

Women and Ordained Pastoral Ministry in the Local Church: A Complementarian Understanding

The Reason for the Study

Many evangelicals have noticed the dramatic rise in the number of women pastors in conferences and seminars we attend. A number of Bible teachers have remarked with surprise concerning widespread adoption among evangelicals of an egalitarian position as representing God's true desire for the church. At the same time, the notion that egalitarians represent "healing" of long standing "mistaken teachings" in the church appears to be echoed more frequently as an assumed truth. With swift departure from the historical understanding concerning the role of men and women in the local church the time to lovingly articulate the longstanding view seems at hand.

Recently, this became real to me when I found myself on a seminar panel concerning "Bible Context" in which I was not the only complementarian, but egalitarian views were characterized with such absolutism, one would readily believe that any thinking Christian would consider a prohibition of any office of ministry as something bigoted, uncharitable and even un-Christian. The inference that one could find a limitation of office in Scripture for a woman was met with terms decrying renewed victimization and bullying, with assumptions so strong there was no need for careful Scriptural examination. It is as if the new understanding was the only way to reckon the truth. That absolutism was a surprise to me.

At the same time, I recently began working with a number of women pastoral leaders on international projects. My current teaching work in Europe and the Near East has been filled with groups from fellowships and denominations that assume egalitarian views are absolutely correct. I am currently working on a number of projects with some outstanding women pastors, where they are leading relief efforts on mission fields and teaching the Word to people. In spite of our difference of belief in this important area, I have had many days of laughter and joy, and have come to peace working with these dear women who are seeking to honor Jesus with their lives. Our differences

have not squelched our work, nor has it led to agreement on this issue because of shared experience. I wanted to record both why I hold to a specific position in the text, and why it doesn't stop me from working well with those with whom I do not agree on this issue.

As a child of the 1970s, I watched Charismatic views of the work of the Spirit grow from an open threat to evangelicals (who claimed "they believe their experience is more important than the Scriptures") into the wholesale adoption of many Charismatic views as part of larger modern evangelicalism. I believe the issue of egalitarian thinking seems heading on that same course. That is not a threat to me, but at the same time I do not concede its approach to the text of Scripture or Christian History as the one to which I can personally ascribe, nor do I believe my egalitarian brothers and sisters have the right to make me follow their view (and they do try!).

In a global environment, an leader must find a personal path to peace in the midst of disagreement with friends and spiritual family in larger evangelicalism. At the same time, I would sternly caution those of our local church or international fellowship family from adopting egalitarian views concerning local church service.

The study on this topic began as much for my own work as for my dear friends in the Charis Fellowship, to which I am joyfully joined. In my view, Brethren must continue to develop and articulate our own thoughtful positions in this area, and decide to what extent that could or should hinder our cooperation with others in the wider evangelical world. While serving with joy on the larger arena of ministry, I advocate a careful distinction between the standard of shared work in international evangelism and discipleship and how one chooses a local church. There must, by necessity, be a higher and more restrictive theological standard for the full cooperation involved in a fellowship of churches designed for decades of intimate cooperation, and (perhaps) even a greater restrictive bands involved in joining a local church. I also feel it necessary to mention I have true concerns about how the egalitarian position is being driven into orthodoxy as a "correction" of the Christian centuries before it. That framing is a dangerous one in my view.

The Means of the Study

In order to understand this trend, I immersed myself in writings that appeared to be defending egalitarian views. In the end, I found that I objected to methods of interpretation used by those writers, and became fundamentally concerned that one could use their technique to overrun many important ministry boundaries to help the church conform to prevailing cultural trends.

I have no desire to demonize those who hold an opposing view, for they are clearly brothers and sisters in Jesus. Yet, reading the statement on women by Fuller Seminary (contained in this paper and taken directly from their website) I see such flawed methodology that leads (in my view) to a deeply flawed position, I believe it requires loving examination and careful response. I found many egalitarian arguments filled with logical leaps by those who framed the text as thoroughly misread for twenty centuries, and now “corrected” by newly enlightened scholars marinated in western cultural feminist ideals.

While there is a deep cultural appeal to what egalitarians teach, their textual position simply still seems quite weak to me. In my view, unable to find any clearly appointed “Apostless-es” and “Pastoress-es” in the New Testament, they dove into intricate re-examination of Epistle ending greetings and other texts that attempt to redefine the center of understanding by the anecdotal edge. Further, there is seems a simple lack of understanding of the legal Torah arguments made by the Apostle Paul regarding functional headship in the local church which appeared as foundational to his thinking. Let me say it simply: the textual examples and arguments are woefully weak and omit the entire concept of “spiritual headship.”

The Scope of the Study

There are three parts to this writing:

Part One: The first part is a brief **review of the statement on women from Fuller Seminary** (with my own notes placed within) to suggest where I believe the author made statements with insufficient evidence from the text of Scripture or even

offered statements that I believe countermand the record itself. That is not a thorough treatment of the issues, but a way of suggesting that many “gaps” were evident in Fuller’s widely accepted statement.

Part Two: A second part of the work is to **research briefly but carefully the record of the New Testament on male and female roles in the functional ministry in the New Testament church** in the context of the spiritual headship principles amply attested throughout the Scriptures.

Part Three: A third part is to offer some **notes on the practice of serving beside those who hold the opposite position with sincere peace and joy**. I believe it is incumbent on every believer to work out how obedience will work in a pluralist environment in general, and in the global church environment as well.

The Terms of Complementarianism

Before we begin we should review some terminology. Like the term “Trinity,” neither the word “complementarian” or “egalitarian” can be found in the Bible, but the terms describe concepts that describe a foundational view of how one understands humans and their position before God and each other. As a complementarian, I favor a view that assumes the intrinsic value of all humans, while accepting a Biblical case for a functional line of spiritual headship and familial responsibility in males. The view embraces the uniqueness of both males and females, but makes a stark distinction between *functions* of service to Jesus and *value* as a treasured creation of God.

The label “complementarian” has only been in use for about thirty years, coined by scholars who held to the historic, (orthodox and I believe Biblical) idea that males and females are equal, but designed to be different, and have a different calling. The label rose in response to the proposition that God intends *equality* to be demonstrated by **total role-interchangeability** (egalitarianism)— a concept first forwarded and popularized in evangelical circles in the 1970s and 1980s by “Biblical Feminists.” “Complementarian” derives from “complement,” as in “something that completes or makes perfect a whole” and stands in

contradistinction to egalitarians that seem to see the concept of “spiritual headship” vested in a male as fundamentally at odds with true equality. In egalitarian terms, value is inextricably tied to function.

In the end, neither the culture nor the church can dictate what manhood and womanhood are all about; our Creator alone has the right to do that, and His Word proclaims His views. As a result, the acceptance by the culture dare not provide our view. Our view also may not be rooted merely in “traditionalism,” (i.e. what Christians have traditionally believed). Christians must identify and believe the Bible’s principles as superseding culture and tradition, and give much less heed to whether common culture has changed.

A Complementarian Approach

As we have said, true complementarians believe God created male and female as distinct but interconnected expressions of His image, both uniquely reflecting different aspects of His glory. Adam without Eve would have revealed less of God’s nature, whereas the addition of Eve added richness and depth to the self-revelation of God. In addition, by creating male and female to live in relational connection to one another before God, our Creator reflected realities that would not be seen by male alone or female alone. In complementarian terms, spiritual headship was an essential part of that picture that was inalterably revealed, and represents God’s desire. Such headship wasn’t established in light of the Fall of humankind; it was placed in the original design.

At the same time, complementarian Christians do not condone any societal oppression of women, but invite women to flourish in their God-given roles. Our issue is related to the church and home, not the corporation nor body politic per se. We place the limits at the edge of the Biblical prescription. We believe people will be most fulfilled when they live according to the God’s Word. We further believe the principles of spiritual headship are thoroughly Biblical and we are therefore not embarrassed to maintain that standard lovingly and with grace in the face of any coming absolutism of egalitarian cultural trends.

To be clear, spiritual headship is *not* the belief that men, as a group, are intrinsically superior to women. Military symbolism is not appropriate

for family or church definition in this regard. Rather, the responsibility to exercise headship in homes and churches is a God-given function of a humble servant, not an expression of a potentate to be used as a show of power. The divine example of “God is the head of Christ” was not a *value* statement (we see both the Father and the Son as fully and equally God), but recognize a clear headship principle proclaimed by Jesus (I do the will of My Father) and of the Apostle Paul (see 1 Corinthians 11).

Authority, then, in the context of Christ, is not the “divine right to rule” as much as it is a responsibility to serve Christ in humility and grace. In that way, Complementarianism is not “hierarchical” with some inherent, self-proclaimed right of men to rule. Males are to serve Jesus as a slave of Christ, just as females are to serve Jesus in their assigned roles. The very notion of distinct roles is woven into the fabric of complementarian thinking, but functionally dismissed by many, if not most, egalitarians. What follows is the work that should offer the evidence to these statements.

Part One: The Biblical Case as Outlined by Egalitarians at Fuller Seminary

In the Fuller Seminary statement on “Women in Ordained Pastoral Ministry” we find the Biblical defense offered by egalitarians that aptly reviews the concepts and principles of many books and articles on the subject. For the sake of brevity, let’s use that statement as a prime example of defense of the position; allowing some grace to recognize it may not contain all that any individual egalitarian may desire to express, and it may not make every case well (even among those who hold that view). With those caveats, we seek merely to be practical and deal with manageable materials. To that end, let’s look at elements of Fuller’s statement with some added notes before we look at the four foundational arguments of complementarians.

The rest of this section will be divided between the statement by Fuller, and my indented and bracketed notes on that section of their statement.

Fuller’s statement begins as follows:

“Women in Ministry: Equally Called - This is our commitment.

In the following article, we present Fuller Seminary’s position on women in ministry, as described and biblically supported by the late Professor of New Testament David M. Scholer.

An Introduction

Women have contributed much to the ministry of the Church throughout its history. However, their role in this area has never been free from controversy. Today, most church bodies are discussing the place of women in their ministries. Crucial to these discussions for many of us are the matters of faithful biblical interpretation.

[Note: the position statement begins with a sense of “historical correction” of some perceived level of discrimination and victimization, and then introduced the importance of Biblical text interpretation, assuming that standards egalitarians with find

offensive are not embedded within the text and therefore are fundamentally unfair and therefore morally wrong.]

“Perhaps a few words should be said about the concept of ministry itself on the basis of the New Testament. Today, we tend to confuse our specific church traditions about ordination with the biblical concept of ministry. The New Testament says relatively little about ordination. It clearly portrays, however, the fact that the early church had a varied and faithful ministry arising from the fact that all of God’s people were “gifted” by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up one another (see, for example, 1 Corinthians 12:4–31; 14:1–19; Romans 12:3–8; Ephesians 4:7–16; 1 Peter 4:8–11). Any person could exercise ministry (which means, remember, service) who was called and gifted by God and affirmed by the body of Christ, the Church. Some were set apart in leadership positions and some were assigned specific tasks to accomplish, but the differences among ministries were not distinctions of kind. Eventually, certain types of affirmation were combined with certain functions of ministry to produce our current understanding of ordination.

[Note: While the term ordination is not used in the text, both the practice of the “laying on of hands” and of public marking for pastoral service or priestly duty are well attested in Scripture, and notably without a single instance of application to a female in the text. While the broad term “ministry” obviously applies to all people, one need not mix the public markings of ordination with general ministry so easily without removing the actual point of the laying on of hands. This can seem as though one is taking clear pictures and making them seem blurry in the text.]

“Modern debates over the ordination of women often miss the crucial and basic issues of the holistic concept of the ministry of the Church reflected in the New Testament. Of course, no person should be ordained or given any responsibilities of ministry within the Church because of gender or for the sake of a “point.” On the other hand, we have affirmed in the Church that no person, called and gifted by God, should be denied any role of ministry or leadership in the Church because of one’s gender.

[This appears to be the practice of equating cultural understanding and then “correcting tradition” without first examining the

headship principle that (in my mind) appears clearly echoed throughout the Biblical text and in Christian historical understanding.]

The Basis in Creation

First, man ('adam), a generic term meaning the "human person," is created in God's very own image (Genesis 1:26–27; 5:1–2). This creation in God's image includes the identification of persons as male and female. This mutuality of women and men carries no suggestion of male headship or female submission.

[Note: God's image in both male and female are not at odds with the concept of spiritual headship or submission. Paul noted later that although Jesus is fully reflective of the image of His Father, yet He is clearly submissive to His Father. The Apostle did not argue for value, but for functional difference.]

Second, this mutuality is confirmed by the fact that both the man and the woman together, without distinction, are charged with responsibility for all of God's creation (Genesis 1:26, 28). This equal partnership between man and woman is also present in the retelling of the creation story in Genesis 2. Here the man is found in need of a companion, but none of the creatures God has created qualify (Genesis 2:18–20). Thus, God differentiates man ('adam) into man ('ish) and woman ('ishshah), persons of separate male and female gender identity. The point of such a provision of companionship is to relate the male and female persons as equals, indicated by the common designations ('ish/'ishshah; the same word root) and the common identity of bone and flesh (Genesis 2:23). This is climaxed with the concept of mutuality expressed in the "one flesh" language (Genesis 2:24).

[Note: The concept of mutuality of reflection of God in no way cancels headship that appears to have been expressed in clear terms in places like 1 Corinthians 11: 3 'But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.' The author's logic here suggested that because it was apparent to him in the Genesis account, it was not a Biblical ideal. Is that valid? Though the

intention of the “Story of Seven Days” in the Prologue to Genesis (1:1-2:3) was not so purposed to show headship, it can be found both in that account and elsewhere in the Scriptures, particularly in passages specifically addressing relationships between males and females in the local church.]

Some have interpreted Genesis 2:23, in which the man ('ish) calls the “bones of my bones and flesh of my flesh” woman ('ishshah), as an act of naming that demonstrates the headship or authority of man over woman. However, that type of naming does not occur until after the Fall when “Adam named his wife Eve”(Genesis 3:20).

[Note: the key passage to “naming” and “taking responsibility for” was found before the Fall story in the naming of the animals in Genesis 2:19-20. Many commentators note this as the beginning of God’s charge of Adam over the earth, and it continues to be the reason why a woman’s name is changed to the last name of her husband in the church wedding. This isn’t a spurious concept, but deeply rooted in our teaching on headship.]

Genesis 2 also indicates that the woman partner with the man will be an appropriate “helper” (Genesis 2:18). The word “helper” ('ezer), when used of a person in the Old Testament, always refers to God (in 29 places) apart from one reference to David. The word “helper,” then, is not to be understood as an expression of submission and service to man; rather, the woman as helper serves God with man.

[Note: the author rightly points to the grammatical term here, but omitted the reference of Paul on the event in 1 Timothy 2:13-15 and its very direct statements concerning headship.]

The woman and man sin together (Genesis 3:1–7). Although it does not show in English translations, the serpent addresses the woman with the plural “you.” Genesis 3:6 states that the woman “gave some [of the fruit] to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” The fact that the man was with her (a phrase sometimes omitted from English translations!) indicates that both partners are together involved in disobedience to God. This is also seen by the fact that it is after both ate that it is said: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened” (Genesis 3:7).

[Note: Again the author omits the New Testament review of that same scene in the context of headship in 1 Timothy 2: 14 ‘And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.’]

The statements of judgment for disobedience (Genesis 3:14–19) are descriptive ones of future realities, which involved a supremacy/subjection relationship between man and woman. These statements are not creation mandates; rather, the relationship of mutuality, partnership, and equality portrayed in Genesis 1:1–3:7 is now sadly marred by sin.

[Note: The author asserts that God’s intent was NOT to have any reference to spiritual headship in the Creation story of males and females, but rather that it was strictly the result of the Fall into sin. If one traces both 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2, as well as Numbers 30 and the like, it would seem likely that position would encounter great interpretive difficulty.]

The Basis in Jesus' Ministry

In the time of Jesus’s ministry, women were usually regarded as subordinate and inferior in virtually every area of life. They were to remain at home, to be good wives and mothers, and to take no part in public discourse or education. Josephus, a Jewish historian, said: “The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive.” It was also said: “Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good” (Sirach).

[Note: The argument began in ancient culture without asking the key critical question, “Why did Jews arrive at such a difference when being fervent students of the Torah?”]

Jesus, however, by his teaching and actions, affirmed the worth and value of women as persons to be included along with men within God’s love and service. Jesus challenged “sexual put-downs” of women. In Jesus’s setting, the prerogative of divorce belonged almost exclusively with men, and virtually any reason could be used to justify divorce. Jesus tolerated no

such “male chauvinism.” He recalled the “one flesh” concept (Genesis 2:24) of mutual partnership and God’s intention for marriage (Matthew 19:3–9). Although women were held responsible, in Jesus’s time, for all sexual sin, Jesus rejected this “sexism” with his dramatic indictment of men: “anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

[Note: This argument first implies that function and value cannot be separated, and seems to assert the very notion of headship as sexist and chauvinist, without examining its source in the Biblical text. It also presumes that Jesus was somehow limited to the appointment of males in His discipleship group by the culture, while stating that His work was revolutionary and counter-cultural.]

Jesus reached out to women who were rejected. In spite of the laws regarding uncleanness, Jesus allowed a woman with a twelve-year menstrual problem to touch him, and he commended her faith (Mark 5:25–34). Jesus permitted a sinful woman to anoint and kiss his feet (Luke 7:36–50). Jesus challenged religious leaders by saying: “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you” (Matthew 21:31). He also offered salvation directly to women who were known as adulteresses (John 4:4–42 and John 8:1–11).

In Jesus’s day responsible teachers were not to teach women. Nevertheless, Jesus taught women and included them in his group of committed disciples. He taught Mary of Bethany and commended her learning to her sister who was carrying out the traditional tasks (Luke 10:38–42). It was to the Samaritan woman that Jesus made his most explicit affirmation that he was the Messiah, and he shared with her his basic mission (John 4:4–42). According to Luke 8:1–3, many women were in Jesus’s band of traveling disciples. These same women were present at the crucifixion and burial and on resurrection morning (Luke 23:49, 55–56; 24:1).

[Note: Again, Jesus’ loving inclusion of women did not appear to end in appointments to publically accepted discipleship posts in the same way as did “His men.” We should also note that headship as a principle doesn’t imply that Jesus would have had a lesser love for women, nor that they deserved any less attention. The issue is grasping clear example from the actions in the text by Jesus – i.e.

who was appointed to represent in official ways the message. If Jesus was being revolutionary in this Patriarchal culture, the Gospels afford no clear examples of women in such roles as it does of "the twelve." While the twelve disciples were sent out to call people to the Kingdom and heal in His name, etc. there was no clear example anywhere that put showed women doing those things. If Jesus was attempting to erase distinctions beset by penalties of sin, it is in no way clear He was successful in doing so.]

Jesus affirmed the value of committed discipleship and obedience to God, even over the natural and valued role of mother: "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice" (Luke 8:21), and "Blessed [rather than his own mother] are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:28).

The women Jesus included became the proclaimers of Jesus as Savior and risen Lord. The Samaritan woman was responsible for evangelizing her town (John 4:39–42). All of the Gospels show that it was Jesus's women disciples who were the first persons to declare the message of Jesus's resurrection, central to the gospel in the early church.

[Note: Headship nowhere implies any discomfort with the prophetic role of women in society, merely that they were not placed into positions of "priestess" or "pastress." Declaring truth of God is not specifically a male or female issue. At the same time, running the Tabernacle, Temple or church clearly were on close examination of the Word.]

Among Jesus's disciples we know of seventeen men by name: the Twelve, Joseph Justus, and Matthias (Acts 1:23), Lazarus, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea. What is not so often noted is that we also know women by name from among his circle of devoted disciples: Mary the mother, Mary Magdalene, the "other" Mary, Mary of Bethany, Joanna, Susanna, and Salome.

Jesus's inclusion of and ministry to and through women within his own life and teaching were a powerful witness to the early church of the partnership of women and men within its membership and ministry.

[Note: This is an excellent point and worthy of careful reflection in what has, at times, been an unbalanced church.]

The Basis in the Early Church

Apart from documenting the widespread presence of women in the early church, the account in Acts presents us with three additional items of importance. First is the fact that when the Holy Spirit came in power and in fulfillment of God's Word (Joel 2:28–32) both men and women were present (Acts 1–2). Peter interpreted the events of Pentecost to mean that the “last days” of God's time had come and that God's Spirit was poured out on both women and men enabling them to prophesy. This foundational role was significant in the early church (see Acts 21:8–9; 1 Corinthians 11:5). Throughout the history of the modern church, the events of Acts 2 have been one of the major arguments in favor of women in ministry.

[Note: This appears to lack the distinction between prophetic office and public ordination to ministry. We could easily ask: Which of these women were clearly appointed to the leadership of the church in terms of public office and in what text was it clear the Apostles did so? If this was a prime purpose, the text is in no way clear they openly appointed women to public office in the same way. Paul's words have a context within the church that do not appear to demonstrate “major arguments in favor of women in ministry.”]

Second, the involvement of women in the establishment of the Philippian church is noteworthy (Acts 16:11–40). Paul begins the church in Philippi, the leading city of its district, with a group of women gathered for prayer outside the city gate (Acts 16:13–15). The “place of prayer” here is probably to be understood as a synagogue. Clearly one of the leaders of this remarkable women's synagogue was Lydia. She and her home became the center of the new Philippian church (Acts 16:14–15, 40). This data is very significant background for the two women of Philippi who worked with Paul in the gospel ministry (Philippians 4:2–3).

[Note: The author appears unaware of the “tashlich” (i.e. the place Jews meet without a “minyan” to hold synagogue services at a local water supply). Further, the establishment of the church did not end

in Lydia proclaimed as the pastor. Had it done so, the case would be very helpful in offering the conclusions of the author of this article.]

Third, Acts gives some indication of the importance of Priscilla (Acts 18:2,18, 26). She, along with her husband Aquila, instructed Apollos, who became a noted teacher in the church (Acts 18:26). There has always been debate over the significance of the fact that Priscilla taught Apollos at home rather than in the church, but it must be recognized that she did teach Apollos (see 1 Timothy 2:12).

[Note: The headship principle does not preclude women in private teaching men spiritual truth, nor delivering prophetic understanding (as in the case of Philip's daughters, it merely asserts the position of ordained office was not afforded these women.)]

The Basis in Paul

Galatians 3:28, like Acts 2, has been cited for hundreds of years as a basis for women in ministry. Detractors of women in ministry often argue that Galatians 3:28 refers only to the spiritual reality of equal access to God through faith in Christ Jesus. The text does refer to this, but it clearly encompasses other realities as well. There are three traditional pairings, and they reflect the three basic social divides of hostility within the first century AD in the Roman Empire. Paul's declaration would have had no less actual social impact than an American preacher's statement in the 1950s that "in Christ Jesus there is neither Black nor White" would have had.

Further, the conflict of Paul and Peter recorded in Galatians 2:11–14 demonstrated that the declaration of "neither Jew nor Greek" had social implications in the life of the church. Paul's letter to Philemon has similar implications for "neither slave nor free" in asking Philemon to accept Onesimus as a dear brother in the Lord just like Paul (Philemon 15–17)! Paul's declaration about male and female had implications, too, for the life of the church. The point is not the obliteration of God's created differences between male and female, but that sexual differentiation does not determine the participation in Christ's Church for persons created in the image of God.

[Note: No fair reading of the text could or should include this idea. Paul is dealing with the formula of salvation, not the lifestyle changes of sanctification. It is entirely unwarranted to see Paul erasing distinctions between men, women, slave, free, Jew or Gentile beyond the way in which they receive eternal life. He did not set slaves free, nor imply practical differences in lifestyle did not continue between each of the groups in question. His argument was clearly about the Gospel, not sanctification in the passage.]

Paul also notes the mutuality of men and women in Christ in two striking passages in 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 7:3–5 Paul makes it clear that sexual relations between a husband and wife are matters of mutuality and equality in respect and in rights. Such a position grew out of the love and inclusiveness of Christ and was directly counter to the prevailing Jewish and pagan opinion in the Roman Empire that the husband had all the sexual rights over his wife. In 1 Corinthians 11:11–12 Paul includes a strong and explicit assertion of the mutuality of men and women lest his discussion about head coverings be misunderstood as against women's participation.

The discussion of head coverings for women in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 clearly implies and assumes that women, as well as men, engage in prayer and prophecy (1 Corinthians 11:5). The participation in prophecy is the "highest" gift in the Church because it is the means of edification, encouragement, and comfort in the Church (1 Corinthians 14:3). Such edification is the purpose of the Church's life together and constitutes, under the Holy Spirit, the exercise of authority and teaching in the Church. Thus, Paul concludes the first part of his discussion on head coverings (1 Corinthians 11:2–10) by stating that women ought to have authority on their heads. First Corinthians 11:10 is rarely translated accurately in English (most often one finds "a sign of authority" or "veil"), but Paul asserts that women have authority, using his normal word, which always means the active exercise of authority (and never the passive reception of it).

[Note: While all agree there is great importance in the women of the New Testament, the author neglects to admit there is not a single case where Paul therefore placed a woman in the ordained position of pastoral leadership, while there are numerous examples of his

doing so with men. Concluding that women were included in the operation of the gift of prophecy is not at issue. Clearly women did and do possess all the gifts men possess. The question is not value nor giftedness, but one of function.]

Paul's letters also mention twelve women by name who were coworkers with him in the gospel ministry. This is the most often neglected evidence from the New Testament relevant to the participation of women in ministry.

Three women are known as leaders of house churches (the only type of church there was in the first century!): Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11), Nympha (Colossians 4:15) and Apphia (Philemon 2). To this group we can add Lydia, a Pauline house church leader known from Acts 16.

Paul stated that four women—Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Romans 16:6, 12)—had worked very hard in the Lord. The Greek word translated “work very hard” was used very regularly by Paul to refer to the special work of the gospel ministry, including his own apostolic ministry (1 Corinthians 4:12; 15:10; Galatians 4:11; Philippians 2:16; Colossians 1:29; 1 Timothy 4:10; see also Acts 20:35) as well as the work of others in the ministry, leaders and persons of authority in each case (1 Corinthians 16:15–16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17). Thus, for Paul, the term “work very hard” was not a casual term referring to menial tasks.

In Romans 16:3–4 Paul greeted Priscilla and Aquila. This husband and wife team is mentioned six times elsewhere in the New Testament. It is significant that Priscilla is usually mentioned first, since the cultural pattern would be to name the husband first. This may indicate that Priscilla was the more important or visible leader and may suggest that she had a higher social status and/or more wealth than Aquila. Paul indicated that he and all the Gentile churches were indebted to both of them. Paul designated Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, “fellow workers in Christ Jesus,” a term used regularly for other leaders in the gospel ministry: Urbanus (Romans 16:9), Timothy (Romans 16:21), Titus (2 Corinthians 8:23), Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25), Clement (Philippians 4:3), Philemon (Philemon 1), Demas and Luke (Philemon 24), Apollos and himself (1 Corinthians 3:9), and several others (Colossians 4:11).

In Philippians 4:2–3 Paul mentioned two women, Euodia and Syntyche, whom he also classed “along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers,” and noted that these two women fellow workers “contended at my side in the cause of the gospel,” an expression similar to the “worked very hard in the Lord” phrase applied to the four women noted in Romans 16. In view of Acts 16:11–40 it is not surprising that two such women leaders emerged in the Philippian church.

Phoebe, usually assumed to have been the one to deliver Paul’s letter to Rome, is warmly commended by Paul to the Roman church (Romans 16:1–2). Phoebe is designated as “a servant of the church in Cenchrea.” Although some have thought the word “servant” here means “deacon” (or “deaconess”), that is most unlikely since the other New Testament texts that refer to the office of deacon mention the office of bishop in immediate conjunction with it (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8, 12). Paul regularly used this term “servant” to refer to persons clearly understood to be ministers of the gospel: Christ (Romans 15:8), Apollos (1 Corinthians 3:5), Epaphras (Colossians 1:7), Timothy (1 Timothy 4:6), Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7), himself (1 Corinthians 3:5; Ephesians 3:7; Colossians 1:23, 25), and generally (2 Corinthians 3:6; 6:4; 11:15, 23). Thus, Phoebe should be understood as well as the minister (leader/preacher/teacher) of the church in Cenchrea.

[The grammatical arguments would be compelling if there was a single clear example of the “laying on of hands” to any women, and a clear-cut admonition to her to shepherd the flock. Clearly there are a number of these in relation to men (i.e. Timothy, Titus, etc.) but not a single clear example among these women. Further, if the text was intended to bear out such equality, it was not clearly attested as understood that way among the Church Fathers of the post-Apostolic period.]

Paul identified Andronicus and Junias as “outstanding among the apostles” (Romans 16:7), an expression that includes them within the apostolic circle. Junias is a male name in English translations, but there is no evidence that such a male name existed in the first century AD. Junia, a female name, was common, however. The Greek grammar of the sentence in Romans 16:7 means that the male and female forms of this name would

be spelled identically. Thus, one has to decide—on the basis of other evidence—whether this person is a woman (Junia) or a man (Junias). Since Junia is the name attested in the first century and since the great church father and commentator on Paul in the fourth century, John Chrysostom (no friend of women in ministry), understood the reference to be a woman Junia, we ought to read it that way as well. In fact, it was not until the thirteenth century that she was changed to Junias!

These thirteen women surveyed here (Lydia, Chloe, Nympha, Apphia, Mary, Persis, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Priscilla, Euodia, Syntyche, Phoebe, and Junia) provide clear evidence from Paul that women did participate in the gospel ministry, as did men. Paul's common terminology made no distinctions in roles or functions between men and women in ministry.

[Note: The meaning of the statement concerning Junias does not merely rest on his/her identity. It is possible the reading should have been understood that 'Junias was a "well-known" servant who the Apostles recognized' not a member of the Apostolic group. That interpretation is again favored because there is simply no mention of an Apostle list that includes any women on it from the period that followed as Scripture was canonized. There is little historical data to accept that the church considered the list of women offered as ordained and vested pastors. Rather, there is encouragement that outside of that function, women flourished in the ministry of the church.]

Missional innovation grounded in an unchanging gospel (1 Corinthians 14:34–35)

It should be recalled that Paul has already indicated in this letter—1 Corinthians—that women did participate in prayer and prophecy with the authority in the church (1 Corinthians 11:5, 10; 14:3–5). This fact alone shows that 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 cannot be a general, absolute, and timeless prohibition on women speaking in church.

It was common at one time to “dismiss” the evidence of 1 Corinthians 11:5, 10 (and a few would still argue this position). It was suggested that 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 did not refer to a meeting of the church but only to a private non-church gathering. The whole context of 1 Corinthians 11:2–

14:40, the argument of 1 Corinthians 11:16, and the parallel between 1 Corinthians 11:2 and 11:17 make such an idea most untenable. Some have even suggested that 1 Corinthians 11:5 was only hypothetical, but such an approach is clearly an argument of desperation.

[Note: Missing from the discussion of the specific verses is the general notion of headship that is so carefully applied in the passage. Without that context, the author is picking at the details and missing the general context. The specifics must be understood as set inside the frame, or the conclusions will be false. In addition, using terms like “argument of desperation” are unwarranted conclusive statements when one has no clear single case of the laying on of hands for pastoral ministry.]

The silence enjoined in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 must be a specific, limited silence. Numerous suggestions have been offered, but only the major alternatives can be reviewed here (some scholars, with slight evidence, have also suggested either that 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 was not written by Paul but was inserted by a copyist or that it is a question from Paul’s opponents in Corinth which Paul denounces in 1 Corinthians 14:36). One view is that the speaking prohibited here is mere babbling. There is, however, nothing specific in the context to support this meaning of “speak,” and such nonsense would certainly have been prohibited to all persons in the worship Paul described. Another view suggests that the speaking prohibited is speaking in tongues (glossolalia) since that is frequently mentioned in the preceding context (1 Corinthians 14). However, glossolalia is always referred to as “tongues” or “speaking in tongues” and never simply as speaking.

Probably the most popular view today among those who oppose women speaking with authority in the church is to identify the speaking prohibited with the judgment of the prophets mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:29. Thus, it is argued that women may prophesy (1 Corinthians 11:5) but may not judge or evaluate prophecy. The evaluation of prophecy is seen as the truly authoritative level of speech in the church from which women are to be excluded.

This view has two major difficulties. First, the word “speak” in 1 Corinthians 14:34 has no implication within the word itself or in its

immediate context (14:34–35) to support identifying it with the concept of prophetic evaluation. Second, the idea of two levels of speech in the church—prophecy and the judgment of prophecy—with the understanding that one is higher than the other and is for men only has no clear or implied support elsewhere in Paul. In fact, Paul’s own definition and defense of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1–25) implies directly that prophecy itself is authoritative speech of the highest level in the church.

[Note: While trying to decide what the word “speaking” referred to in the text, the overall argument of the text seems missing. Why did the Apostle, in this case or any other, tell the woman to get her information from her husband at home? What spiritual headship is implied in that command?]

The view that seems best to me is to understand the speaking prohibited here to women to refer only to disruptive questions that wives (usually uneducated in the culture of Paul’s time) were asking their husbands. This corresponds precisely with the resolution Paul offers (1 Corinthians 14:35): “if they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home. . . .” Such disruptive questioning was also considered a disgrace in Paul’s day in which it was widely believed that it was morally indiscreet for any wife to say anything on any subject in public. This view of disruptive questioning also fits well the specific context (1 Corinthians 14:26–40) in which Paul is concerned about appropriateness and order, which permit genuine edification (note that 1 Corinthians 14:26 expects everyone to participate). Thus, there are actually three injunctions to silence (1 Corinthians 14:28, 30, 34), although many Bible translations use “silent” only in 1 Corinthians 14:34.

1 Timothy 2:8–15

First Timothy 2:8–15 is the paragraph in the New Testament that provides the injunctions (2:11–12) most often cited as conclusive by those who oppose preaching, teaching, and leadership ministries for women in the church. It is inappropriate, however, to isolate verses 11–12 from the immediate context of 1 Timothy 2:8–15. If any of the paragraph is perceived as culturally bound (as 2:8–10 often is) or as especially difficult in terms of Pauline theology (as 2:15 often is), it must be realized that these same issues must be confronted in understanding 2:11–14.

[Note: In a text that was designed specifically to outline the work of a Pastor and the functions of the local church such as this letter clearly was, the author slid into a “cultural” argument without regard to the fact that was not the basis of Paul’s argument used by the Apostle himself. He did not argue that she had a deficiency by virtue of her culture, but rather he argued on the basis of larger and more permanent headship principle.]

It should also be observed that 1 Timothy 2:11–12 is a general prohibition on teaching and authority exercised by women. It is not directed to only a certain level of persons (such as “ordained” in distinction from “non-ordained” or “pastors” as distinct from “missionaries”). Further, it is not limited to only certain styles of teaching (“preaching” as distinct from “sharing,” seminary teaching, or writing theological books). In other words, if 1 Timothy 2:11–12 were a transcultural, absolute prohibition on women teaching and exercising authority in the church, then it prohibits all such activity.

[Note: Women were included among the teachers in the context of a church as they were both instructed to teach other women and children. Further, examples of important prophetic instruction can be seen throughout the Scripture. Again, because Deborah was a prophetess did not mean she could run the Tabernacle or be a priestess. The functional office had no such crossover. Because Philip’s daughters could offer prophetic counsel to an Apostle did not mean that Paul laid hands on them and put them in pastoral office. The clear understanding left in the example of the local church in the four hundred years following these statements demonstrated they believed them to mean the office was not open to her. There was no reason to emphasize that she could offer prophetic counsel, for that was not in view in the argument of the text.]

The word in verses 11 and 12 often translated as “in quietness” (11) and “silent” (12) is identical in Greek. The same term is used by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 3:12, which the NIV translates as “settle down.” The point is that this term, which is often assumed to mean only “verbal silence,” is better understood as an indication of proper order or acceptance of

normal practice. The term translated “to have authority” (authentein) occurs only here in the New Testament and was rarely used in the Greek language. It is not the usual word for positive, active authority. Rather, it is a negative term, which refers to the usurpation and abuse of authority. Thus, the prohibition (2:11–12) is against some abusive activity, but not against the appropriate exercise of teaching and authority in the church. The clue to the abuse implied is found within the heretical activity outlined in 1–2 Timothy. The heretics evidently had a deviant approach to sexuality (1 Timothy 4:3; 5:11–15) and a particular focus on deluding women, who were generally uneducated (2 Timothy 3:6–7).

The injunctions are supported with selective Genesis arguments (1 Timothy 2:13–14), using Genesis 2 rather than Genesis 1 (2:13) and the fact of Eve’s deception (2:14, see the use of this in 2 Corinthians 11:3 for male heretics). The function of the Genesis argument is parallel to its use in 1 Corinthians 11:7–9 where it is employed to argue that women must have their heads covered in prayer and prophecy. In both cases scriptural argument is employed to buttress a localized, limited instruction. The concluding word of hope for women (1 Timothy 2:15) is an affirmation of the role of bearing and nurturing children, a role considered as the only appropriate one by many in the culture who believed women incapable of other roles as well. This conclusion (2:15) is parallel in thrust to 1 Timothy 5:3–16 and Titus 2:3–5, both of which are concerned with specific cultural expectations.

[Note: The actual argument of Paul was based on the order of Creation and the order of the Fall, neither of which are impacted by culture at all. Both are timeless and relevant to all ages that follow them.]

Consistency and Balance

Two broad and basic issues of responsible biblical interpretation should concern us in this, indeed, in any issue—balance and consistency. In terms of balance, it is the total witness of Scripture that must inform our thought and action. In terms of consistency, it is crucial to approach our understanding of all biblical texts in the same way in order to offset as much as possible our blind spots and biases.

Opposition to women in ministry has often been mounted virtually on the basis of one Pauline text—1 Timothy 2:11–12. Whatever that difficult text and context means, it must be put in balance with all other biblical texts that bear on the same issue. This shows, in my judgment, that the 1 Timothy text does, in fact, speak to a limited situation.

Further, in regard to balance, one must struggle with starting points. For example, on the matter of “eternal security” of believers, does one read Hebrews 6:4–6 “through” Romans 8:28–39, or should the Romans text be read “through” the one from Hebrews? It has often been assumed without question that 1 Timothy 2:11–12 is the “control” (i.e., authoritative) text through which all other New Testament data on women in ministry must be challenged. It is more plausible, in my judgment, to approach 1 Timothy 2:8–15 through the accumulated witness of all the other Pauline passages on women in the church.

[Note: The lack of any clear examples of pastoral office demand that such balance be set in the context of how these commands have been long understood. Not only that, but claiming timeless truths were based solely on cultural values lacks academic integrity. If the author agrees that 1 Timothy 2 must be understood as broad, then the “black and white” reasoning offered must be as well.]

Consistency in interpretation is notoriously difficult. Yet, to push it here may help considerably in the attempt “to hear” the Scriptures. Why is it that so many persons insist that 1 Timothy 2:11–12 is a transcultural, absolutely normative text, but at the same time do not approach other texts in 1 Timothy with the same passion? Pressed in the same way, 1 Timothy 3:2 would rule out all single men from ministry, and 1 Timothy 5:3–16 would require churches to establish “orders of widows” for those sixty and older and would require that all widows fifty-nine and under remarry for the reasons of their sensual desires and idleness.

[Note: First, some do insist on the positions stated. Second, the author fails to be able to offer a single grammatical reference in the sections on specific requirements of the office as both masculine and feminine. “Husband of one wife” nowhere implies that a woman was even considered as eligible. If that were the only one, that would be scant, but the whole of the list appears in masculine form. To argue

that a view is not warranted solely because other texts are not taken so literally is a dead end argument. Could it be many dismiss too much of the text in their interpretation?]

Most of us do not literally exchange the kiss of peace or holy kiss even though the New Testament commands it five times (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). Most of us do not consider foot washing a necessity even though Jesus explicitly commanded it (John 13:14–15). Obviously, our inherited tradition and/or our sense of the cultural contexts of certain texts strongly inform our interpretations.

[Note: Not all commands of the Scripture are rooted so deeply in a broad principle. Perhaps it is sufficient that churches understand the greeting is to be warm and personal, but holy in its application, whether a kiss or in some other form. To link a long-standing concept like spiritual headship to a greeting is to place equal weight on every idea of the text – something no careful interpreter would fairly urge.]

Finally, consistency and balance mean that we cannot impose on texts understandings that are not there. We cannot devalue the authority Jesus gave to his followers or the authority of prophecy in the Corinthian church just because they do not have the same structural pattern as that of 1 Timothy. We cannot divide the injunction of 1 Timothy 2:11–12 into two levels of authority imposed from our context so that women can be included in some activities but excluded from the “highest” levels.

[Note: We can and should restrict or promote any boundaries that are consistent with the text. Those texts written with the expressed purpose of organization of the local church should be favored over scant example. Instruction has greater import than narrative in such matters. Further, the implication that function shows value must be consistently resisted.]

In conclusion, it is my deepest conviction that the full evidence of Scripture and an understanding of balance and consistency in interpretation mean that we must rethink some of our traditions and reaffirm with clarity and conviction the biblical basis for the full participation of women in the

ministries of the church. The underlying biblical theology of a “new creation in Christ” in which there is “neither male and female” is a powerful affirmation of the commitment to equality in the gospel, the Church, and all of its ministries. Jesus’s inclusion of women among his disciples and witnesses, the coming of the Holy Spirit on both sons and daughters, and Paul’s inclusion of women in his circles of coworkers in the ministry all affirm the full and equal participation of both women and men in all the ministries of the gospel.

[Note: “Neither Jew nor Gentile” is explained further in 1 Corinthians 7 to “allow each to thrive as they were when they came to Christ.” In the argument of Paul, he dealt with their salvation, not their sanctified lifestyle. Paul argued that men and women found salvation the same way, not that all distinctions of their life were eliminated in the Gospel, as is clear through the fact that each group were given separate instructions on walking with Jesus in his various Epistles.]

This “Women in Ministry” article was adapted, with permission, from those authored by David M. Scholer for The Covenant Companion: December 1, 1983; December 15, 1983; January 1984; and February 1984 issues.

Part Two: A Brief Scriptural Analysis of Male and Female Roles as Applied to Ordination and Public Ministry

The Bible and Culture

Throughout church history followers of Jesus were regularly encouraged to derive their daily practices in operation of their home, church and activities in society from the Scriptures. Believers measured obedience by adherence to their best understanding of the text. In more recent times, believers have been more heavily engaged in a global society, and many have integrated multi-cultural thinking. In that context, some have argued that ancient culture greatly set the tone for the Bible and have begun to press modern believers to re-examine how much the Bible reflects what people merely “used to believe long ago.” One of the places that argument is most notable is in relation to the position of women in the ordained public ministry of eldership, sometimes referred to as pastoral ministry. The Fuller Seminary statement is but one example of many that seem to argue the text was as much a reflection of ancient thinking as it was of Divine revelation.

While culture is obviously a vital concern for understanding communication, it is also a somewhat elusive part of the human experience. It embraces more than just great ideas and grand artistic forms. It includes the pattern of the daily, the basic beliefs, values and assumptions within which people operate. It isn't always a simple matter to know what people believed at any given point in history. Even more, in the case of the Bible, the context of their belief may not always be nearly as important as some teach. The essential thing to bear in mind is this: the Bible doesn't claim to be a product of human culture; it claims to be the Word of God.

In that way, the Bible stands apart from culture as revealed truth, though it certainly was recorded in several temporal cultures over two millennia. To be sure, while the cultural context may be essential to clearly deriving a timeless truth from a text, we dare not make the text a product of that culture. We must also recognize the text helped produce the culture that recorded, lived and taught it. The Bible must not be framed as a text of men from “back then,” but as the transmission from

the “God of the now.” His Divine name (YHWH) proclaims Him as “always now” (“Who was, Who is, Who is to come.) Truly, the exclamation of Jesus about Himself was:

John 8:58 “Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple..”

If the Bible were a product of great minds of ancient culture, it would follow that its teachings were open to stark revision as culture changed, for modern understanding of many things has grown and changed. That line of thinking undergirds many articles suggesting the church re-think her standards concerning social practices. We must understand, then, if we support a change in practice arguing the Bible was a mere reflection of the culture of the past, we erode the precious belief that the foundation that our faith was built, not on great people who found God, but upon a timeless God Who gave us revealed truth.

We recognize that culture has its purposes. Since humans lack much by way of basic natural instincts, (that is why children must be trained to meet even the most basic needs) culture adds a necessary frame to make things more easily understandable and recognizable. In contrast, there are Biblical cases when culture seemed the clear basis for a specified practice, and such cases allow that practice to be reckoned as temporary and changeable. When a behavior is instructed in the Bible, one must seek the text for the reasoning behind that behavior. In the case of family or church practice, a behavior mandated by God and instructed on the basis of unchanging realities must not be redirected by the prevailing winds of modern culture.

Two Intertwined Studies

There are two Biblical studies that are essential to properly understand the functional roles of males and females in the church as designed by God. They cannot be easily separated, and must take place in a parallel set of studies.

The first study attempts to set individual statements and passages into a more general Biblical context. It forces us to define concepts like “headship” before we can simply dive into the passages.

The second examines a string of related passages, offering a proper interpretation of each that is consistent the established broader Biblical context first, to the extent such principles can be clearly identified.

We cannot tackle this study in a linear way, defining the broad picture of the landscape and then focusing on the specific passages, because the broad picture is built on a series of individual texts. Perhaps the best way to proceed is to dive into specific texts and try at the same time to demonstrate broader principles existed. To that end, here are some questions that we should consider on our way to understanding the broader assumptions of the writers:

- In the whole of Scripture, does God show any distinction between how He deals with males and females in the context of spiritual authority?
- Is there reason to believe the Bible teaches males and females are assigned differing and distinct functions, but are equally valued?
- Does the Scripture demonstrate an eventual egalitarian ideal (as some explain) and place “spiritual headship” of males as a “penalty of the Fall” (with the principle of “submission”)?
- Does submission (hupotasso) intrinsically imply greater and lesser value of the one who chooses to “rank themselves less important?”

Establishing the Broader Context

There must be no question that God used women mightily as He revealed Himself to us. Even prophetic revelation was not the exclusive domain of males in the Scripture. Mary Magdalene was truly among the most *marginalized* of voices in her time, both as a woman and as a former demoniac, yet she was the first person to announce to Jesus’

beleaguered followers that Christ had risen. Her gender did not hold back that supreme honor. In spite of the fact that the Disciples initially thought her pronouncement silly, we now can see that she was granted the wondrous privilege to share the news of the risen Christ before all others nonetheless. Let's say it plainly: both men and women could hear prophetic truth and on occasions share it with others in accordance with divine sanction.

There are many such cases, where God used a woman to step out and correct a generation or reveal an essential spiritual truth. The rabbis long acknowledged seven women they considered "Hebrew Prophetesses" that show they understood God's use of their lives, testimony and voices. The seven normally include: Sarah, Miriam, Esther, Huldah, Deborah, Hannah and Abigail. Because of the records concerning their labors, there seemed no limitation of her ability to hear from God in Hebrew memory.

Passing into the ministry of Jesus, the work of women was highlighted in the Gospels significantly. Small biographical narratives help weave the story of Jesus together, sharing the works of Elizabeth, Anna the Prophetess, Mary the mother of Jesus, Peter's mother in law, the widow at Nain, the woman wiping Jesus feet with her tears, the Samaritan woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery and brought to Jesus, Jairus' daughter at Capernaum, the Syro-phenician woman and Mary Magdalene. These women represent just how many were tied to Jesus' story and how important they were to the text itself.

Moving into the missional establishment of the church in the Book of Acts and the Epistles, that same trend continued. Women were essential to the growth and development of the church. Mary the mother of Jesus continued to be important in that time (cp. Acts 1) but was by no means the only woman greatly used of God. Consider stories in the Book of Acts like that of Tabitha, Mary the mother of John Mark, Rhoda the servant, Lydia the seller of purple, Priscilla and perhaps Damaris. Each of these women were led by the Spirit of God to expand the kingdom message.

While all that is true, receiving prophetic truth doesn't necessarily indicate that God's true ideal was to use men and women interchangeably in roles in public worship or in godly homes (the

essential egalitarian argument). With no attempt to reduce or demean the impact of the women in the story, one must face the fact that no woman experienced the “laying on of hands” for the purpose of priestly work in the Tabernacle or Temple, nor was there any clear instruction to do so in the ancient synagogue (from which church offices later drew their pattern). In fact, there was no example nor instruction to incorporate women into the ordained office in the early church.

The same cannot be said of men, where such a “laying on of hands” was both instructed and recorded. The lack of both instruction and model, coupled with what appears to be clear definition of roles in males and females in the text led the church to the position it held for generations, until the impact of modern feminism in the western church culture.

In fact, the Bible offers a foundational role of “spiritual headship” vested in male leadership of a family as the essential foundation upon which the Epistles explained functions of the local church. As a complementarian, I find both headship and submission as underlying concepts that must be understood to come to a Biblical understanding on the matter of functional leadership roles within the local church particularly as applied to ordained pastoral office. I do not see these concepts as a result of sin’s marring (as supposed by the Fuller statement), but rather as a part of the expressed design reflecting the perfect order of God. The implications of that view are that I see male headship in a family as a Biblical function of service for Jesus by a man, while I see the Biblical submission of a wife to her husband as a function of service of Jesus.

The purpose of both truths (headship and submission) appear to be revealed as a means *to bring honor to the Lord Jesus* in the same way that Jesus (through submission) consistently honored His Father (Who exercised headship). Because I do not believe the Bible reveals these concepts were in response to the Fall, I do not see justification in trying to tie their *removal* to some idea of freedom and equality the church should strive to promote. As those functional roles are openly expressed as the pattern of the Godhead, it seems clear to me that neither the function of headship nor that of submission imply greater or lesser value at all, but each was commanded in the Word and demands obedience to the structure to function according to God’s revealed

design. I believe as we study the Scriptures, we can show how the foundation of male headship became a basis of God's unique role assignment in the local church.

Our Terms

Before we do so, perhaps we should define some terms. In every discussion concerning this topic, we refer to terms like "ordination" without suggestion that others in the church are not as vital or cannot minister. An "ordained minister" refers to one who has had proper public markings for a specific type of service in public worship. The origination of the idea was Biblical, and its qualities were enhanced by the Hebraic understanding by the time of the establishment of the early church. Perhaps a few moments to consider that topic will help us refine the way we use the term.

The "Laying on of hands" and Ordination

The most common Hebrew idea behind the phrase "to lay hands on" was not positive, but normally denoted "grabbing" in order to inflict harm or judgment of some sort (Genesis 22:12; 37:22; Leviticus 24:14).

In ceremonial use as part of Levitical Law, priests were instructed to "lay hands" on an animal sacrifice to impute God's righteous curse on the animal, substituting the animal for the penitent sinner (Leviticus 1:4; 3:2ff; Exodus 29:10ff). This is particularly clear in the ceremony at Yom Kippor (on the Day of Atonement) in Leviticus 16. It appears that was the very command referred to in Hebrews 6:1 as one of the "elementary teaching about Messiah," that is, the notion of imputation of sin and righteousness in substitutional atonement.

For the sense of the word as we use it, we must examine how "the laying on of hands" came to mean the "passing of function" in the process of formal recognition of a leader in the context of public spiritual service. Such a use can be seen in Numbers 8:10, where priests were officially commissioned as tribal leaders placed hands upon them (Heb: "samak" refer to physically supporting or placing hands upon), as well as in Numbers 27:18, where God instructed Moses to lay his hands on Joshua to lead the nation (using identical Hebrew terminology).

The Hebrew concept, then, beyond “grabbing to apprehend a violator” was either the imputation of righteousness or sin on another in substitution, or the public ceremonial confirmation of some form of spiritual leadership. Sometime during the exile to Babylon and return, that concept was refined even further in rabbinic circles, as men were chosen to work in both the Second Temple and in the local synagogues of each town on the return into Israel.

The concept of “semikhah” or sometimes “smichut” or “ordination” was based on the practices of the Torah, and specifically the “smicha lerabbanut” or “rabbinical ordination was derived from a Hebrew word which means to “rely on” or “to be authorized”.

- In Jewish literature, “smicha lerabbanut” signifies one has been deemed to offer transmission of rabbinic authority and reliably give advice or judgment in Jewish law.
- In relation to public worship, “smicha lehazzanut” signifies one has been deemed to hold authoritative knowledge about Jewish musical and liturgical tradition.

Though the terms seem to be used sometime after the period of Jesus, the ideas seem very much present in the use at the time His earth ministry unfolded. It was clearly held by the time of the training of the young Apostle Paul. The use of the term during the time of the Sanhedrin paralleled the recognition of conferred authority by one rabbi to inaugurate the ministry service of a pupil to become his colleague, thereby passing the “reshut” (rabbinic authority) to the younger man. In the period of the Apostles, Jews were doing this, and the early church grew out of that contextual use of terms.

The Greek term for this conferring was most often “paradidomai,” a term that had broad meaning that showed one “laying hands on another.” Like the Hebrew use, it sometimes reflected a negative sense (it was used of the apprehension of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane in the betrayal scene) but it is also used in the sense of “things passed from one to another” or “handed down.”

At the same time, the word captured those positive times when Jesus laid hands on people to bless and heal them (Matthew 9:18; Mark 5:23; 6:5; 7:32; 8:22–25; Luke 13:13). Another notable incident is when Jesus “laid His hands” on the little children who came to Him, in order to bless them (Matthew 19:13–15; Mark 10:16). Continuing that healing use in Acts, we see the healing touch extended to Ananias as he “laid his hands” on the blind Saul of Tarsus three days after he first encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:12, 17). As if passed to him, much later Paul’s own hands were used by God to perform miracles (Acts 14:3; 19:11), which included laying his hands on a sick man on the island of Malta to extend God’s healing power to him (Acts 28:8).

We would be remiss if we didn’t also notice the fact that “the laying on of hands” was also used in the giving and receiving of the Holy Spirit as the gospel spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. It became a visible sign of the coming of the Spirit among new people and places — first in Samaria (Acts 8:17) and then in Ephesus (Acts 19:6).

Closer to the use for the purposes of ordination study are the references for public recognition of continued public service to the body of Christ, where we see an echo of the practice from the Book of Numbers (8:10 and 27:18). These cases seem to offer the most complete backdrop for Paul’s references in the Pastoral Epistles.

Consider Acts 6:6, when the church put forward men to serve as official assistants to the apostles in the newly established deaconate. As in Numbers, a commissioning ceremony marked their service. The visible sign of the laying on of hands publicly marks the beginning of a new formal ministry for these seven, recognizing them before the people and asking for God’s blessing on their labors. A bit later, Acts recorded a time when the church responded to the Spirit’s call to set apart Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2), and they laid hands on them to send them (Acts 13:3). This formal commission performed in public seemed to convey authorization and blessing of spiritual authority over the task at hand.

As the church spread out, Paul wrote to those he had appointed. In one such case, the Apostle charged Timothy in Ephesus to stir up the gift of

God in him that was given to him when hands were laid on him and some prophetic utterances were made over him (1 Timothy 4:14).

The gift Timothy received appears twice in the narrative to be the spiritual ability to teach (see the previous and following verses that mention teaching), but our point is to notice how he was placed into his formal public role. Timothy left for his assignment after a public recognition of recognized leaders conveyed through the laying on of their hands. Such a practice seems attested as part of the regular functions of the church as can be demonstrated with the caution from Paul to Timothy to be very careful in repeating its use without due consideration (1 Timothy 5:22). Timothy clearly took part in commissioning others, an evidence the practice was wholly engrained into the local church by that time.

Laying on of hands, then, seems the opposite of Pilate's washing of hands. It is taking responsibility for another, and conferring recognition on them. When elders lay hands on a candidate, they commission him to particular service and commend him to those among whom he will serve. That ceremonial laying on of hands publicly commended candidates to the church for an official ministry carrying some sense of the authority of those who chose to place hands upon the candidate.

The church often interchanged the phrase with a singular term "ordination" which was derived from Latin. It meant a setting in order with reference to public affairs, and came to mean "an appointment to office." The term coined in Greek for this use in eastern church history was "cheirotonia," and is simply translated by the original phrase "laying on of hands."

In the whole discussion on the laying on of hands, any student of the Word will readily recognize the entire context of the practice was consistently *among* males and *by* males. There is simply no other model from which to draw in the text of the Bible. Even egalitarian apologists do not cite women undergoing such a ceremony in the text. Among the sages, no such practice would have been tolerated. Most note these as conventions of culture, but the Bible was not simply borne out of a culture, it was by its nature often revolutionary and counter-cultural. In addition, one must ask the greater question, "Why did such a culture

come to exist?” Could it be that since both the text’s instructions and its models consistently reflect a view, the view itself may not be in conflict with it?

Having looked briefly at terms in the larger context, we will need to look at a series of the related passages in light of the headship and submission context. In this second set of studies, we will observe instances when the Epistles offered directive instruction on leadership and administrative ministry designs, and carefully note the way it was understood and practiced through the centuries, with no attempt to promote an egalitarian ideal until modernity. Through the ages, the text seemed clear to most of the church until it was re-evaluated and redefined with the rise of feminism in the west. When that began, it was founded in a hermeneutic that appears to redefine the “central concepts” by using a combination of examples from the edges of the text, largely ignoring the fact that neither a whole series of clear instructional texts of the Epistles on ordained office, nor examples of lists of Apostles and Pastors in the text who received the laying on of hands included women. To follow the heart of Jesus, we must examine each text by itself, and we will attempt to do so.

Four Complementarian Cases

In my view, there are **four cases for the complementarian perspective**:

- First, there is the general case for “spiritual headship” and “voluntary submission” in God’s Design as a foundational setting for the whole of the Bible.
- Second, there is a specific textual case for functional headship in church structure.
- Third, there is the case of textual examples that reveal models of church and family structure consistent with the instruction of headship and submission.
- Fourth, there is the case of orthodox interpretive history.

The general case for “spiritual headship” and “voluntary submission” as a foundational setting for the whole of the Bible.

Argument One: The argument from design in Genesis.

The initial chapter of the Bible reveals a general order and purpose in the Creation with these details:

1. It seems clear and purposefully stated that all humankind, male and female, were made in “God’s image” (1:27) and without exception, both possess equal intrinsic value as the property of the Creator. The “image” phrase is repeated; suggesting a prime purpose of the passage was to underscore the importance of that truth. Human dignity is rooted in the breath of their Creator within them, and gender seems to have no relevance; it is a fundamental and revealed truth.
2. Genesis 1 appears to apply to all human beings specific authority to rule over the world and take from the earth their necessary supply for food (1:26, 28). The term “man” is “Adam” and can properly be used of humankind in the opening chapter. For that reason, it seems all humans were commanded to multiply and subdue the planet (1:28).

Based solely on such statements of Genesis 1, the Fuller statement concluded there was no discernible distinction between the male and female roles before “the Fall.” Yet, Genesis 1 was not written with the purpose of gender role assignment nor was it the *total* story. To capture the whole frame, we must study the subsequent narrative in Genesis 2 to gain a more complete picture.

Careful examination of Genesis 2 demonstrates the use of “Adam” in the assignment of specific roles is not as general as used in Genesis 1. Reference to the *male* seems apparent as the story continues in contradistinction to the ideas cited by the Fuller statement. Look closely:

Genesis 2:5 Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no **man** to cultivate the ground.

Since the antecedent use of “Adam” seems to flow from the creative summary of chapter 1, it may seem perfectly acceptable to reckon the cultivation as an assignment for *both* male and female, and the use of “Adam” in the passage may not be specifically male. Considering the fact that Eve participated later in picking fruit for food, we may conclude the gardening responsibility was given to both. Yet, with a closer look, the use of the term seems modified to “male” as opposed to “human” based on the verses that *follow* (and appear to *clarify* it):

Genesis 2:7 Then the Lord God formed **man** of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and **man** became a living being. 8 The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the **man** whom He had formed.

It seems quite clear that Genesis 2:7-8 *cannot* literally refer to Eve, for **those things were not true of her**. Eve wasn’t formed from the ground, but directly from the body of Adam. Genesis 2:7 must apply to Adam alone, as distinct from Eve. Some argue the text presented a metaphor (she was created “in him” as a genetic part of Adam), but that same metaphor would make Adam a representative of humankind. If “Adam” in Genesis 2:7-8 was a reference to all humans, it only could have done so “through Adam as a specific agent” and not in a shared context. Thus, it appears a more specific passage (Genesis 2:7-8) modified a general one (Genesis 1:26,28), with “Adam” solely formed directly from the ground and placed alone in the garden (initially).

The story suggested a specific order of Creation that placed Adam in his specific role representing humankind, and that truth was applied directly by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 in a passage that addressed “spiritual headship.” Paul asserted in a passage on public worship practices (specifically the head covering issue):

1 Corinthians 11: 7 For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.

Only a passing reference was made in the Fuller statement to the detailed record of Paul's words here, but note that Paul continued:

1 Corinthians 11:8 For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; 9 for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.

The teaching of 1 Corinthians 11 was part of a larger series of instructions based on questions sent to the Apostle, specifically about the relationships, functions and operations of the local church. These questions included such issues as: marriage, divorce, remarriage and celibacy (1 Corinthians 7), issues of disputed practices among the members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 8-10), observances of symbols of great heavenly truths (1 Corinthians 11), the practice of gifts of manifest presence and their regulation in public services (1 Corinthians 12-14), instruction of the resurrection and first fruits celebration (1 Corinthians 15) and directions for the offering of relief to Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16). Clearly, the instructions of Paul concerning women in the text were part of an important series on church recognition of Biblical truths, where "spiritual headship" and "voluntary submission" were explained along with representative symbols that marked those truths.

A plain reading of Paul's letter shows he didn't argue submission and headship as a sideline, but a core principle. He clarified the relationship between men and women was designed to both follow and reflect the relationship between the Father and the Son of the triune God:

1 Corinthians 11:3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

The verse sets a clear tone of submission and headship, and separates the idea that "value" is directly connected to "role" as is perfectly clear

in the relationship between God and Christ. Value is not in view; role is. He continued:

1 Corinthian 11:4 Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. 5 But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.

It is quite clear that Paul understood the genders to have specific differences in roles as they were designed. They were to act differently because God assigned them differing roles. The line of demarcation was their biological gender, not some other qualifier.

Historically, it is worth noting that Roman women normally practiced veiling and covering in sacred space, and the command would likely have been far more controversial concerning men (see the Ara Pacis ceremonial parade relief in Rome for a good look at this). Since the symbol of a free Roman man at the time was the “pileus cap” and because many men proudly wore that as a symbol of their manumission from slavery (whether “libertus” or “libertine”), the stripping off of the deeply important symbol of freedom was tantamount to telling them they were not to come to worship as “free men,” but rather as submissive servants of Christ, as responsible to obey Him as they were a former “owner.” This required men to openly display voluntary submission to Jesus as their Master.

At the same time, women who routinely practiced veiling even in their pagan cults before coming to Christ, would not have mistaken the point that such a symbol was, in fact, an expression of voluntary submission as their role in the headship line was defined.

We consult 1 Corinthians 11 to clarify the narrative of Genesis 1 and 2 because Paul specifically drew his point about order in the church from that very Genesis account. He wrote:

1 Corinthians 11:8 For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; 9 for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.

Paul marked the order of creation as his foundational reason for statements of church practice (such as the head covering or removal during worship). The Apostle stated man was created *first* (directly from the ground) by God and woman was created *out of the man*. She was a creation of God, but this *from another human*. Next, Paul argued the purpose of men and women were distinct. The woman was created specifically in response to the man's recognition of his need of companionship. She was God's perfectly designed choice to complement (that is, to *complete*) him both biologically and emotionally.

Lest women decide to "throw off the covering" and lose that symbol of submission, Paul warned women their audience was both larger and more significant than they may have realized. He charged them to walk in a way that would not encourage another rebellion from the ranks of angels. He wrote:

1 Corinthians 11:10 Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

At the same time, lest his words be taken by men to evoke high-handed, arrogant and domineering behavior in the church, Paul reminded men of the way woman completes him:

1 Corinthians 11:11 However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.

It appears to me the Fuller statement applied part of the story from Genesis 1, but largely **ignored the further detail of the story in Genesis 2 and did not connect Paul's direct review of the story in 1 Corinthians 11 where the details were connected to church behaviors.**

Further they ignored that in Genesis 2, the story seemed purposed to advance the "spiritual headship" idea by sharing a story of responsibility given to Adam before Eve was created. Genesis 2:7

recounted the creation of Adam alone. With man alone in the Garden, the story continued:

Genesis 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. 16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Here, the text appears to clarify the garden assignment by ascribing the work to Adam alone. The command to limit access to one tree was given here, and is not repeated in command form until the tempter came to Eve. By itself that would not be a conclusive argument, but the point in 2:15-17 seemed to be that Adam received an assignment and these commands *before* Eve was created to even hear them. In that way, since she needed to know about them, **Adam needed to communicate these truths to her**. This pattern is the very reason that Paul could offer the instruction in the church of Corinth:

1 Corinthians 14:34 The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. 35 If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

While it seems clear the instruction in 1 Corinthians 14 was directed at particularly disruptive women, it must be noted the pattern from Genesis 2 was the basis for Paul telling her to "learn spiritual truths from her husband." That must not be overlooked.

As the text continued, a vital role of the woman was specified:

Genesis 2:18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

It is absolutely true the term "helper" is used of God Himself as man's helper, and we must not overlook the fact that there is no implication of lesser value to be found in one designated "helper." The term implies a

responsibility given to one is aided by another. The role assignment was not about male superiority or value, but rather his charged responsibility to complete task for which he was not fully equipped without the complete help of the female. Her help was essential to the success of the God-given mission. He was required to submit to the Lord to accomplish his work; she was required to help him complete it.

The complementarian approach is one in which both men and woman are wholly treasured and designed for one another. The team was designed to work toward a God-ordained goal.

When the **Fuller statement that pointed out Genesis 1 to both males and females, it ignored the order in which the task was assigned, and who got the direct word from God about that assignment.** That was a detail worthy of mention, because Paul did so later as the basis of an argument in church order.

1 Timothy 2:11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. 12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. 13 For it was Adam who was first created, [and] then Eve. 14 And [it was] not Adam [who] was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

It appears the pattern of spiritual headship and responsibility was very deeply woven into the fabric of the text. God instructed Adam and held him in a unique position of responsibility for both his actions and for the actions of Eve. He was to tell his wife what God commanded them to accomplish, and any limits God put on them. He was directly responsible for what they both did, for she was taken out of him and was literally the competing part of him. When Adam recognized his lack and need, Eve was created from him with much needed components that completed him.

The Naming of the Animals

The scene that preceded Eve's creation was the story of Adam naming the animals, still in Genesis 2. It underscored Adam's unique level of responsibility in an assignment from God. Eve was not yet, made and

the story notes that Adam alone had this task. The passage clearly communicated three ideas: that Adam was given the responsibility to care for the garden's other inhabitants (the animals); that Adam discovered his need for a companion like him; and that by naming both the species of animals and naming his wife as part of himself, he was taking on unique responsibility.

It should be noted that in the Bible, the **giving of names** most often denoted the taking of responsibility over the named. This account demonstrated the requirement that mankind steward the land ecologically. The passage recorded:

Genesis 2:19 Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.

The giving of names put man in stewardship of the animals. They were not his to do with as he pleased, for they belonged to his Creator. They were, however, his to carefully manage and steward. In this account, it is additionally clear that God knew man needed a partner to be complete, though man did not recognize his lack until he took inventory of all the animals. *God always knows our need before we do.*

The Creation of Woman

In response to man's lack, the text explained God's response:

Genesis 2:21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

Immediately following Adam's naming of the species, the account of the making of woman by God from man occurs, and is quickly snapped together a man names woman. The Fuller objection is that her "naming" doesn't take place until after the fall, but the text isn't filled with **PERSONAL NAMES** for the animals, but rather *species names*, into which "woman" fits. The "naming" of Eve is the specific naming after the Fall, but it doesn't *negate* the earlier species naming. The point is not lost that man is taking responsibility for woman in the act, just as he took it over animals earlier in the same chapter.

This is not a spurious observation; such ideas are still deeply planted in the family design of the Christian west. For generations a woman took her father's family name at birth, and exchanged it at her wedding with her husband's family name. This act has long been understood as an act of placing herself both in the family of the man, and under the service of her husband's "spiritual headship." It offers a quiet evidence of how such Scriptures were interpreted and applied over the millennia.

Argument Two: The unchallenged examples of family headship in the Biblical narrative.

We have argued before that spiritual headship is the concept that God, through Divine decree, had males in a specific place of responsibility before Him. We noted previously how it was clearly expressed in 1 Corinthians 11:

1 Corinthians 11:3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

The text offered a beautiful picture of willful submission of every man to Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. It offered a summary of the way Christ honors His Father found in other places like:

Hebrews 10:7, where the text reminds us that Jesus honors the authority of His Father through complete obedience. His life and ministry were completely directed by His Father and that Jesus was careful to listen and follow in each detail.

In John 14, where Jesus specified that He focused upon the will of God and the Father's command directed each step of His ministry. Even His coming to earth was an act of obedience to His Father (John 14:31).

In John 12:49, where Jesus made clear that His very words came at the directive of His Father. Each action carefully considered what was prophetically shared beforehand, so as to fulfill each word (Matthew 21:4).

In Gethsemane, where we see Jesus pleading with the Father (John 18), it is clear Jesus sought and accepted assignment. The very death of Jesus was framed in Scripture as an act of obedience before His Father (Philippians 2:8).

In several Gospel accounts, where the record reminds us of Jesus' return (as in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32) and tells us, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Here the Son showed openly the direction (headship) of the Father beside the submission of the Son.

In that same way, we can clearly see 1 Corinthians 11 calling for the submission to the headship of Jesus Christ for every male. We need not be gentle with this truth: Every Christian man must understand life was designed for him to intentionally choose to follow Jesus Christ. That following includes (as we have just seen in the model of Jesus) seeking His word, hearing His word and obeying His word, even when that direction causes us temporary hardship, pain or grief. The point of the Christian life is to hear and heed the directive voices of our companion and leader, Jesus Himself. In that same passage, the text does not fail to specify unique roles and symbols for males and females. That pattern, Paul argued, was set all the way back at creation.

The Old Pattern Affirmed

Additionally, the pattern of beautiful voluntary submission should be identified and observed in the home. The Patriarchal and Matriarchal narratives of Genesis 12-50 clearly model such a home life. Abraham

and Sarah exemplified both headship and submission in clear ways. Their example alone is not a complete argument, but it offers testimony to how they understood God's design for the family. Clearly Sarah thought she was to help Abraham and to assist him in accomplishing God's call in his life.

The Fuller statement did not carefully examine the question: "How did those of the Biblical record come to the understanding of male and female roles?" It appears we can make the case, based on Paul's argument, that it wasn't merely a reflection of culture, but as a reflection of their understanding of God's design. It is notable that when the Apostle Peter taught concerning the role of women in the church, he hearkened back to the **behavior of Sarah with Abraham in 1 Peter 3**.

The section of the Epistle in 1 Peter 2 and 3 contains a series of admonitions on "how to live through persecution as a winsome evangelist." Peter beckoned them to live in "submission." He told both men and women to...

1 Peter 2:13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority...

Believers in the face of troubles (even unfairly imposed ones) were to place the desires of the rulers around them above their personal agenda to win favor by humility. In the same way, domestic servants were to face even their unfair masters with a new commitment to obedience, whether or not the master acted well...

1 Peter 2:18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

In that context, Peter exclaimed wives of ungodly husbands could be elegant evangelists of repentance toward God without speaking a word, if they would place their husband's desires and needs above their own.

1 Peter 3:1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that **even if** any of them are disobedient to the

word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives...

At the heart of the command is the word “*submit*.” The word “*hupotasso*” literally meant “to choose to place one’s personal desires in subjection to that of another.” To be clear, **no one can force another to “*hupotasso*;**” it must be chosen from within. In one sense, it is like the actions of a mother who cares for a newborn child, feeding, caring and nurturing without regard to her own sleep. Out of love, she places the needs and desires of the child above her own, and in that way “submits” to the child. It is an intentional word about service, not a word of license to be trampled by another.

Peter did not limit the submission to those who needed to be “wooed” to God, but said *that* behavior was something that should be a part of their lives, and was *particularly effective* in the case of drawing someone toward Christ. In order to illustrate what he instructed, Peter hearkened back to “honor, respect and submission” ideals of an earlier godly woman, noting that:

1 Peter 3:2 as they [the hard-hearted husbands] observe your chaste and respectful behavior... 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

Abraham sometimes displayed hardness (i.e. ordering his wife to lie about her identity before Pharaoh, etc.) yet the humble submission of Sarah was held up as a high value that should be emulated even among church women. If the teaching of Scripture was, as is attested in the egalitarian argument, that submission was a “post-Fall repression of God’s ideal,” it does easily not follow that such a teaching concerning submission would be put forward as a model *after the resurrection of Jesus*. Lest we be tempted to simply lump this into “that is what all believers should do,” note there was additional instruction to the man, and it was significantly different. Peter said:

1 Peter 3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

The text needs close attention.

- Peter directed the comments to a husband (“aner” is used to denote “maleness” and most often, though not exclusively, used of a husband. At times it is used of a “wise man” to distinguish him as a male model).
- The instruction follows the pattern before it, using the terms “in the same way” (“homoios”) as if to say “the same way women were instructed to submit to men as a testimony.” Husbands were to ‘live’ with (sunoikeó) their wives or “to dwell together with them” according to the standard about to be set forth.
- The wise way to live with the wife was according to experiential and applicable knowledge of truth (gnósis is a feminine noun derived from the verb to “experientially know” or to function according to first-hand (personal) experience, connecting theory to application). The “truth” they were to apply was this: her vessel is not as strong as his. The phrase “as with someone” is a term for vessels that carry things (skeuos). The adjective describing that vessel is “weaker” (a form taken from the verb poieó, that is “to make, bear or produce.”). What does Peter mean by “weaker vessel?”
- Some well-meaning teachers use terminology like “treat your wife like fine china”, but that picture of something dainty and fragile, suggests a largely decorative picture of the godly women. One need only consult Proverbs 31:17-25 to see her as both strong and essential to the family.
- Peter’s use of “vessel” compares well with Paul’s use in 2 Timothy 2:20-21 where the term is not limited to womanhood but the *body* in which any person dwells. In other words, the term “vessel” appears to be about the physical stature of the person. In that

case, Peter used the term “weaker vessel” to point to the general reality that women are comparatively physically weaker than men. He is warning men not to use physical strength to intimidate their wives, while in *no way* diminishing a woman’s intrinsic worth.

Peter ends the instruction with two things that happen to the man if he refuses to heed that truth. First, at the end of verse seven, it is clear his prayer will be hindered. Second, the harmony and kindness that should pervade the church will be broken. We learn this when he says:

1 Peter 3:8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit...

Though Peter said nothing that should raise offense, I find it personally significant that there is such strength in the prevailing winds of culture, that even the most mature believers find themselves uncomfortable with a text that set the pattern of submissive behavior for millennia. We must admit that abusive males have marred the picture (and that the church has not always spoken out as it should), but it appears today we are in danger of “tossing text over culture” and further marring the picture by moving in the opposite direction.

To that point, I would submit that by allowing males who “self-identify” as “females” in our culture, (under the entirely ungodly concept that gender is a cultural construct and not a biological fact) we endanger women in areas like *sports* by pitting women against biologically male specimens with greater heart capacity and lung flow as God designed them. This, in our culture, has been framed as “fairness” (and the church must not be silent concerning it). **Peter argued that the body of women, in general, was not as strong.** That isn’t a sexist notion to hold women down; it is Biblical truth to offer protection, as well as a biological truth that forms the basis for true fairness.

In the Biblical model, men were designed to add protection to women. They were to see the woman as part of their own body, as Paul noted in Ephesians 5 in the context of instructing on marriage and the home:

Ephesians 5: 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself.

Men were designed to make sure women were guarded and safe. God designed the male body to be, on the whole, stronger for that very purpose. The failure to recognize this has eroded the safety of women in modern society, and has allowed us to place our women in the front lines of combat under the guise of “equality.”

The Example of Headship in Vows

One more very important and explicit example of male spiritual headship of the home is provided in the “pattern of protection” commands concerning a vow before God as seen in the vow commands in Numbers 30. That passage both displayed a clear distinction in the way a man or woman stood before God in direct responsibility and became a vital part of the basis for Paul’s outline of work in the church.

Nowhere in the Torah code is a distinction of roles before God more evident than in the text of the Law concerning vows to God. Obviously, a key indicator of one’s relationship with God can be found in a passage that addressed the specifics of one’s intimate dealing with God. First, note the specifics of the passage:

- Moses gave the Law from God to tribal chieftains, explaining that a vow of any *male* to the Lord is an absolute obligation. (Numbers 30:1-2)
- In contradistinction, a woman under her father’s house (as an unmarried youth) did not have the standing on her own to be held to the same level of accountability. Her father held immediate veto right to her vow before God. Should the father countermand her vow, the Lord will hold no obligation over her. (Number 30:3-5)
- Further pressing the distinction, the Vow Law provided that a married women fell under the veto right of her husband. In both married and unmarried women, the vow annulment was the exclusive domain of the male spiritual head of the household. (Numbers 30:6-8)

- The one exception to this vow statute was for the “uncovered woman” who outlived her husband or faced life after a divorce. (Number 30:9)
- Further, the obligation of fulfillment and the guilt of an unfulfilled vow of a married woman fell specifically on her husband. (Numbers 30:13-15)

A woman’s indirect spiritual responsibility before God except in the case of the “uncovered woman” (widow or divorcee) is clear in the passage, and offers some challenge to the assumption that God’s ideal for a woman was to have an interchangeable spiritual function in her home as that of her husband. Under the Torah Law, it was clearly not so.

Yet, that idea was not negated with the coming and work of Jesus. Paul’s later call to women to learn in “calmness” or “silence” in the church pulled in that reference from the Torah as the basis of his instruction when he said:

1 Corinthians 14:33b “... as in all the congregations of the saints, 34 women are to be silent in the churches. They are not permitted to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. 35 If they wish to inquire about something, they are to ask their own husbands at home; for it is dishonorable for a woman to speak in the church.”

Since the egalitarian view holds the ideal of God will erase such functional distinction between male and female, one wonders why the instruction was given on the basis of the Law *after* the resurrection of Jesus, as He began to “make all things new” in the journey toward the eventual redemption of all things. This appeal does not seem a concession on Paul’s part, but rather the considered pattern based on a reflection of design elements that were long understood and accepted since the time of Moses. In that way, male spiritual headship seems a clear functional role assigned by God in the home, and was bound over as such from the days of Moses into the church. If the woman was not able to take a direct vow, how could she be the pastor of the church and lead the congregation unchecked by her husband?

Argument Three: The distinction between prophet and priest; the male functional leadership of the Tabernacle and Temple the stated functions of male priestly office in the Temple.

The Hebrew Bible offered a number of important examples of female prophetesses and godly women that could easily lead one to conclude there was no distinction in how God worked in people. Clearly, Miriam prophesied, as did Deborah and a host of other women. At the same time, there are no examples of women holding the ordained offices of priestess at the Tabernacle and later the Temples. How could that be?

Simply put, priests and prophets both represent God and in specific settings, each can speak for God. At the same time, the two offices are quite distinct. A priest learned the Law, operated within specific religious functions each week, and was normally quite highly respected.

A prophet, by contrast, often had no formal training in relation to cultic practice, but was used of God to relate the Master's desires. Whereas a priest memorized specific duties and executed each according to his training, a prophet often didn't know what God wanted them to do next, wore no discernible costume and had garnered little local respect. While Miriam could prophesy, the issue is whether that implied she was a co-leader with Aaron, who was a priest and got vestments with a ceremony of installation. Miriam clearly didn't have anything like that, but her voice was heard by Moses, Aaron and God.

Miriam's public ministry was highlighted in Exodus 15, in light of the great miracle of the previous chapter:

Exodus 14:30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 When Israel saw the great power which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses.

The great moment was celebrated with the wonderful "song of Moses" in Exodus 15:1-19. In direct contrast to the words of Moses to the "sons

of Israel,” the words of Miriam were to a different group. Exodus reminds:

Exodus 15:20 Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. 21 Miriam answered them, “Sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted; The horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea.”

We must recall that she testified in the context of the women of Israel, and spoke most certainly to them. That is not to say that her words could not or should not be instructive to males, but rather to blunt the notion that her example helps the cause of ordaining women to public ministry before both men and women. No support for such a thing can be found in that place.

In summary, it seems clear enough in the text that prophetic gifting was assigned to both males and females in Israel, while the ordained priestly duties of public worship were assigned to males alone. Priestly ministry was a specific and trained set of public duty functions, while prophecy was carried out apart from any of those conventions.

The Specific Textual Case for Male Headship in Church Design

Argument One: Jesus modeled the ideal of God, and He chose no female disciples for the marked role in which He placed the twelve.

The Gospels are filled with the stories of women, as we established earlier. Their value to Jesus and to His ministry is not in question by anyone who takes the text seriously. At the same time, one need not look any further than the lists of the disciples to note the gender of those who were sent out in an official capacity to represent Him.

There are four lists of the disciples found in Scripture. They can be found in Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16 and Acts 1:13-14. They sometimes differ in order, but always include only males. The term for this unique group (“disciple”) was likely the reflection of the rabbinic idea of “talmidim” from which women were excluded. No one suggests that only males followed Jesus. We are not arguing the females were less valuable to the mission of Christ or the early church, merely that official ambassadors Jesus sent His ministry were male. If the model of Jesus was meant to undo the work of the Fall, His choice in this regard did not reflect the ideal of interchangeable functions of ministry leadership.

Argument Two: Paul stated church order and God’s ideal with literally *no* indication that egalitarian function was part of that order.

The church was born from out of the synagogue in terms of functions, offices and many (if not all) of its operations. Its organization was expressed from the Epistles, but the words used had a general Hebrew context. Leadership was carefully defined from an older model. These leaders are referred to in different ways, but all the terms had a Hebrew antecedent.

One of the issues that arises when dealing with the “laying on of hands” of publicly marked ministry personnel is the cross-connection of the titles and descriptors used of the leaders. We ought to take a minute to

review the titles and look at their origins before we draw conclusions as to who was eligible for those posts.

Elder, Pastor and Overseer

The general use of the Hebrew term "elder" indicated either "one of advanced age" or in some cases one "of an age with a beard" (Heb. *zaqen*) In the same way, the Greek term used in the New Testament (*presbyteros*) indicated "aged." In the Bible, these words were also used to denote one who had a publicly recognize office of spiritual leadership within the people of God.

The origin of that public recognition terminology can likely be explained by the people's earlier tribal structure, and it was widely used (Genesis 50:7; Numbers 22:7). The term elder kept for many generations some sense of a "criterion of age." It seems, the esteem for the older, together with the hope their experience afforded them wisdom was in view. Some men were not advanced in age, but all had to show themselves as bearing wisdom associated with the older men.

In the Hebrew context, a few specific duties of elders can be identified. These included judgment and discipline of those under their care, as well as guidance of the same. Though it was an honor to be considered an elder, it was chiefly a title of heavy responsibility both in regards to one's public deportment, and in the weight of the responsibility of those an elder led.

As an example of the task of judging, note how Moses appointed men in order to help him effectively judge the people (Exodus 18:13ff; Deuteronomy 1:13). Likewise, in relation to the ruling task, look to stories like that of Jephthah, who sought the elders before leading them in conflict with the Ammonites (Judges 11:4-11).

Clearly Hebrew elders led, beside the priests of God, and they felt the need to assure God's law was upheld. They also called God's people remember His mighty acts on their behalf (cp. Deuteronomy 27:1; 31:28; 32:7).

The term “elder” appears to have been significantly refined during the Babylonian exile, as elders could be found both in Israel (Ezra 10:14), but also far away in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:1; Ezekiel 8:1; 14:1; 20:1ff). As tribal organization faded during that age, new authority emerged in the hands of an aristocracy, who borrowed the term “elder” to add credibility to their decision making process (see 1 Maccabees 12-14 and Josephus’ Antiquities 12.3.3). The word “elder” seems to have shifted from its older age designation to now identify “a member of a particular publicly recognized group.” By the time of the Gospels, the term “elder” was an inspecific term for a group of recognized authorities, but without regard to their specific age (cp. Mark 11 and 15). Some scholars feel the demarcation was a ceremony to “pass rabbinic authority” (reshut), like the “laying on of hands.”

By the time of the writing of the Epistles to the New Testament church, the older office of “elder” in Judaism, (though somewhat revised in function) was still functioning, and offers some context to the conditions and restrictions of the office as outlined by the Apostles. Bear in mind, the church began as a Jewish organization, and her structures often reveal their origins in the synagogue. It was for that reason that Luke apparently did not explain his first reference to “elders” in Acts 11:30 in the context of church leadership and their handling of operations and funds.

New Testament *presbyteroi* seemed to have some among their ranks that were referred to by their specific function, noted in the text as “bishops” (*episkopoi*: literally “overseer”). Though the two words overlap in the sense that *episkopoi* appear as a subset of *presbuteroi*, they are at times used interchangeably (Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5-7) and at times they were distinct from one another (they had separate but related qualifications in Titus 1 and 1 Tim. 3).

Are Elders and Bishops the Same?

It seems probably the term “elder” suggested **title** to the office bearer, showing the public recognition of attainment of authority, while “bishop” emphasized a specific **assignment** of the bearer of the title. Many scholars feel the clarifying idea can be found in 1 Timothy 5,

where both words are used, those who labor in the preaching and teaching are separated from the more general group.

It appears from the Pastoral Epistles that all elders have the task of oversight and guidance (Acts 20:28) and all will have to give account of their service (1 Thessalonian 5:12; Hebrews 13:17). Further, it appears all were empowered by his Spirit (Acts 20:28), not only those who taught the flock in public gatherings.

Paul addressed the Ephesian elders and warned them to keep watch over both their own lives and the flock in their care (Acts 20). Peter pressed elders (as a fellow elder and not a bishop) that they shepherd the flock willingly and see the people as a “trust” placed with them by God (1 Peter 5).

As a plural council, it appears the elder's were set over each congregation (1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17). Both the functioning episkopos and presbuteros are described in various terms as stewards of God's people, administering the mysteries of God and opposing false teaching (Acts 20:28 Acts 20:31 ; Titus 1:9-11). For both, the standards of behavior to measure one's ability for the office are strict (cp. 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). For that reason, the New Testament warned that elders must be carefully chosen.

Paul and Church Order

As we have seen above, there was no precedent for women in eldership from the Hebrew past, nor was such a convention part of Paul's rabbinic education in the “shmita” or the passing of rabbinic reshut (authority) by the conferring with the hands. The idea was wholly foreign to his time and his practice. At the same time, the Holy Spirit's direction in the writings of the Epistles nowhere indicate that women should be included in the offices of elder or bishop.

Beyond the obvious reality that no example can be found of the Apostle Paul “laying hands on” a woman for the purpose of commendation to public ministry, the fact is that it cannot be found in the instructions on how to choose someone for the position. Clearly, the standards for an elder or bishop in the Pastoral Epistles are things that are bound up in

male identity, like “husband of one wife” and the like. We could take the time to examine each of the Pastoral Epistles for those instructions, but women simply aren’t referenced as eligible in any of the standards.

At the same time, Paul encountered prophetesses, and he certainly believed they spoke for God. One such case can be recalled from Acts:

Acts 21:8 On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.

There was no apparent tension between the spiritual gifting of these women and the Apostle, for he stayed in their home. At the same time, the fact that they could proclaim the truth of God made them neither an Apostle, nor a local church pastor.

Paul’s use of “neither male nor female”

To the Galatians, Paul wrote a forceful letter pleading with them not to be tricked by Judaizers, who wanted to deal a direct blow to the formula of the Gospel as he received it from Jesus and passed it faithfully to them. The entire letter was framed around the problem of the “formula of salvation” and not an effort to dismiss the Law, but to properly apply it as serving a specific purpose, which did not include saving people. The blood of bulls and goats didn’t take away sin; it covered the sin in what is referred to as “atonement.” In Christ, atonement was replaced with justification, the full and complete payment for sin that healed the breach between God and the individual sinner. The letter was all about this salvation formula. With that purpose in mind, the phrase in Galatians 3 concerning males and females offers no support for the argument to remove boundaries on anyone except breaking sin’s hold in salvation. Galatians 3 says:

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Clearly, the context of what follows concerns justification. This is not a text about what roles men and women should have in the church. This recalls the truth that both men and women, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free are all saved the same way. Paul offered it this way:

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Paul is not arguing against a church building offering different restrooms for men and women, nor is he indicating the roles of men and women are interchangeable in leadership. Further, Paul is not freeing the slaves or abolishing the ownership of those slaves in the homes of believers. He is not saying that Jews can now drop all the sanctification lifestyle restrictions God told them to practice for all their generations, forever. He is simply saying that when it comes to salvation, we all get in the same door.

On close inspection, we find Paul's male team members had the marks of ordination, but there is silence on any woman have such. We note his language in the instructions to organize the ordained offices for public service in the church, and we see masculine exclusive language. We see him working with couples like Aquila and Priscilla, and we see her in a role of private instruction of a man, but we don't see her preaching to a church or pastoring a flock.

Instruction over Narrative

In addition to examples from the early church, we also have direct instruction concerning women in the church of Paul's time. We have previously noted Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians 14, as well as instructions in the Pastoral Epistles.

We should note that, as in the case of Jesus' naming of disciples, the New Testament does not contain a single example of Paul publicly marking a woman for church leadership. Further, the instructions for eligibility for public ministry offices like that of "elder" or "bishop" were all given with strict understanding that only men were being considered.

Finally, it should be noted the office of shepherd, pastor or elder was deemed a place of “authority” by Paul in places like Titus 1:11. The office was surely one of service and ministry, but it carried authority as well. We dare not leave that truth out of the mix.

Argument Three: The New Testament (as the Old) separated the functions of pastor and prophet, offering neither model nor instruction for female ordination.

In various arguments we have made the point that neither the Hebrew nor Christian Scriptures modeled any case for female ordination. Both, however, make the clear point that women were used by God to reveal prophetic truth. In the places where people could prophesy, women were clearly part of that work. Paul wanted them to dress a certain way when doing it, but he placed no limitation on them performing in this way specifically because of their gender. He reminds:

1 Corinthians 11:5 But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.

The specific circumstances in which women offered prophetic revelation is not clear anywhere in the New Testament, but the instructions for ordination are. These women were able, in some context, to speak for God. At the same time, we have previously noted that Miriam wasn’t a priestess, and Deborah wasn’t offered a sanctioned leadership role in the Tabernacle. There appears to be adequate examples of the distinction of the roles of prophets and prophetesses and that of priest, rabbi or pastor at each period recorded in the Biblical text to note these two were distinct in all periods. In short, women were not ordained to priesthood nor eldership, but they did prophesy in public and private contexts that are not clearly explained.

Argument Four: Spiritual headship in the salvation story.

In the great resurrection instruction of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul made these observations:

1 Corinthians 15:21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, 24 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

It is clear in this text that Adam was deliberately contrasted to Jesus; Adam as death-bringer and Christ as life-bringer. One can quickly note this pattern used throughout Scripture, that Adam was the responsible party for the breach, though Genesis 3 made clear that Eve was the first person to breach the boundary and eat the fruit of the tree. How is it that Adam is responsible for her? The answer lies in the reality of spiritual headship. Eve is spiritually "a part of Adam" in the story, and her failure IS his failure. In the same way, the "Second Adam" took full responsibility to solve the sin problem, by caring for every part of the need to its judicial resolution.

The Case of Orthodox Interpretive History

Any survey of history will demonstrate clearly the church didn't always get her teaching right. At the same time, the slow developments of orthodoxy had its value, as the church was able to demonstrate over a long period of time, what they believed was a reflection of Biblical instruction and practice. A survey of church history will also reveal that until the seventeenth century and some women of the Quaker movement in England, the ordination of women and their subsequent ministry as pastor or elder was virtually unheard of. By the middle of the nineteenth century, some groups had a few such as the Free Will Baptists in New England and the like. The real surge came since the beginning of the twentieth century, based largely on prophetic themes of Joel 2, and the notion that prophecy and pastoral ministry were virtual equivalents.

In much of the evangelical world, there is true honesty about how this became an issue; i.e. It was a response to 1970's feminism surging in the culture and enveloping parts of evangelicalism. For that, again, I return to Fuller on this issue:

"Fuller welcomes women equally into all its programs, and the seminary is committed to making its resources fully available to women as they pursue the professions and ministries to which the Lord has called them. All who teach and study in Fuller's programs are expected to honor this commitment: under no condition may the authority of the classroom be used to challenge the calling of any student on the basis of gender. Read more about this institutional commitment.

Our History

In 1947, when Fuller Theological Seminary was founded, it was assumed that all students preparing for ministry would be men; women, however, saw it differently. At their insistence, by the following year women were taking individual courses, and by 1950 a degree specifically for women—the Bachelor of Sacred Theology, a modified version of the Bachelor of Divinity—was created, with Helen Clark its first graduate in 1952. That year also saw the hiring

of Fuller's first faculty member, Rebecca Price, who taught and administered a second degree designed with women in mind, the Master of Religious Education. By 1966, all Fuller's degree programs were opened to women. With the 1970s came the creation of an Office of Women's Concerns, courses on women in ministry initiated and taught by Roberta Hestenes, and Fuller's first female tenure-track faculty member, Hendrika Vande Kemp. "We made it clear that women are welcome, and they showed up," said trustee Max De Pree about that time more than 40 years ago. "If you were a woman and you felt called to ministry, you could go to Fuller." For decades now, Fuller has welcomed women equally into all its programs. Learn more about the history of women at Fuller.

It is not altogether unreasonable for churches to question a recent call to rethink practices that extended profoundly and consistently through both the models and instructions of Scripture. It is not wrong to be slow to question the long path of understanding of church history as if in the modern period we have the ability to better understand and correct twenty centuries of Bible instruction. We aren't always right; but something so well attested was also not cobbled together on a whim.

Conversely, many of us have been experiencing a sense of growing absolutism by women pastors on the others promoting forms of evangelical feminism and facing charges of bigotry and abuse for maintaining positions that date centuries ago. The notion of role equality in evangelical settings is a relatively recent phenomenon that was clearly fueled from outside the church in a feminist tradition that was not committed to upholding Biblical concepts or promoting a Biblical worldview. While many evangelicals do desire to show deep and enduring commitment to the Bible as the sole rule of faith and practice, seminaries are not only adopting new teaching, there is an adoption of a new attitude that seems less and less open to using the teaching of the past to instruct us in the present when that teaching comes in conflict with cultural expectations. This may become quite dangerous for the church.

Part Three: Working in Joyful Harmony with Egalitarians

I am not ashamed to be complementarian in spite of the fact it has been regarded by some as an antiquated view, but I am honestly concerned the view has more recently been cited as inherently sexist and textually baseless, especially in light of the clarity with which it was presented in the Bible. Even more, I am concerned about the routine use of an argument that I keep hearing: “I don’t care what Paul said, I know what God told me.” That pattern of setting rules of faith and practice on a subjective foundation cannot last, and opens the door to many innovations of belief.

I would also be disingenuous if I didn’t admit the absolutism concerns me greatly, since the core issue involved in this discussion is less about women per se, and more about the hermeneutic one uses to open or close a door to a practice in the church. That is a key point. If one can take an historic position of the church, find both model and instruction in the Word, and toss it out because the culture has gained such power over popular thinking (and I believe that is truly what is happening in many quarters), we must all admit changes in the church’s approach to modern issues will not be limited to this issue. We should brace for impact of many other trends, practices and behaviors that seem to be opposite the instruction of the text. I submit both the text and church history are stubborn, and that they are less clear than some claim on this issue.

On the other hand, I desire to work with egalitarians in a way that is winsome in deportment and helpful in arenas where the prevailing views are not my own. Working with some wonderful women who hold the opposite view has not changed my textual understanding, but it has allowed me to navigate this ground without constant tension. It has also deepened my appreciation for the gifts and abilities of these women. I am at peace working with people, even when I textually don’t believe they should hold the positions they do. Some may ask, “How can you do that?”

One of the ways this work has become easier is it forced me back to the text, where I had to clear up (in my own thinking) what my true objections are, and are not. Over time, I came to see the true issue of Complementarianism is about a hermeneutic of Scripture that has been adopted and promoted (perhaps in some cases unwittingly) by egalitarians. I had to get clear about the text: It either intended to instruct and model male and female in fully interchangeable roles at Creation, or it does not. It either argues Jesus’ resurrection power will bring back an ideal of fully interchangeable roles, or it doesn’t. It either supports the long-held views of “spiritual headship” and “submission” or it doesn’t. The church has either been wrong for most of its history in this area, and both changes and apologies are in order, or they are not. Believers should consider the text as a reflection of its ancient culture even in relation to its blatant instructions, or that notion should be rejected.

A second challenge to my own thinking that was productive was to reanalyze common arguments that supported my conclusion, and test whether they were Biblical ideas or cultural ones. Some arguments that wholly support Complementarianism make me shudder inside because they aren't about the Bible, but an observation that may or may not be true.

Abuses of Complementarian views

From time to time I hear colleagues use provocative and unhelpful language to support a complementarian view. In discussions, I hear some correct Biblical interpretation, but an ungentle tone or shrill answer. As I studied, I was sensitized to those who tend to overstate what complementarianism entails and try to take cultural ideals formed from outside the Bible and knit them into historical and theological principles.

I confess it is easy to confuse the essence of masculinity with a particular cultural expression of it. We can easily begin to see our own presuppositions, and our culture has helped us to challenge those assumptions. Doctors don't have to be men; nurses don't have to be women. God didn't say a woman couldn't run a family business that wasn't a beauty salon. It may sound obvious, but truth about "spiritual headship" and "submission" can be offensive enough to modern ears without adding barbs that are both unnecessary and (at times) bizarre. I had to come to the place where I accepted that although headship and submission have always been timeless principles involved in marriage, each couple must be instructed to work out the practices in a unique way. That is as it should be. There is no "one size fits all" view of practical roles.

Though house management was often the domain of a woman in the Bible, the instructions to make it strictly the domain of one gender aren't there. Cultural conditioning caused many practices among believers that didn't come from and aren't really encouraged in the Scriptures. Suggesting whether males or females have greater sensitivity to emotions or are more verbal, forwarding spurious arguments like "because this gender likes sports more" and the like should not part of the Biblical argument. The psychological makeup of men and women may be a helpful component to aid in our understanding of how God uniquely designed us, but the text should lay out the rules, and the argument should be rooted in the Word alone. I am more committed now than ever: we must know the text and frame our assignment around what it says.

Finally, I came to a conviction about my tendencies. This has been helpful for my personal growth...

Over time I have had to admit: I can become so afraid of "affirming what is forbidden by God" that I become "quick to forbid what is affirmed by God."

I want to be proactive and stand against one of the most tragic abuses I have observed, as least in some complementarian cultures. We must carefully consider in our teaching the full range of gifts available to women, as well as laud contributions of women so that these dear sisters are not muted or even totally squelched. As an evangelical pastor, I must encourage spiritual vibrancy in women.

Bible teachers must not simply to affirm Complementarianism; we must explain Biblical truth with a goal of helping people grasp the nuance, beauty and depth of God's creation in Eve. We must celebrate both manhood and womanhood and call both to submission of Jesus Christ within their assigned roles. In my life, I have not personally observed many women who wanted positions outside their Scriptural role assignment that hadn't first suffered a time under a man who was either passive when God ruled action, or abusive in his handling of power. That is anecdotal evidence to be sure, but I submit it was observed on many occasions.

This study was helpful to me personally. It helped me identify the fact that in my own engagements of ministry, I have too often failed to explain how men and women should practically exercise their spiritual gifts toward growing the body in meaningful ways according to their Biblical assignment. Too much energy of ministry has been spent in reaction to culture, with too much development of instruction on limitations; not enough time was spent creatively pressing women forward in areas that honor God.

Why I work with Egalitarians with joy.

I want to offer two conclusions to this study. First, I wish to clarify why I feel it is appropriate to work in broader settings of evangelicalism with those on both sides of this issue. Second, I want to lovingly submit that as a fellowship of churches, we must not move from our position of understanding on the issues of male and female roles.

In broader evangelical circles, I serve often in settings with women pastors. I make little or no attempt discuss the subject with them, because I have found these discussions could be hurtful to those dear women, and nothing has really accomplished when I tried in the past. As a result, I established internal boundaries. In a setting where people have an obvious position, if it does not hinder our combined purpose in that setting, I simply keep my Scriptural insights to myself. I don't assume the other person hasn't done a study; I simply don't attempt to be a judge of their work in any way. Since they are not a part of my local church nor my fellowship, I simply live with differences in the kingdom.

In fact, I can work with people across a spectrum of theological traditions if the cause we have is worth the teaming, and the message we are giving in that setting is pure. I can work with Catholics against abortion, since we are virtually in "lock step"

on the sanctity of life. I work with a range of different kinds of believers in regards to their understanding of the Spirit's filling or "baptism of the Spirit" if we aren't doing something that would be problematic in that project. I recognize each believer works for Jesus Christ, and not me. They don't see things as I do, and that is not a problem unless one of us makes it one.

Why I don't believe we should join them in our Fellowship.

Conversely, a fellowship of churches is an intimate and long-term association. We came together, not just because of a doctrinal statement, but more significantly because of a hermeneutic, a shared way of interpreting the text. Accepting broad differences in our approach to Scripture will ultimately cause the collapse of the bonds that hold our collective work together. In many visions, there is only blur.

There are some in our sister churches who may agree to the parts of this study that explain the Biblical text, but will still advance the notions either of making women "lay elders" or of "ordaining women for tasks other than the singular role of the teaching shepherd of the flock." I would humbly caution us to simply, lovingly and carefully preach, model and explain the text and stay far from the appearances that we are trying to remain relevant by drawing lines other than those we currently have. The moving of those lines, once it begins, will continue as the pressure of culture grows.

I would loving ask us to recall that our message is not our own. The very church itself does not belong to us. Though we must be approachable and authentic, Jesus didn't call us to make His message more palatable to the culture. Every good missionary has struggled with how to present Jesus from within a culture that is both contains strong values that are contrary to the teachings of the Master. The task is not easy, but we should take courage as so many of them have done. We are not left in our work without the aid of the Spirit and the direction of the Word. Jesus promised He will build His church, and we should represent Him without a need to be loved by our world or even understood by our culture when its teachings run contrary to God's Word.

I want to heartily affirm the Biblical notions of headship and submission and call us to exalt Jesus by living in submission to His Mastery with joy. His way is best! Further, I believe Jesus designed both the home and the church, and in light of that, His Word must always be more important than voices of our culture or the inner voice of our feelings. I have every confidence that many of my fellow Brethren share such views, and hope that this short work will help them re-examine the details of the Biblical framework in which we work. Any error found within is entirely my own, but I trust some value will be found as we study these things together.