – 12) and ensures leadership accountability by guarding against the potential for authoritarian excess that can arise under a single elder/leader. For this reason it has been observed, “*This should be a pertinent consideration for those who believe the Bible prohibits a woman from having authority in the church. For if elders act in concert on administrative matters, the presence of a woman among the elders would not grant her individual authority any more than it would a man.*”<sup>196</sup>

A final point is that elders were required to be shepherds of the churches under their care, not to domineer or impose their own will upon them (Acts 20: 28; 1 Peter 5: 1 – 3). This accords with Jesus’ teaching about the need for His disciples to demonstrate servant leadership (Mathew 20: 25 – 28; Mark 10: 42 – 45; Luke 22: 25 – 26; John 13: 1 – 16). Hence, elders are to guide, serve and facilitate the local church and its members in achieving their full God-given potential, not to exercise “governing authority” over them such as asserted by some Male Headship proponents. The criterion for determining whether a person has the ability to undertake such a role successfully should be the measure of their spiritual maturity, not simply their gender.<sup>197</sup> Understanding eldership eligibility in this way is consistent with the universal New Testament teachings outlined in section 4 of this study in which gender was not a consideration in the allocation or exercise of gifts such as leadership and service.

## 6. Exceptions to the rule?

Male Headship proponents have sometimes argued that while there may be instances in the Scriptures of women who performed functions or exercised gifts and abilities, such occasions were “exceptions to the rule”. For example, one Male Headship proponent has said that while “... *the Old Testament includes numerous positive, countercultural leadership roles for women ... every one of them remains the exception rather than the norm....*”<sup>198</sup>

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194 For example Hurley 1981, pp. 223, 229; Knight 1985, pp. 37, 88; House 1995, pp. 175 – 176; Schreiner 2001, pp. 218, 219; Grudem 2006, pp. 140 – 141, 145, 155

195 Knight 1985, p. 84; Walsh 1986, p. 267; Belleville 2000, p. 143; Keener 2001, p. 42; Schreiner 2001, p. 183n11; Liefeld 2004, p. 266; Waldron 2004, pp. 169, 170; Viola 2008, p. 173

196 Liefeld 2004, p. 266

197 As discussed previously in section 4.3 of this study, gender alone is not a good indicator or predictor of suitability for such leadership roles (note Diotrephes in 3 John).

198 Blomberg 2001, p. 332

Another Male Headship proponent has asserted:

*From beginning to end, the Bible is simply not an egalitarian book. Think of the Bible as a whole, from Genesis to Revelation. Where is there one example in the entire Bible of a woman publicly teaching an assembled group of God's people? There is none. Sometimes people mention Deborah in Judges 4, but she did not teach the people publicly, for people came to her privately to hear her wise decisions in disputed cases ... Judges 4: 4 suggests some amazement at the unusual nature of the situation in which a woman actually has to judge Israel ... Something is abnormal, something is wrong – there are no men to function as judge! ... The unusual nature of Judges should also warn us that it is not a good source for examples of how the New Testament church should be governed.<sup>199</sup>*

The inference from the “exceptions to the rule” argument is that there are no lessons which can be drawn from the scriptural instances of women who performed functions or exercised gifts and abilities vis-à-vis the role that women can play in the Church today. However, there are at least four major problems with this approach.

Firstly, if male authority and female submission is a fundamental, God-given ordinance but “exceptions” can be made in this respect, by whom are these to be determined: man or God? If man, what is the authority to override the eternal

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199 Grudem 2006, pp. 51, 83, 84 (emphasis in text). Apart from the fact that there is frequent reference in the Scriptures to the impartiality of God (for example, Romans 2: 5 – 11), there is a dual irony in Grudem's comments. Firstly, he appears to suggest that there are no lessons that the Church can draw from the Book of Judges such as with respect to Deborah yet elsewhere in his book he has no difficulty in asserting that the Old Testament custom of *primogeniture* (“right of the firstborn”) still has application for understanding New Testament passages such as 1 Timothy 2: 13 (pp. 35 – 36). Secondly, elsewhere in his book he labels those who do not share his view of the role of women in the Church as “*evangelical feminists*” who hold to the notion of “... *theological liberalism ... a system of thinking that denies the complete truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God and denies the unique and absolute authority of the Bible in our lives*” (p. 282; also, pp. 201, 217), yet in this instance it is he who appears to dismiss the Book of Judges as having any contemporary relevance. While many Old Testament practices are no longer applicable given that a new covenant is now in place (Acts 15; Colossians 2: 16 – 17; Hebrews 8), the fact remains that the Old Testament Scriptures continue to provide important lessons and instruction (Romans 15: 4; 1 Corinthians 10: 11; 1 Timothy 4: 13; 2 Timothy 3: 14 – 17; Hebrews 4: 6, 11). Furthermore, what they have to say about the nature and character of God (for example Psalm 103: 8 – 10; Micah 7: 18 – 19) still continues to be relevant despite being part of the Old Law (Malachi 3: 6; Hebrews 13: 8; James 1: 17). Therefore, the Book of Judges (particularly what can be learned from the account regarding Deborah's successful leadership of the nation of Israel and her calling by God in this regard [Judges 2: 16 – 18]) should not be dismissed as having little or no relevance for Christians. One final point which should be made is that contrary to Grudem's assessment of those with whom he does not share agreement on this issue, others see “... *the debate surrounding issues of women in ministry is not one of orthodoxy versus liberalism, faithfulness to Scripture versus departure from the faith, or truth versus heresy. Evangelicals with the strongest of views regarding the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the supremacy of the work of Christ, and the all-sufficiency of Christ's salvation for our sin-cursed world can subscribe to either egalitarian or hierarchicalist understandings of the roles of women in ministry*” (Beck and Blomberg 2001a, p. 159). Similarly, another writer has remarked, “*It is one thing to have honest disagreements ... it is another thing to charge evangelicals who take a differing position with a denial of biblical authority or with abandoning a high view of Scripture. Lamentably, this happens all too often*” (Belleville 2000, p. 164).

Word of God by saying that a particular Scripture does not apply or that it only applies in certain circumstances? There is no scriptural precedent where God allowed man to do such a thing. Indeed, there are indications that when this did occur the person or people in question were censured accordingly (for example Mark 7: 5 – 13). On the other hand, if male authority and female submission is a fundamental, divine ordinance and it is God Himself who makes the “exceptions”, then this could allow a sceptic to argue, “*If God can break His own rules in this respect, how can He be trusted not to do so in other matters?*”

If male authority and female submission is a divine ordinance and God broke His own rules by allowing women such as Deborah, Miriam, Huldah from the Old Testament and Priscilla, Junia and Phoebe from the New Testament to undertake roles involving leadership, then such precedents would have serious implications for us in other areas of life and faith. For instance, how could we be sure that He would not change His mind about the laws of nature that hold the universe in place (Colossians 1: 17) or that He would not change His mind about the well-established rules pertaining to salvation?<sup>200</sup> While the prospect of a fickle all-powerful deity would be frightening, the reality is that God can be trusted not to arbitrarily or capriciously change the ground rules that He has established (Numbers 23: 19; Deuteronomy 32: 4; Psalm 33: 4, 117: 2, 118: 8 – 9, 145: 13, 146: 6; Titus 1: 2; Hebrews 6: 13 – 20). As Jones (2007) has observed, “*Even the Almighty cannot do what is contradictory. If he sets up laws for running the universe, he cannot keep breaking them himself.*”<sup>201</sup> Accordingly, the so-called “exceptions to the rule” Scriptures were written for our learning and encouragement as much as any other passage (Romans 15: 4; 1 Corinthians 10: 11; Hebrews 4: 6, 11). They should not be dismissed or minimised as having little or no relevance to us today.

Secondly, if there are “exceptions” to a “rule” then this is a strong indication that the “rule” was not a timeless, universal ordinance in the first place. This point will be made during the discussion of the Old Testament custom of *primogeniture* (“right of the firstborn”) in section 7 of this study. If, as Male Headship proponents assert, *primogeniture* was a timeless and universal principle that forbids women from exercising leadership functions in the presence of men then it should have applied, for example, during the period when Deborah was a Judge of Israel in order for it to apply today.<sup>202</sup> The argument of

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200 Even human institutions need certainty to ensure stability and to function effectively. If those in authority over an institution ignored or broke the institution’s rules whenever they felt like it, the institution itself would eventually break down. That certainty is important and necessary is particularly demonstrated by the modern concept of the Rule of Law which is based on the need for individuals to be certain of the laws that apply to them rather than them being subject to variables such as the opinion or whim of government officials. Being certain of what is required of one, of what one may do or not do, in a spiritual sense is even more important (Romans 3:20, 7: 7). Such cannot happen if the supreme rule maker is prone to changing His mind!

201 Jones 2007, p. 91

202 As noted previously, some Male Headship proponents assert that rather than ruling or governing Deborah only decided issues in dispute between individuals and then only in private (for example Grudem 2006, pp. 51, 81 – 82). Such assertions ignore the fact that each of the Judges, including Deborah, was

some Male Headship proponents that Deborah was chosen by God only because there were no suitable men available<sup>203</sup> ignores the fact that He could have raised a man up if this was necessary to do so (1 Kings 19: 14, 18; Romans 11: 1 – 5). It also ignores the fact that women such as Deborah, Miriam and Huldah were active in their ministries during the tenure of prominent male identities such as Moses, Barak, Josiah and Jeremiah.<sup>204</sup>

Thirdly, where does one draw the line with the “exception to the rule” argument? It could potentially be used to rule out almost anything in the Bible with which one did not agree. Recollection may be made of King Jehoiakim who, piece by piece, cut up and burnt the scroll upon which the Words of the Lord had been written because he took offence at what was said, and was condemned for doing so (Jeremiah 36). It is significant that the passages alleged to be “exceptions to the rule” do not self-identify as such which means that their identification in this regard has been dependent on, and subject to, the limitations of human wisdom. Thus, it is not safe to make this argument and accordingly, its use should be avoided (Deuteronomy 4: 2, 5: 32, 12: 32; Joshua 1: 7, 23: 6; Proverbs 3: 5, 4: 27, 14: 12, 16: 25, 30: 5 – 6; Revelation 22: 18 – 19).

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specifically selected by God to save the people of Israel from their enemies; they were not self-selected to perform this role (Judges 2: 16 – 18). There is no indication from the text that Deborah adjudicated only between individuals and in private. Elsewhere Grudem (2006) argues, “*When the text says that ‘Deborah ... was judging Israel at this time’ (Judges 4: 4), the Hebrew verb shaphat, ‘to judge,’ in this context does not mean ‘to rule or govern’...*” (p. 81). If this was the case then consistency would require the same understanding of the word when it is used of each of the various male Judges of Israel. However, the sense of Judges 2: 16 – 18 indicates that the role of Judge of necessity involved leadership with no distinction being made for the gender of a Judge. That Deborah was a recognised leader is further demonstrated by the fact that when she and Barak are mentioned together (Judges 4 – 5) Deborah’s name is listed prior to that of Barak’s. Contrary to Grudem’s claim, Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament notes that there is a connection between the word *shaphat* and ruling or governing: “... *to rule, to govern, as connected with the idea of judging, since judging was the province of kings and chief magistrates ... especially used of the leaders and magistrates of the Israelites, who delivered their people from the oppression of neighbouring nations between the time of Joshua and Samuel, and who then governed them in peace as supreme magistrates (Jud 4: 5), Jud 2: 16, 18; Ruth 1: 1; 2 Kings 23: 22, etc ...*” (# 8199, p. 844). On this point it has also been noted that *shaphat* is the same word used to describe the judicial activity of Moses (Exodus 18: 13) and Samuel (1 Samuel 17: 6) (Davis 2009, p. 8). Furthermore, it should be noted that the first century AD Jewish historian Josephus, in writing about the Judges, described them as “rulers” who “governed” the people (cited in Goodman 2008, p. 210). On the issue of ‘who’ should exercise leadership Grudem (2006) elsewhere argues, “... *there is a consistent pattern in Scripture: Men teach and lead God’s people. On rare occasions where women gained power as queens in Israel or Judah (such as Jezebel in 1 Kings 16 – 21 or Athaliah in 2 Kings 11), they led the people into evil, so they can hardly be used as positive examples of women having governing authority over the people of God*” (p. 51). However, simply because there were two evil queens does not automatically mean that all women would be bad leaders. If this were the case then consistency would demand that the same conclusion be made about all men particularly since there were many more kings of Israel and Judah who were identified by the Scriptures as being evil. Another Male Headship proponent Blomberg (2005) has also acknowledged this same point (p. 135). In any event there is no comparison between Deborah’s leadership and that of Jezebel or Athaliah. In this regard it is instructive to note that while the Book of Judges is not reticent in revealing the personal deficiencies and sins of some of the male Judges (such as Samson) no such salacious revelations are made about Deborah.

203 For example Grudem 2006, p. 83

204 Belleville 2001, pp. 81, 93; Belleville 2004a, pp. 113, 114



Fourthly, the “exception to the rule” argument minimises and devalues Scripture. Second Timothy 3: 16 states, “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*” (NIV). Furthermore, 2 Peter 1: 20 – 21 states, “... *no prophesy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophesy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*” (NIV). Also, in referring to the Scriptures Peter stated, “*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness*” (2 Peter 1: 3 NIV).

One of the basic rules of biblical interpretation is that “... *everything in the Bible means something ... it is invalid to claim that a certain passage means nothing.*”<sup>205</sup> The principle that everything in the Bible means something is confirmed by passages such as Isaiah 55: 11. The “exceptions to the rule” argument ignores this basic rule of biblical interpretation. All the Scriptures have relevance for us today because if God had not wished for us to learn from them then they would not have survived.<sup>206</sup>

The early Church highly valued the Old Testament Scriptures because of the lessons that they taught (Romans 15: 4; 1 Corinthians 10: 11; 1 Timothy 4: 13; 2 Timothy 3: 14 – 15). Consequently, Old Testament instances of women lawfully exercising leadership functions (such as Judges 4: 4ff, 5: 7; 2 Kings 22: 14ff; 2 Chronicles 34: 22 – 28; Proverbs 1: 8, 31: 26, 30 – 31; Micah 6: 4) would not have been dismissed by the early Christians as having no significance for their community. Notably, there is no indication in the teachings of Jesus or in the letters of Paul or other New Testament writers that Deborah or Huldah or any other similar woman mentioned in the Old Testament were “exceptions to the rule” that had no relevance either for them or us.

The “exceptions to the rule” argument is demonstrably flawed. In fact, when considering the preceding material there would need to be only one biblical instance of a woman lawfully exercising a function asserted by Male Headship proponents to be the sole prerogative of males (such as leader or teacher) for the conclusion to be reasonably drawn that women could still serve in such capacities today.

## 7. A discussion about “authority”

Before proceeding to discuss relevant passages in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, 1

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205 Sumner 2003, p. 127

206 There are references in the Scriptures to other books and letters that were written but which no longer exist. For example, there was at least one other letter written by Paul to the Corinthians which has since disappeared (1 Corinthians 5: 9 – 11). He also wrote a letter to the Laodiceans which does not appear to have survived (Colossians 4: 16). Had such writings been necessary for faith and instruction today, God would have ensured their preservation. This is further evidence that the Scriptures which have continued until the present time should be highly valued, with no aspect of them being dismissed as an “exception to the rule”.

Timothy 2, Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3, it is necessary to briefly consider the nature of “authority” in order to understand how it is acquired and how it may be legitimately exercised. Underpinning the arguments of Male Headship proponents about the alleged prohibition of women from teaching or exercising authority over men is the assumption that teaching and exercising authority, particularly in a “public” sense, is a purely male prerogative.<sup>207</sup> However, what does the Bible say?

The Greek word most commonly used in the New Testament for authority is *exousia*.<sup>208</sup> Two types of authority are specified in the Scriptures: primary and delegated. Primary authority arises out of the relation of those who have the right to command and those whose duty it is to obey. Delegated authority is the right to command and to enforce obedience that can be given to another by the one holding primary authority.<sup>209</sup> A delegate does not inherently possess authority and power, rather it has been granted to them for an express purpose by another person with the inherent authority to do so. Furthermore, a delegate is accountable to the delegator for the way in which the delegated authority is exercised (Matthew 24: 45 – 51, 25: 14 – 30; Luke 19: 12 – 27; Hebrews 13: 17). The Scriptures teach that God alone is the source of all authority from which all other authority, whether temporal or spiritual, is derived (Psalm 22: 28; Isaiah 40, 45, 46; Daniel 4: 17, 25, 5: 21; John 19: 10 – 11; Romans 13: 1; 1 Timothy 6: 15). His supreme authority originates from the fact that He is the Creator of all that exists (Psalm 24: 1; Isaiah 42: 5, 45: 9; Romans 9: 20 – 21). Thus only God possesses absolute, inherent authority. All other authority may only be lawfully exercised as a result of an express delegation from God.

God may delegate His authority for particular purposes and in such cases the delegation is specifically mentioned in the Scriptures. For instance, civil authorities are authorised to keep law and order in society (Romans 13: 2; 1 Peter 2: 13 – 14, 17). Jesus was authorised in His capacity as Son and Saviour (Matthew 28: 18; John 5: 21 – 27; 17: 2; Hebrews 1: 1). As an apostle, Paul was authorised to do certain things (2 Corinthians 10: 8, 13: 10) as were the Twelve Apostles (Luke 9: 1). Wives and husbands have specific (equal) authority over each other in the context of the marriage relationship (1 Corinthians 7: 4).<sup>210</sup> In each of these cases there is a clear and explicit delegation of authority and the conditions of that delegation are specified. Unless an explicit delegation of authority by God has been granted, it cannot rightfully be assumed that such a delegation has been made (Exodus 18: 13 – 27; Deuteronomy 18: 20 – 22;

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207 For example Grudem 2006, pp. 35 – 36; Schreiner 2001, p. 201

208 Cunningham *et al* 2000, pp. 222, 275n32. NB: *Exousia* is used at least 100 times in the New Testament (Belleville 2001, p. 105; Grudem 2006, p. 195).

209 Internet 5; Bowman 2001, p. 285

210 The significance of this point will be discussed later in this study. At this stage it is instructive to note that, “*The only place where the word authority [exousiazo from exousia] appears in the New Testament regarding the relationship between a husband and wife is here, and it’s used twice. It literally says that the husband has authority over his wife’s body and that she has authority over his body! So, the only time the New Testament mentions authority in relation to marriage, it is made mutual*” (Cunningham *et al* 2000, p. 156).

Numbers 11: 14 – 17; Judges 2: 16 – 18; Hosea 8: 4; Acts 6: 1 – 7, 16: 18, 19: 13 – 16; Hebrews 5: 4 – 5). Anyone who purports to exercise authority without an explicit delegation, or goes beyond the terms of a delegation that has been granted, does so unlawfully (note Deuteronomy 18: 20 – 22; 1 Corinthians 4: 6).

As has been observed:

*For delegation to occur there must first exist a party who possesses some specific responsibility and accompanying authority. This primary individual then selects someone else to act as his agent – to conduct business on his behalf – with the authority necessary to fulfill that charge. The primary party can choose to vest as little or as much authority in this agent as he desires. But certain cardinal principles are imperative to grasp. First, this primary party can never delegate more than the scope of his own vested authority. You cannot distribute to others that which you do not possess yourself. Secondly, the agent can never unilaterally expand or create his own authority. As an agent, his entire responsibility emanates from the existing authority of someone else. Thirdly, if allowed by the primary party, an agent can further delegate any part of his vested authority to another party, who will then be acting as his agent. Any such secondary delegation is automatically governed by the same cardinal principles outlined above.*<sup>211</sup>

The above principles relating to the delegation of authority are reflected in passages such as Exodus 18: 13 – 27; Numbers 11: 14 – 17; Deuteronomy 18: 18, 20 – 22; 2 Samuel 12: 7; Matthew 10: 5 – 7, 24, 40, 15: 24; Mark 13: 34; Luke 6: 40, 7: 8; John 5: 30, 7: 16, 10: 18, 12: 49 – 50, 13: 16; 14: 10, 24, 15: 4 – 5, 15, 20, 16: 12 – 14, 17: 2, 20: 21, 19: 10 – 11; Acts 15: 24 – 27, 16: 16 – 18, 19: 13 – 16; Romans 14: 4.

There are many instances of people being delegated by God to undertake an activity or mission such as Moses, Saul, David, Jonah, Isaiah, and the Twelve Apostles. There is a clear scriptural record of each of these people being delegated by God to exercise authority for the purpose of their particular mission. At no time did any of them simply assume (or presume) that they could exercise authority on their own account. In fact, they were fully aware that they could not undertake their mission without God's clear and explicit delegation of authority. Such cases demonstrate that it was God's practice to make the delegation of authority both explicit and unambiguous by having such delegation scripturally recorded.<sup>212</sup>

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211 Internet 6. Although, it should be noted that the particular nature of the Apostles' calling (*shaliach*) meant that their delegated authority could never be sub-delegated to anyone else (Green 2005, pp. 45, 84).

212 God's practice in this respect ensures fairness, consistency and certainty. As mentioned previously, being certain of what is required of one, or of what one may do and not do, is important in a legal sense but even more so in the spiritual dimension (Romans 3: 20, 7: 7). Hence, the necessity of written Scriptures so that we can know with certainty what God's Will is for us (Exodus 24: 12; Numbers 22: 18, 24: 13; Deuteronomy 17: 19 – 20; Joshua 1: 7, 23: 6; Psalm 19: 7, 8, 119: 1 – 16, 105; Proverbs 6: 23, 29: 18, 30: 5 – 6; Hosea 4: 6; Luke 1: 3 – 4; John 20: 31; 1 Corinthians 4: 6; 1 John 5: 13).

Compare this to the question of whether men have ever been explicitly delegated by God to exercise authority over women. In this respect the absence of such a delegation is striking.<sup>213</sup> God's practice of delegating authority explicitly and for such delegation to be recorded scripturally means that any assumption by men that they can exercise authority over women without such explicit and written delegation is unlawful and is not sanctioned by God.

There is no instance of a person lawfully exercising authority without it first being delegated to them by God and without there being an explicit scriptural record to that effect. There is a record of a clear delegation by God to both the man and woman in Genesis 1: 27 – 30. This involved the joint dominion of man and woman over the rest of creation. Furthermore, there was and remains no room in the delegation for members of one gender to exercise authority over members of the other. The most important thing to remember about this particular delegation is that it has never been withdrawn by God.<sup>214</sup>

Some have interpreted Genesis 3: 16 as providing the necessary authority for men to rule over women.<sup>215</sup> However, in this passage God was neither authorising nor condoning the rule by members of one gender over members of the other. Rather, the meaning of the original (Hebrew) text indicates that He was *predicting* what would happen between husbands and wives as a result of sin.<sup>216</sup> It has been pointed out that if God had been directing Adam to rule Eve

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213 Writers such as Belleville 2001, pp. 145 – 146, Sumner 2003, pp. 249, 252, Nicole 2004, pp. 357, 358, Fee 2004c, p. 374, Groothuis 2004, p. 313 and Belleville 2005a, p. 31 also note that there is an absence of a delegation from God for men to exercise authority over women. In fact, there is no explicit delegation even for husbands to unilaterally “exercise authority over” their wives (Belleville 2000, pp. 80, 114). As noted in footnote 210 of this study, the only time that *exousia* is used in the context of the marriage relationship is 1 Corinthians 7: 4 and in this instance it refers to the authority that both the husband and wife have over each other. The assumption by some that elders, pastors and preachers today are entitled to exercise authority similar to the New Testament Apostles or apostolic delegates such as Timothy and Titus is also without biblical support (Liefeld 2004, pp. 261 – 262, 269, 271; Belleville 2005a, pp. 64 – 65). Indeed, the argument has been made that in the Church no single person is authorised to exercise authority over anyone else. Certain people may be given particular responsibilities and functions to which, as a result, others will voluntarily submit, but such submission does not arise because authority is being exercised over them. The suggestion is that it is the Church as a whole which is authorised to exercise authority rather than individuals or roles within it (Belleville 2000, pp. 134 – 138, 149; Belleville 2001, pp. 104 – 109; Belleville 2005a, pp. 64 – 68; Viola 2008, pp. 181 – 196). While some have queried the practicality of “... *government by the whole ... as being functional in a church of any size. Some kind of internal authority seems not only biblical but also necessary to prevent chaos*” (Liefeld 2004, p. 270n31), it has been pointed out that, “... *up until the second century, the church had no official leadership. That it had leaders is without dispute. But leadership was unofficial in the sense that there were no religious ‘offices’ or sociological slots to fill ... the Christians themselves led the church under Christ’s direct headship. Leaders were organic, untitled, and were recognised by their service and spiritual maturity rather than by a title or an office*” (Viola and Barna 2008, pp. 109, 110).

214 Such as occurred when the delegations to Saul and Nebuchadnezzar to be kings of their respective domains were removed (1 Samuel 15: 17 – 29; Daniel 4: 31). Other passages such as 2 Chronicles 7: 17 – 22 and Hosea 13: 11 also show that God’s delegation of authority to a king could be withdrawn. David pleaded with God not to withdraw his authority following his sin with Bathsheba (Psalm 51: 11).

215 As noted by Belleville 2001, p. 147

216 Trombley 1985, pp. 19, 112; Grenz 1995, p. 120; Nicole 2004, p. 358. One Male Headship proponent, Grudem (2006) has also noted that, “... *the word translated ‘rule over’ in Genesis 3: 16 refers to Adam’s*

then,

*... the verb 'shall' or 'will' would have been in the imperative mood – a command. But according to scholars, this verb is in the simple imperfect, and not a command at all. The verb form in the simple imperfect translates into English as the future tense. In other words, the statement is prophetic in that God told Eve what would happen as a consequence of her sin. The imperative is only found in the present tense, so this simple imperfect tense prevents translation of 'shall' as a command. It doesn't say man 'shall' but 'will' rule her; it's not a command but a consequence. God did not tell Eve that she must bear children, but that she would. He didn't tell Adam 'you must' work by the sweat of your brow, but 'you will.' He didn't say that men must rule and dominate women, but that they will!<sup>217</sup>*

Similarly, it has been observed:

*Though this text only predicts how some husbands will take advantage of their wives when the wives turn to their husbands after turning away from God, some argue that this second verb should be rendered "he shall rule over you." This would make the statement mandatory with the force of a command addressed to all husbands to rule over their wives. The Hebrew grammar once again will not allow this construction. The verb contains a simple statement of futurity; there is not one hint of obligation or normativity in this verb. To argue differently would be as logical as demanding that a verb in verse 18 be rendered "It shall produce thorns and thistles." Therefore, all Christian farmers who used weed killer would be condemned as disobedient to the God who demanded that the ground have such thorns and thistles.<sup>218</sup>*

The message in verse 16 was given in response to the sin of the woman, similar to the message in verses 17 to 19 which was given in response to the sin of the man. It was part of the consequences of sin that the man would seek to rule over the woman. Prior to this time the rule of man over woman, and the corresponding submission of woman to man, was not part of God's original intention and accordingly there is no scriptural mention of it (Genesis 1: 28). Therefore, as the post-Fall rule by the man over his wife was not God's Will for His creation, it is *eisegesis* to use Genesis 3: 16 to assert the existence of a divinely approved hierarchical principle for the rule of men over women.<sup>219</sup> The absence of any clear delegation by God for men to exercise authority over women is highly significant: it means that men are not authorised to exercise

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*later harsh leadership over Eve – not one of equals, but one who rules by virtue of power and strength (even sometimes harshly and with force)" (p. 23).*

217 Trombley 1985, pp. 112 – 113 (emphasis in text)

218 Kaiser *et al* 1996, p. 98

219 The term *eisegesis* means "... reading one's views into a text so as to make the text mean what one wants it to mean" (Osburn 2001, p. xv). Such an approach is contrary to the rules of biblical interpretation that are outlined in section 3 of this study.

authority over women.<sup>220</sup>

Despite foreknowing what would happen as a result of the introduction of sin into the world, God never endorsed or legitimised the domination or ruling of women by men. He may have endured the attitudes of men in this respect in the same way that He tolerated their hardness of heart in other matters (for example note Matthew 19: 8) but this does not mean that He approved of men's domination or rule over women any more than He approved of men corrupting His original ideal with respect to life-long marriage. As mentioned previously, despite the fact that some men may seek to rule over women as a consequence of the Fall (Genesis 3: 16), the joint delegation to man and woman as recorded in Genesis 1: 27 – 30 still stands and has never been withdrawn by God.<sup>221</sup> Consequently, the burden of proof falls on those who argue for the Male Headship position to produce the explicit scriptural record of God withdrawing the Genesis 1 delegation of joint authority and replacing it with a delegation to men to exercise authority over women.

As noted previously, since God is the source of all authority no authority can be exercised lawfully unless there is an explicit delegation from God to do so. There is a notable absence of a delegation from God for men to exercise authority over women. While some Male Headship proponents appear to accept this point, they nevertheless assert that only certain men are eligible to hold Church leadership roles on the basis of the governance pattern established under the patriarchal and Mosaic systems. One Male Headship proponent has argued:

*If the New Testament congregation is compared with the patriarchal and Mosaic organisation of God's people, we find that in both times God appointed certain of*

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220 If there were any biblical examples of men ruling over women they would need to be supported by clear evidence of a delegation from God before valid conclusions could be drawn about such authority being lawfully possessed by all other men. If there were instances recorded of men having done so without such a delegation, this would be no more an indication of divine support for their actions than the scriptural accounts of the lives of sinful people is an endorsement from God of their particular activities. In fact, the message of passages such as 1 Corinthians 10: 11 and Hebrews 4: 11 is that such examples are recorded in order that Christians may learn not to repeat their mistakes! Accordingly, if there were any references in the Scriptures to men ruling over women without the appropriate delegation from God, such should be regarded as having been intended as a lesson concerning what to avoid doing.

221 The question may be asked: Could Genesis 1: 27 – 30 have been superseded by Genesis 9: 1 – 7? While only men appear to be addressed in the latter text, it contains nothing fundamentally new from which it could be supposed that God was now only authorising "men" to multiply and fill the earth (after all, they still needed women to help them in accomplishing this task!). It is clear that men are addressed since everything had changed as a consequence of the Fall and the prophecy of Genesis 3: 16. After sin entered the world and men had imposed their rule, this generally necessitated God communicating His Will through them. However, this does not mean that God was pleased with or condoned such an arrangement (sometimes He deliberately chose to speak directly to individual women and bypassed the male leaders [for example Hagar in Genesis 16, 21: 7]). Furthermore, such was not the case prior to the Fall as evident by Genesis 1: 27 – 30 when God explicitly authorised both man and woman to rule over creation. Also, on this point it has been observed: "*Dominion is set in the context of the ideal world of Genesis 1 and is not altered with the sins of the following chapters (Gen 5: 1 – 3; 9: 1 – 6)*" (Hess 2004, p. 81).

*the males to lead his people. No females and not all males were included among those called to exercise religious authority. In patriarchal times the patriarch was priest for the clan; under Moses the family of Aaron was called to act as priests; in the church certain men are called to be elders. From the point of view of authority within the church, all men who have not been called to be elders are in exactly the same position as women. Thus, it would be wrong to say that women (as a sex) are generically subordinate to men (as a sex) with respect to ecclesiastical authority. The entire congregation (men and women) is to honour God's calling of certain men to shepherd (nurture and teach) his flock.<sup>222</sup>*

Such an argument begs the following questions: Why would God want His New Testament Church to be compared with, or patterned after, the patriarchal or Mosaic models of governance when such models were only temporary and shadows of better things to come (John 1: 17; 2 Corinthians 3: 6 – 18; Galatians 3: 23 – 26; Colossians 2: 17; Hebrews 8: 5, 13, 10: 1)? Why would every other aspect of these former systems be superseded by the New Testament Church except for this one?

This argument ignores the fact that the New Testament Church is not just an updated version of either the patriarchal or Mosaic systems, it is a completely new and different entity (2 Corinthians 5: 17; Galatians 4: 21 – 31) with its own “Royal Priesthood” being comprised of all believers, not just males (1 Peter 2: 9). Furthermore, the symbol of the covenant under both of these previous systems, male circumcision (Genesis 17; John 7: 22), has been replaced by baptism which is available to all members (1 Corinthians 7: 19; Galatians 3: 26 – 29; Colossians 2: 11 – 12). While particular men may have held leadership roles under former dispensations, the assumption that only men are eligible to be elders in the Church is based on the presence of only one gender specific criterion in 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 and Titus 1: 6 – 9 and ignores the fact that the other listed character-based eldership eligibility criteria were to be sought after by all Christians.<sup>223</sup> In comparing the Church with the superseded patriarchal and Mosaic systems, this argument is highly questionable and brings to mind Jesus' teaching about the futility of pouring new wine into old wine skins (Matthew 9: 17; Luke 5: 37).

While Genesis 3: 16 can be seen not to be a delegation from God for men to exercise authority over women, some Male Headship proponents nevertheless argue for an inferred right of men in this regard based on the Old Testament custom of *primogeniture* (“right of the firstborn”).<sup>224</sup> For example, in taking

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222 Hurley 1981, pp. 237 – 238 (emphasis in text). With respect to Hurley's statement about “certain men” being shepherds within the church, it will be recalled that section 5.5 of this study canvassed several reasons for questioning the argument that only males are qualified to fill the role of church elder.

223 These points were discussed previously in section 5.5 of this study.

224 For example Schreiner 2001, pp. 201ff; Blomberg 2001, p. 365; Bowman 2001, p. 289; Grudem 2006, pp. 35 – 36, 78. Despite the assertions of Male Headship proponents in this regard, it is notable that in the Old Testament no explicit link is made between the male leadership which followed as a consequence of

*primogeniture* as the basis for 1 Timothy 2: 13 one Male Headship proponent has asserted:

*Paul simply assumes that his readers will understand that when God created Adam first, and then gave commands to him alone (Genesis 2: 7, 15 – 17), and then later created Eve (v. 22), God was giving a leadership role to Adam. People in the ancient world, where the firstborn son had a leadership role in the family, would have understood this. But we do not need to assume that Paul was endorsing the entire system of “primogeniture,” at least not in all its details. It is enough simply to say that people who were familiar with that system would have had no trouble in understanding Paul’s reasoning: The firstborn male in any family is assumed to be the leader in that family in his generation, and Adam was the firstborn in his generation, so he was the leader.<sup>225</sup>*

However, arguments from the custom of *primogeniture* in support of men having a God-ordained, automatic right to lead and exercise authority are problematic for at least three reasons.

The first reason why such arguments are problematic is because while *primogeniture* may have been the way of the world, there is no evidence that God instigated it or that He was obliged to observe it once it became established and embedded in human society (Isaiah 55: 8 – 9). Indeed, far from endorsing *primogeniture*, there are instances of God either allowing or not intervening to prevent the younger being chosen over the older (for example Genesis 17: 15 – 21, 21: 8 – 12, 25: 5, 23, 48: 19, 49: 3 – 4; 1 Samuel 16: 6 – 12; 1 Chronicles 5: 1 – 2, 26: 10; also note Micah 6: 7 – 8). If the custom was instituted by God, why on so many occasions did He not ensure that it was followed? Why would He allow it to be disregarded? Even more to the point, why would He disregard it Himself? This demonstrates that *primogeniture* was not accepted by God as having universal importance or application otherwise He would have seen it consistently enforced. It also demonstrates that birth order/sequence did not automatically reflect divine preference or appointment.<sup>226</sup> For instance, it was through Shem rather than his older brother Japheth that Abraham, the progenitor of the Messiah, would be born (Genesis 10: 21). Furthermore, it was Judah, rather than his brother Reuben as the firstborn, from whom it was promised that the Messiah would descend (Genesis 49: 3, 10; 1 Chronicles 5: 1 – 2).

For God, the quality of a person’s heart and the level of their spiritual maturity is more important than the chronological order of their birth (1 Samuel 13: 14, 16: 6

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the prophecy of Genesis 3: 16 and the fact of Adam’s prior creation to that of Eve. Indeed, Paul is the only biblical writer to refer to the Adam and Eve creation sequence in the context of a prohibition on a woman teaching a man (Belleville 2000, pp. 170, 193n55). His reason for doing so will be explored in section 10 of this study (Part B).

225 Grudem 2006, pp. 35 – 36. Similarly, Schreiner (2001) argues that “... *the responsibility for leadership belonged to Adam (and hence to males) because Adam was created before Eve*” (p. 201).

226 Sumner 2003, pp. 232, 255; Keener 2001, p. 63. NB: There are also clear instances in the Scriptures which demonstrate that just because someone was the firstborn did not automatically make them fit or qualified for spiritual service (for example Genesis 4: 1 – 16, 38: 7; 1 Samuel 8: 1 – 3).



– 7, 17: 13 – 14). This can be seen from individuals such as Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, Moses and David who were chosen by God on the strength of their character or because it was necessary for the accomplishment of His plans rather than on the basis of *primogeniture*.<sup>227</sup> This practice is consistent with a God who time and again declares His impartiality (Acts 10: 34; Romans 2: 11, 9: 6 – 18; Galatians 2: 6; Ephesians 6: 9).

In those few instances in the Scriptures where *primogeniture* appears to be an explicit feature (such as in relation to property inheritance [Numbers 27: 5 – 8; Deuteronomy 21: 15 – 17; Joshua 17: 3 – 4]) there is no indication of any divine

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227 Hess 2004, p. 84; Pierce 2004, p. 105. God showed that He would not let human traditions and expectations in relation to *primogeniture* get in the way of His plans by treating and honouring David, who was the youngest of his brothers, as if he was the firstborn (1 Samuel 16: 11; Psalm 78: 67 – 72, 89: 27). Also, that *primogeniture* was not an immutably binding principle is demonstrated by Esau being able to divest himself of his inheritance rights as the oldest son by selling them (Genesis 25: 24 – 34; Hebrews 12: 16 – 17), Job giving his daughters an inheritance together with his sons (Job 42: 15), and Ephraim being referred to as the firstborn when in fact he was the second born (Genesis 41: 52; Jeremiah 31: 9). Kaiser *et al* (1996) point out that being the firstborn in a chronological sense was not a guarantee for receiving the blessings associated with *primogeniture*: “Generally in the Old Testament ‘firstborn’ means the son who was born first ... That child had a leading place in the family and normally took over as the head of the family upon his father’s death. However, even in the Old Testament this is more a right conferred by the father than a place in the birth order. For example, in Genesis 25: 29 – 34 Esau can sell his birthright, his place as the firstborn, to Jacob, although this sale was apparently not recognised by their father, for Jacob later has to trick Isaac into giving him Esau’s blessing as the firstborn (Gen 27: 19). A generation later Jacob makes it clear that it is not the son born first (Reuben) whom he considers to have the rights of the firstborn, but Joseph, the one born to his favourite wife. He demonstrates this by having a special garment made for his heir designate (Gen 37: 3 – 4). In this case a younger son is designated as firstborn, arousing the jealousy of the others, especially when he exercises his designated leadership. Even later Joseph brings his own sons to Jacob, who puts the one born second before the one born first (Gen 48: 13 – 20). Again ‘firstborn’ will not mean the one born first, but the one who will be the leader or the greatest. Even when talking about literal families, then, ‘firstborn’ can indicate a favourite son rather than the one born first. So in Micah 6: 7 and Zechariah 12: 10 the ‘firstborn’ is the most loved child, the one the parent is most loath to give up” (p. 652). It is important to note that when Jesus is described as “the firstborn” (Romans 8: 29; Colossians 1: 15, 18; Hebrews 1: 6; Revelation 1: 5) it is a literary device to emphasise His uniquely pre-eminent status and role as God’s sole anointed One rather than presenting Him as the first of God’s creation (Kaiser *et al* 1996, p. 652). Continuing this theme it is also important to note that when God told Moses, when speaking on His behalf to Pharaoh, to refer to Israel as “my firstborn son” (Exodus 4: 22 – 23), it was because such a reference would have been understood by Pharaoh in terms of his own firstborn son as his successor as well as the cultural importance placed by the ancient Egyptians on their firstborn (Exodus 11: 5 – 6, 12: 12; Numbers 33: 4; Psalm 78: 51, 135: 8). In this regard Romer (1988) has observed, “With the tenth and final plague, Jehovah reaches right into ancient Egypt’s heart. For the death of the first born is a specifically Egyptian curse that goes far beyond the limits of its more obvious tragedy. In traditional Egyptian society, a family’s eldest son not only inherited his father’s position in the world, but, by careful attention to the cult of the dead, ensured a continuity between this world and the next. The destruction of this link would have dropped ancient Egyptians into rootless, unstructured oblivion, a cosmic chaos” (p. 48). Consequently, it is not surprising that the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians was regarded as the culmination of God’s judgement on their gods (Exodus 12: 12; Numbers 33: 4). In commemoration of this momentous event all firstborn males in Israel, be they human or animal, were subsequently deemed to belong to God (Exodus 13: 2, 12 – 16, 22: 29 – 30; Numbers 3: 13, 8: 17). It was under this requirement that Jesus’ parents presented Him at the Temple as their firstborn son (Luke 2: 7, 23). Thus, rather than being based on an all-encompassing “order of creation” principle, the rationale for the requirement was specific to the Israelites and their particular circumstances: it was instituted to act as a reminder of what God had done by bringing them out of slavery in Egypt (Exodus 13: 1 – 16).

endorsement for the concept of the rulership of men over women. In fact, rather than allowing *primogeniture* to operate unchecked, God can be seen in such instances to be regulating the practice to mitigate any adverse, unjust consequences it may have had.<sup>228</sup>

Importantly, the creation account reveals that God showed no partiality for the man (the first created) over the woman (the second created) since it was to both that He gave the command to increase in number and to have dominion over the earth and everything in it (Genesis 1: 28 – 29). This strongly indicates that at the time of creation the concept of *primogeniture* did not exist.<sup>229</sup>

As noted in section 6 of this study, in Deborah God chose a woman to lead the nation of Israel when He could, and should, have chosen a man to do so if *primogeniture* was a binding obligation.<sup>230</sup> Judges 4: 5 states that she “held court” and all the Israelites came to her to have their disputes settled. Deborah was a prophet and had the title of “Mother of Israel” (Judges 4: 4, 5: 7). If the creation of the man prior to that of the woman means that men should always be the leaders and women the followers, then Deborah should never have been chosen to be a Judge of Israel.

The fact that Deborah was so chosen indicates that *primogeniture* is not a universal, timeless ordinance. If it was, and it applies today, then it should also have applied in the time of the Judges, but the case of Deborah demonstrates otherwise. As has been observed by one writer, “*I have heard the arguments that Deborah was exceptional, and that was a bad time in the history of Israel, and that was the Old Testament, so it doesn’t count since the church had not yet been established. But if the principle of the order of creation truly is a universal principle, then it has to apply to the time of the Judges in order to apply to us today.*”<sup>231</sup> Therefore, any suggestion that the Old Testament custom of *primogeniture* must apply to the New Testament Church is highly questionable.

The second reason why such arguments are problematic is because Jesus did not accept the validity of the custom that the “first shall always be first and the last always last” nor did He require His followers to observe such a custom (Matthew 20: 25 – 28, 23: 9 – 12; Mark 10: 42 – 45; Luke 22: 25 – 26). In fact, Jesus’ approach was that the leader should be the servant, not the followers

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228 Similarly, Pierce (2004) notes, “*The law of Moses does not endorse slavery (economic or personal) any more than it does patriarchy, but works within these frameworks and regulates them, providing a degree of care and protection for slaves and women*” (p. 101). For example, while only a husband could initiate divorce (Archaeological Study Bible, p. 1548), provisions were incorporated into the Old Testament Law to protect women and their interests (Deuteronomy 21: 10 – 14, 22: 13 – 19, 28 – 29, 24: 1 – 4).

229 That the concept of *primogeniture* did not exist at the time of creation also can be seen by contrasting Genesis 1: 27 – 30 (pre-Fall) with Genesis 9: 1 – 7 (post-Fall). If men always were meant to be the leaders/rulers (not women) then the Genesis 1 passage should have been addressed to the man only (as it is, verse 28 states that God spoke to “them”, not “him”).

230 As previously noted, the Judges were selected by God rather than being self-selected. Furthermore, this role, of necessity, involved leadership (Judges 2: 16 – 18).

231 Sumner 2003, p. 231

(John 13: 1 – 17). In a very practical sense Jesus demonstrated His disregard for the custom of *primogeniture* by choosing to make His first recorded appearance following the Resurrection, the most significant event in history, to a woman rather than a man (Matthew 28: 8 – 10; John 20: 11 – 18). If the custom was as important as Male Headship proponents contend then it is difficult to imagine why Jesus would have done such a thing unless it was because the custom was a “human tradition” by which He was not bound (Mark 7: 8).

The third reason why such arguments are problematic is because while some Male Headship proponents claim that the order of creation where man was created first and woman second “... *sets an important biblical precedent*,”<sup>232</sup> Paul did not accept the universality of the concept of the primacy of the first over the second nor did he “... *use chronological priority as a universally self-evident argument*.”<sup>233</sup> In some of his writings he clearly regarded the first as being inferior to the second (1 Corinthians 15: 45 – 49; Hebrews 8: 6 – 13), while elsewhere he specifically rejected any notion that the order of creation (man first, woman second) gave men any special priority or position over women such as during whole-of-church worship activities (1 Corinthians 11: 11 – 12 [note verses 3 – 16 for context]).<sup>234</sup>

Despite such facts, Male Headship proponents frequently assert that 1 Corinthians 11: 3, 14: 34 – 35, Ephesians 5: 22 – 24 and 1 Timothy 2: 12 – 15 empower men alone to exercise authority in the Church and that women should follow their leadership.<sup>235</sup> However, as the following sections of this study will show (continued under Part B), any contention that these or similar passages represent a divine delegation for men to exercise authority and for women to submit to such authority is lacking in scriptural support.

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232 For example Grudem 2006, p. 21; also, Ware 2002, pp. 82 – 83

233 Keener 2001, p. 63

234 Of 1 Corinthians 11: 11 – 12 one Male Headship proponent, Hurley (1981) has observed: “*The theme of the inter-relatedness of the sexes stands out clear and strong: ‘In the Lord, however, woman is not independent (choris) of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came out of (ek) man, so also man is born of (dia + genitive, ‘though’) woman. But everything is from God’ (1 Cor 11: 11 – 12). The husband may not consider himself the ruler of his wife and abuse his authority. By God’s design he is dependent on her for birth; they are interdependent by God’s design*” (pp. 177 – 178). While Hurley approaches the passage from a Male Headship perspective, he nevertheless recognises that it teaches the interdependency of man and woman.

235 For example Hurley (1981) claims that “... *1 Timothy 2: 8 – 15 teaches that men rather than women should teach and exercise authority in the church*” (p. 207). Grudem (2006) claims similarly (pp. 154 – 155, 157).

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