
The Biblical Vision Regarding Women's Ordination

[COMMENT: The following is reproduced with a few clarifying edits -- none of the text will be changed. I will also insert into the text my own commentary, indicated by green text. E. Fox]

By the Rev'd Dr Rodney A. Whitacre

24 July 1998,

Part 1

Fr. Whitacre is Professor of Biblical Studies at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, and a member of the Synod's doctrine and Scripture task force. His previous articles for The Evangelical Catholic were "On Remaining (Or Not) in the Episcopal Church" (May/June 1993), examining the Biblical evidence on whether or not Christians should remain within an errant body, and "Why All the Fuss?" (April 1990), explaining why the ordination of women is a crucial question for the Church. His list of the books that formed him appeared in "The Books That Form Souls".

This article originally appeared in The Evangelical Catholic, vol. 16 (March/April and May/June, 1994), pgs. 6-19, under the title, "The Biblical Vision." It is broken into 4 parts: [part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#), and [part 4](#).

AS CHRISTIANS, WE ARE TO manifest the life of God within this world. Our life flows from the Holy Trinity, and our relationships with one another should reflect the relationship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In the Trinity itself, the Son and the Spirit are at the same time equal to the Father and yet subordinate to Him. In St John's Gospel, Jesus says both, "The Father and I are one" (10.30) and "The Father is greater than I" (14.28). In His Incarnation and especially His Passion and death, Jesus shows us both the godliness of subordination and submission and the sacrificial nature of godly authority.

According to Scripture, as we shall see, the godly relationship between male and female is crucial in manifesting the loving subordination and equality of the Trinity. Therefore, the issue of men and women in ministry touches very significant truths, including the nature of the Church and the manifestation of God's life in this world.

Unfortunately, the relationship revealed in Scripture is not always found in the Church. Many Christian communities practice either a false hierarchialism or a false egalitarianism. Instead of reflecting the very life of the Godhead we too often live like the world, in one form or another.

The present swing toward egalitarianism legitimately criticizes the false hierarchialism characteristic of Church life in the past, which too often confused headship and authority with domination and power. It is an understandable reaction, but in itself it is an overreaction and a

false path. We must retrace our steps if we are to walk according to the revelation given in Scripture. This paper attempts to show the main reasons we are presently walking on the wrong road.

I do not know in detail what a faithful embodiment of the Biblical vision would look like in our time and place. The Church is an otherworldly reality manifesting itself in the present age. The many valid forms which that life may take in our world are known only as Christians wait upon God in company with the whole communion of saints, past as well as present, together search the Scriptures and the Tradition, and dare to live sacrificial, counter-cultural lives. [1]

I have no doubt that fallen men and women find it very difficult to live out Scripture's subtle mixture of equality and subordination. As Chesterton said of Christianity, it has not been tried and found wanting, it was found difficult, and left untried. This paper is in part a call to recapture the Biblical vision, avoiding the male domination of the past and the egalitarian over-reaction of the present. I make this call in the confidence that the Biblical vision was given to us for our good, and that only by obeying it will we find true happiness.

The Main Reason

THE MAIN REASON TO reject women's ordination, I believe, is that although Scripture affirms women as full and equal servants of God, it teaches that women should not serve as the head of Christian community.

Although it does not teach the superiority of men, and condemns domination by men, it does teach that the principal authority, or headship, within the Christian community is to be exercised by men. In what follows I offer a brief discussion of what I think is the coherent view of Scripture, though it is no more than an outline.

Because it is a difficult subject, Christians trying to be faithful to God's revelation must work very hard to understand it. In particular, we must study the relevant texts very carefully, and thoughtfully weigh the competing proposals for how these texts are to be understood. Readers would profit from looking up the texts as we discuss them and reading them in context. I will address important textual questions in the footnotes which, though important, may be of less interest to some readers.

I do not believe that the issue is unsettled in Scripture, as some (on both sides of the issue) claim. This claim seems to depend on the fact that nowhere does Scripture directly say "Women shall not be ordained."

But the teaching of the headship of men in the family and the Church is clear, and it is clear that the New Testament's understanding of headship in the Church corresponds to ordination to the priesthood and episcopate. As with many teachings in Scripture, the teaching is clear, but only if we are willing to take the time and energy to read and reflect carefully, with prayerful openness to God's leading.

Points of Agreement

ON MANY POINTS I AGREE with those who believe women's ordination to be God's will. *First*, the Church has often failed to manifest the Biblical teaching on this matter and turned headship into dominance. This perversion needs to be reformed.

Second, Scripture does teach equality and mutuality between men and women and does not allow the belief that women are inferior to men. [2]

Third, both Jesus and St Paul did upset the patriarchal assumptions of the first century. In the New Testament, women are treated with great respect, seen as disciples of equal value with men, praised for their great faith, have received the Spirit, are privileged witnesses to the Resurrection, and perform recognized service for the Kingdom.

Fourth, discipleship and leadership within the Church are both positions of servanthood, not domination. Contrary to a worldly understanding, even leaders are called to love, respect, and sacrifice themselves for those put under them. In these matters our chief exemplar, apart from our Lord Himself, is a woman, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Though we agree on much, the significance of these points of agreement looks different to those who accept women's ordination and those who do not. Some believe that they mean that all ministries and offices in the Church must be open to women. I believe that while God intends the role of principal leader in the Church to be limited to men, these truths help determine how that leadership should be exercised.

The Argument

I WILL ARGUE THAT women ought not to be ordained for three reasons: (1) the egalitarian interpretation misinterprets the texts and is inconsistent with the rest of Scripture (using Galatians 3:28 as an example); (2) women are nowhere described in the New Testament as holding positions of headship or authority; and (3) the New Testament explicitly teaches that men are to be the head of the family and Church. Thus, the supposed contradiction between the headship of men and the equality of men and women in Christ is an assumption imposed on the New Testament, and in fact perverts its life-giving revelation.

I think this can be shown exegetically, from the Bible itself, but the great weight of tradition supports this interpretation. Also, some social scientists now argue that a division of roles between men and women corresponding to headship and subordination is both natural (even biological) and a necessity for healthy families and society.[3] As Anglicans, we should note this confirmation from Tradition and Reason.

My examination of the egalitarian interpretation begins with Galatians 3.28, the text most frequently cited in support of women's ordination. I will suggest briefly why it supports the equality of men and women before God, but not the interchangeability of their roles in family and Church. I will then quickly survey what the New Testament teaches about women in ministry and about headship and authority.

Galatians 3.28

THE MOST POPULAR VERSE cited by those who believe women should be ordained is Galatians 3.28: *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

This is presumably the most popular verse because it seems to say that the distinctions between men and women have been erased in Christ and thus women may have headship in the Church, or even that headship is eliminated altogether. It is held to be of greater or more universal authority than the teachings on women’s subordination found in the Pastoral Epistles and elsewhere. Thus, if we find that this verse does not teach the elimination of sexual differences, if in fact that it fits with the rest of the Biblical teaching, we will have done much to establish the Biblical teaching on this subject.

This verse is a wonderful expression of the truth that all who are in Christ are such by faith and baptism (vv. 26-27). The distinctions of race, status, and sex do not determine who can meet God in Christ, nor do they divide those who are in Christ. As St Paul says in a similar passage, “Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3.11).

The old distinctions do not divide those who are one in Christ, but this does not mean that they have ceased to exist for those who are in Christ. Such an interpretation of Galatians 3.28 is called into question both by the context of this verse and by virtually everything St Paul says elsewhere about each of these distinctions. Here Paul is explaining our access to Christ and relationship with Him, not roles in the family and the Church. Our equal access to and relation with Christ change our relationships with one another, but do not eliminate them, as we shall see.

That is, while Galatians 3.28 declares the good news of the unity of all Christians in Christ, it does not obliterate all distinctions within the Body of Christ.[4] Instead, it changes the way the three groups relate to one another, in keeping with patterns revealed in Scripture. This will become clear if we look at what Paul elsewhere says about these relationships.

Jews, Greeks, and Women

JEW AND GREEK continue to exist as distinct groups within the Church and each has a distinct role to play in salvation history, as Paul explains in Romans 9-11 (see also 1.16; 2.9-10). The Church has not changed from being Jewish to being gentile, contrary to appearances and the opinion of many throughout the ages. It is neither Jewish nor Greek, not because the two have been completely blended, but because it is composed of both in Christ, each with a distinct role to play.

Likewise, master and slave in the Church continue to be master and slave (Ephesians 6.5-9; I Corinthians 7.20-24). When Paul wrote Philemon about his runaway slave Onesimus, he does not tell him to free Onesimus because all distinctions between slaves and masters have been erased in Christ. He says that Onesimus is still Philemon’s slave, but now he is also his brother (Philemon 16).

This change will obviously make an enormous difference in how they relate to one another, but the distinction of role still remains. Indeed, in Colossians Paul makes a statement very similar to Galatians 3.28: “Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all,” but then goes on almost immediately to describe some of those differences (3.11; cf. 3.22-4.1).

In the same way, the distinction between male and female continues to exist. The egalitarian interpretation of Galatians 3.28 is contradicted by I Corinthians 11.2-16 and 14.34-35; Ephesians 5.21-33; Colossians 3.18-19; and I Timothy 2.9-15, as we will see shortly.

Thus, Paul clearly believes that the distinctions have not been done away with in Christ. His “There is no” does not refer to the roles played by these different groups. There are, however, some important differences between these three relationships. I will briefly consider these differences, for they will help us understand the significance of the distinctions that do remain in these areas.

Slaves, Gentiles, and Women

IT IS OFTEN SUGGESTED that as the Church was slow to realize that slavery has been abolished in Christ (supposedly the teaching of Galatians 3.28), it has been even slower to recognize that the differences of role between men and women have also been abolished in Christ.

But the distinction between slave and free is different from that between male and female. Scripture does not teach that slavery is of divine origin, nor that it is part of the order of creation, as it does of male headship. God is not said in Scripture to have specified the roles between slaves and masters. Indeed, the Bible views slavery as undesirable (e.g., Exodus 21; Leviticus 25; and Paul himself in I Corinthians 7), something it never states or even implies of male headship.

What God has done is to regulate the conduct of slaves and masters, in keeping with their new relationship in Christ, for as long as that relationship lasted. Thus, in coming to oppose slavery the Church was not dissolving a distinction of divine origin, as it does in dissolving the distinction between male and female.

[Apparently the first person to actively and openly oppose slavery anywhere on earth was Thomas Aquinas of the late 12th century, the major Church scholar of the time -- in which he was firmly upheld by both the Pope and the... Inquisition. It has been, and still is, only among people inspired by the Biblical worldview and understanding of God and of freedom that slavery has been banished. Without the Judeo-Christian message, we would still have (and still do have) slavery. Clearly slavery is of quite a different category from male headship.

For reasons of His own, some rather obvious, God permitted His people to compromise with the conditions of the time until the time was ripe for dealing with those issues. e.g., Samuel’s insistence on the slaughter of the Amalekites. E. Fox]

In the same way, the admission of the Gentiles to the Church is also often cited as an analogy to the admission of women to headship. As with slavery, however, this is entirely inappropriate. God had chosen Israel and separated her from the rest of the nations, but the other nations were also a part of His plan from the beginning. From the very moment He began to set apart a special people, He had the salvation of the other nations in mind as well. He said to Abraham at that initial call: “I will make you a great nation. . . .And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12.3).

The inclusion of the Gentiles was indeed the cause of great dispute in the early Church. But the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus are both clear that the Gentiles were a part of God’s plan from the beginning, and God revealed to His Church through His Apostles the mystery of His plan (cf. Ephesians 3.1-13). No teaching in the Bible supports the headship of women the way texts support the inclusion of the Gentiles.

Thus, in both cases the real parallel with women’s ordination is the Church’s hesitancy to change. The question is whether this hesitation is justified. The Church had to overcome its hesitancy in regard to the Gentiles, for this was God’s will, revealed in Scripture itself. There is no similar revelation that women are to be ordained and, as we will see, there is much against it. The Church, therefore, should not merely hesitate, but actually reject this innovation.

We must conclude, then, that in denying headship to women either Paul is inconsistent, not having seen the implications of his insight in Galatians 3.28, or the egalitarian interpretation of Galatians 3.28 is not true to Paul’s consistent thought. The historic Christian understanding of Scripture is that all its parts are consistent and coherent, and therefore that we must not “so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another” (Article 20 of the Anglican Articles of Religion, Book of Common Prayer, page 871). The historic position on women’s ordination is based on this belief and is the only position consistent with it. [5]

In summary, a careful reading of Galatians 3:28 leads to the conclusion that “in Christ, there is no male or female” is consistent with Paul’s teaching in other passages that only men are to exercise headship. There is no necessary contradiction between being equal and being under authority.

Indeed, as we have seen, that is the pattern of the life of the Trinity into which we are being invited. While our experience of authority often includes inequality, the idea that equality and submission to authority are inevitably contradictory has to be imported into the text.



Part 2

Biblical Women In Ministry

WE WILL NOW SURVEY the Biblical material on women in ministry. Women did indeed exercise very significant ministries in the New Testament Church, but they are never described as having positions of headship within church or family.

Several women were commended by name in the Gospels for their ministry to Jesus Himself (Luke 8.1-3; Mark 15.40ff). Others, especially St Mary Magdalene, were even commissioned to proclaim His resurrection to His disciples (John 20.17; Matthew 28.10; Mark 16.7). But none of them held Apostolic office. To no woman does Jesus give Apostolic authority. [6]

Several scholars have claimed that women held positions of headship in the early Church, but these claims seem dubious at best. And were they correct, they would only demonstrate that sometimes the early Church disobeyed or misunderstood Scripture. Several early writings forbid women to teach or administer the sacraments, and whether or not exceptions exist, certainly the heavy weight of patristic practice and statement supports the view I am suggesting. [7]

Some women in the Old Testament held positions of authority, especially prophetesses. However, prophets were not priests and held no institutional commission (or ordination) to teach and preach. In other words, they did not exercise the authoritative ministry of teaching restricted to those in headship. Even were they exceptions to the rule against women in authority, their call would conform to the larger rule that God uses whomever He chooses in specific situations. That He does so does not mean that He has not given us norms to be followed.

Women Apostles?

SEVERAL WOMEN ARE referred to in the New Testament in ways that many think indicate their headship, or even Apostleship. A quick review of the texts will show that this is not the case.

Paul calls Phoebe a servant (*diakonos*) in Romans 16.1-2. This word is often used in the New Testament of leaders, including Paul and Timothy, but it is also used of those who simply meet the needs of others. That is, in itself *diakonos* does not designate a head of a community. It is a very general term whose specific meaning must be determined by the context.

The reference to Phoebe as a *prostatis* (v.2) could mean she is a ruler or leader (cf. LXX of I Chronicles 27.31; 29.6; II Chronicles 8.10). But if it meant leader here Paul would be saying Phoebe is his ruler or leader, which is not very likely. The word is often used in the sense of benefactor, and thus suggests her place in the community: “In short, Paul’s readers were unlikely to think of Phoebe as other than a figure of significance, whose wealth or influence had been put at the disposal of the church in Cenchreae.” [8] The businesswoman Lydia mentioned in Acts 16.13-15, 40 appears to have been a similar patroness.

Junia is referred to in Romans 16.7: “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives [or compatriots] who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.” Though often cited by supporters of women’s ordination, this is a highly

ambiguous text. Does prominent among the apostles mean that they were prominent apostles or that they were prominent in the eyes of the apostles?

If they were Apostles in the same way as Paul and the Twelve, it is very odd they are tucked away in the midst of this list of fellow workers. It is far more likely that they are apostles in the sense that they were missionaries, similar to Prisca and Aquila, who moved around (Acts 18.2,18,26; Romans 16.3; I Corinthians 16.19). Even were they a husband and wife team with a significant position of authority in the Gospel ministry, this does not mean there was no distinction of role between them as husband and wife.

Paul describes several women as close associates in his ministry: with her husband Aquila, Prisca is said to be a “co-worker” with Paul (Romans 16.3); Euodia and Syntyche “struggled beside me in the work of the gospel” (Philippians 4.3); and Mary “has worked very hard among you” (Romans 16.5). These women had significant ministries.

These texts are often said to prove that women held Apostolic office in the New Testament Church, but the specific nature of their ministry cannot be derived from these references. We have no reason to think they held Apostolic office, especially as Paul taught so clearly and consistently against the practice, as we shall see.

Full and Equal, But Not Heads

ALTHOUGH IN THESE TEXTS St Paul clearly sees women as full and equal servants of the Lord, in none of them does he describe the woman as exercising a role of headship within Christian communities.

Their ministries were valued and even given special praise, but there is no evidence in the texts that their ministry included headship. The strongest argument that can be made for the headship of women in the New Testament is a dubious extrapolation from the silence or ambiguity of some texts.

Further, in the cases we know women had an active and public role in the Church, that role was exercised under headship. Women played an active role in worship, for they prayed and prophesied in Church (I Corinthians 11.3-16; 14.3,5). But this was to be done with a sign of authority on their heads, that is, it was to be done in such a way that there was no violation of male headship (cf. v. 3). In addition, as we have noted already, those who prophesied held no pastoral care and were not ordained to the authoritative ministry of those in headship.

In conclusion, despite the radical improvement Christianity brought in their status in comparison with the society of the time, there is no evidence in the New Testament that a woman served as the head of a Christian community. My case, however, is not simply an argument from silence. The teaching of the New Testament on headship and authority, to which we now turn, indicates explicitly that women were not to be in that position.

Headship and Authority in the New Testament

THE NEW TESTAMENT teaching on headship and the distinct roles of men and women is found almost entirely in the writings of St Paul. Genesis 1-3 is also very important for our topic, but it is outside the scope of this paper, though I refer to it briefly below. Before coming to Paul, however, some reference should be made to the example of our Lord.

Jesus did not speak directly on the question, but His appointing only men to His inner circle is significant in the light of the rest of the teaching of the Bible. Some have argued that Jesus' countercultural elevation of women is an argument for putting women in headship roles, but to the contrary, it seems to confirm the Pauline distinctions.

If one so free of the patriarchal, cultural prejudices of His day and so brave in publicly rejecting them still chose only men to take positions of headship, the distinctions presumably are not cultural nor a concession to His age, but expressions of the order of creation. This is so especially when you consider that this man was Himself the One through whom all things were made.

Jesus' example in appointing only men as His apostles is often rejected on the grounds that He also only appointed Jewish men. The assumption is that both choices were culturally determined, but the early Church only realized the first was changeable, but not the second. But the fact that Jesus chose twelve Jewish men is significant, not merely cultural.

These men formed the nucleus of the renewed Israel (cf. Matthew 19.28; Luke 22.30; Ephesians 2.20; Revelation 21.14) and therefore had to be Jewish. In God's plan, Israel had to be restored and then through the restored Israel God's reign would begin to spread to all mankind (cf. Matthew 10.5-6 with 28.18-20). In extending leadership to gentile men, the early Church recognized that the Apostles were unique and that the racial restriction no longer applied.

And even were Jesus' choice of Jewish men a concession to His culture (an assumption we should be very slow to make about the Son of God), that fact does not tell us whether He chose men for a reason. To determine that, we must turn to other parts of the New Testament, which Christians have historically believed to accurately and reliably express the mind of Christ.

Headship in I Corinthians

I WILL BEGIN OUR exploration of St Paul's teaching with I Corinthians 11.2-16, a text in which he explains headship, and then survey the passages that teach about authority in the family and the Church. The word head occurs nine times in this passage, four times with the literal meaning and five times with a metaphorical meaning. [9]

In this passage we are told that "while every man has Christ for his head, a woman's head is man, as Christ's head is God" (v. 3). Women were not even to prophesy without an acknowledgment of male headship (vv. 5,10). This probably refers to husbands and wives, but the prohibition would apply to unmarried women, who were also considered to be under male authority, that of their fathers. The roles in the family are to be represented also in the Church, a point we will see St Paul making in later passages. [10]

The subordination (though not inequality) of women to men is expressed not only in the language of head but also in verse 7 (“woman is the glory of man”) and verse 9 (“woman was created for man”). But Paul also makes it clear that with the subordination of man there is also interdependence of man and woman: “Nevertheless in the Lord neither is woman without man nor man without woman” (v. 11).

The grounds for this assertion is that woman was from man at creation and now man is from woman, and all is from God (v. 12). This argument is strikingly parallel to that in Romans 9-11 for the interdependence of Jew and Gentile. Interdependence, however, is not interchangeability. In fact, it requires significant (though complementary) differences.

Authority and Headship Illustrated

WE WILL NOW EXAMINE some of the passages which speak of authority and illustrate the teaching of headship we have just seen St Paul instruct the churches under his care (and therefore us) to follow.

The first occurs later in I Corinthians itself, in 14.33b-40. Here we are told the women should keep silence in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak (v. 34), and that this is true “in all congregations of God’s people.” These prohibitions cannot be absolute, since just three chapters before Paul allows women to prophesy (11.5).

What, then, is Paul talking about here? The topic immediately preceding (vv. 29-33) is the evaluation of the prophecies in church and Paul is now applying his general point to a specific case. Most likely, he is prohibiting the women from passing judgment on a prophetic utterance (v. 29). Since passing judgment is an exercise of authority, this instruction coheres with that in chapter 11. That is, unlike passing judgment, praying and prophesying are not functions of headship and therefore are permissible for women. [11]

Paul strongly insists upon obedience in this matter: “If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. If any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized” (vv. 37-38). This declaration refers to the whole section on prophecy, but includes the material on women in verses 33b-36. [12]

Paul backs up his point by reference to the tradition of the churches (vv. 33, 36), the law (v. 34), his own authority (v. 37), and the command of the Lord (v. 37). His threat that anyone who does not recognize this is not to be recognized (v. 38) means that they will be banished from the community, or perhaps even face God’s eschatological judgment. This passage should give pause to those who think women’s ordination is an issue of little importance. [13] In fact, for few other issues in Scripture are such authority and such sanctions brought to bear.

[See the [Biblical worldview diagram](#), and how gender relations (mothering/fathering, masculine/feminine, are the very warp and woof of creation. The element often missing in these discussions of gender roles is the place of womanhood, femininity, in the *Imago Dei*. It is my contention that the masculine side of the *Imago Dei* is spiritual authority, and the complementary

feminine side of spiritual power, power of being, is the power to be myself. See the [Woman's Ordination Library](#), especially *Psychology, Salvation, & the Ordination of Women*. E. Fox]

The picture we have found in I Corinthians is confirmed by later Pauline writings, for example, the Household Codes (Ephesians 5.21-33; Colossians 3.18-19). St Peter gives similar teaching (I Peter 3.1-7). All these passages speak of mutual respect between husbands and wives, but also distinguish between the two in the form this respect is to take. The women are to be subject, the men are to love and show consideration. I will limit my discussion to Ephesians 5.21, because it is often cited in support of eliminating the distinction.

Mutual Submission in Ephesians?

EPHESIANS 5.21 SAYS “and being subject to one another in the fear of Christ.” This comes as the conclusion of a series of instructions connected with the command in verse 18 to be filled with the Spirit. It also introduces the next section (5.22-6.9), dealing with wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and masters.

The word he uses for “subject” (*hypotasso*) means to submit to the authority of another. Here he is saying that wives are to be submissive to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters. Thus it is misleading to say that verse 21 teaches mutual submission. Paul is not saying that masters are to submit to, to be under the authority of their slaves, nor parents of their children, nor husbands of their wives.

What, then, could being subject to one another mean? In part, St Paul here seems to speak to the community as a whole, not to each individual in his or her relations with every other individual. The various members of the community are to submit to one another in keeping with the ordered, hierarchical patterns of their relationships, which Paul goes on to spell out in the rest of the passage. [14]

[Paul might also be referring to the legitimate needs of the wife which she could require of her husband. Clearly, the husband *owes* a certain respect to his wife. That “owing” of the husband gives the wife a certain kind of authority. It is to be noted also that all “owing”, all obligation, is rooted in the command of God. Neither husband or wife have any authority apart from the obligations which God places upon us for the ordering of society. We live under an “ordered freedom”, with mutual responsibilities. Without the law of God, no one owes anyone anything at all. And no one holds any authority at all. Morally, we are all loose cannon. E. Fox]

This is clearly so regarding children, since they do not have authority over their parents. The same is true of slaves. Paul is not saying that children and slaves now have such authority. Given the structure of Paul's argument, there is no reason to separate out wives and say that Paul is teaching that they now have authority over their husbands, albeit one exercised in mutual submission. What he says of children and slaves he is also saying of women. [15]

Authority in the Church

BUT THAT IS NOT THE whole story. While Paul teaches that one group of people are to be submitted to another, it must be emphasized that in all three cases the relationships are radically altered in Christ, as we saw in discussing Galatians 3.28. Authority and subordination are now to be lived out in a context of mutual love and respect.

[...and therefore of mutual obligation. The headship of the husband does not at all exempt him from obligations toward those under him. On the contrary, his headship is all about making sure those obligations upon himself are fulfilled. E. Fox]

Authority in the Church is not the exercise of power to serve one's self-will. It requires self-sacrifice for the good of the beloved. (Cf. Mark 10.42-5; I Peter 5.1-3; Hebrews 13.17.) The eschatological character of the relationship between wives and husbands in particular is seen in the analogy of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5.22-33). The Church is subordinate to Christ, but she is submitted to One whom she loves and Who loves her.

Thus, Paul does call us here to mutual honor. As John Calvin said powerfully: "God has so bound us to each other, that no man ought to avoid subjection. And where love reigns, there is a mutual servitude. I do not except even kings and governors, for they rule that they may serve. Therefore it is very right that he should exhort all to be subject to each other."

Calvin's point is profoundly true, but he recognizes that such service is exercised within the patterns of authority. The king in serving his subjects does not become a subject, nor vice versa. Rather, he remains king and his subjects remain subjects, but their relationship has been profoundly changed in Christ. [16]

The egalitarian argument often asserts that Paul himself did not understand the significance of statements like Galatians 3.28, and in teaching male headship slipped back into the patriarchal assumptions of his culture. Passages like Ephesians 5.21-6.9 show that Paul saw no such contradiction between the two ideas, but saw their deep complementarity.

The combination of authority and mutual humility and submission is indeed a constant Biblical theme. I Peter 5.5, for example, begins with a command to one group to submit to another: "Likewise you that are younger be subject to the elders." But it ends with a call to mutual submission: "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for `God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble'."

In the Church, as in the life of the Holy Trinity itself, love makes it possible to be both equal and subordinate. It makes it possible to understand submission to the authority of another as a high and redemptive calling. And it also makes it possible to exercise authority sacrificially, in submission to the Lord.

Part 3

Oversight in the Pastoral Epistles

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF St Paul's teaching on headship for ordained ministry in the Church is suggested by several passages in the Pastoral Epistles.

(It is sometimes argued that St Paul did not write the Pastorals, and therefore their teaching on headship is not to be accepted. I believe he did write them, but they are canonical, and therefore authoritative, whether or not he did so.)

The Pastorals are especially significant for us because what Paul describes as leadership is essentially what Anglicans understand the ordained ministry to be. Here Paul draws a direct analogy between oversight, or ruling, in the Church and the role of husband and father in the family (I Timothy 3.2-5). The leader of the church is indeed a father to that community. [17]

In I Timothy 2.9-15 Paul says, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent" (vv. 11-12). Paul allows women to pray and prophecy in Church, as we have seen, so this command is not an absolute prohibition against women speaking in church. From the context the "silence" he requires clearly refers to teaching, which he immediately goes on to mention. This absolute prohibition is consistent with the rest of Paul's teaching, since he says that the sort of teaching he means is that which is the exercise of authority. [18]

A common egalitarian interpretation of this passage argues that the absoluteness of Paul's language here suggests that the command is not general, but rather addresses a particular situation. It obviously addresses a particular situation, but as I have indicated already, it is the absoluteness of the silence that must be recognized as overstatement (obviously women could speak in church), not of the command against women teaching as principal authorities.

Even if the command were not absolute, it would still be an extension of the normal restriction (i.e., of women playing a subordinate role in the leadership of the Church). It would not be the creation of a new concept contradicting his other authoritative teachings.

Adam, Eve, and the Fall

IT IS OFTEN ARGUED that women should be given headship roles because female subordination is a product of the Fall. In Genesis 3.16 Eve is told by God that because she ate of the fruit of the tree, "your husband . . . will be your master," and since (it is argued) this curse has been overturned by Christ, so should the submission of the wife to her husband.

But in I Timothy 2.13-14 Paul grounds this command in Creation as well as the Fall: "For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression." Paul emphasizes the fact that Adam was formed first as a sign of his headship. He seems to have assumed that this point would have been readily understood, and accepted, by his readers.

Regarding the Fall, Paul is not saying that women are by nature more easily deceived than men and thus should not teach. If that were Paul's view it would be very strange for him to speak of older women teaching younger women (Titus 2.3); this would be the deceivable teaching the deceivable! Nor is he saying the Fall was entirely Eve's fault. Just the opposite was true, for she was deceived, but Adam was not and the blame is placed on him (cf. Romans 5.12-21: "sin entered the world through one man . . .").

It may be that Eve was deceived when she acted out of keeping with Adam's headship, as is implied in v. 13. In any case, Adam was the one with authority and responsibility for leadership and thus was responsible for discerning the truth. He should have been able to do so since he was not deceived (v. 14). His problem was not discernment, but open-eyed disobedience.

But Eve did have a role, namely, that of wielding a malign influence over Adam. In verse 12 Paul says he allows a woman neither to teach nor actively wield influence over a man. "Actively wield influence over" is the more general term, perhaps added to the verb to teach in order to prepare for the reference to Eve in verse 13. [19] That is, it helps make the connection between Eve's activity, which was not exactly teaching, with the activity of teaching in the Church with which Paul is concerned. [20]

In this passage, Paul grounds his instruction in both the Creation and the Fall. While some details in this passage are difficult to understand, the principles behind his teaching in I Timothy 2 are the same as those already seen in his writings.

Office in the Church

THE PATTERN OF ST PAUL'S teaching on men and women we have seen up to this point coheres with his explicit discussion of offices in the Church. I Timothy 3.1-13 and Titus 1.6-9 speak of the overseer (*episkopos*) also called an elder or "presbyter" (*presbyteros*) in Titus 1.5 and of the deacon (*diakonos*) as being the husband of one wife. Paul clearly does not have women in mind for these offices, since the word used in both passages (*aner*) can only refer to a male.

Some scholars, however, believe that I Timothy 3.11, which comes in the midst of speaking of the men deacons, may well speak of deaconesses or women deacons. This passage seems to refer not to the wives of the deacons, but to a distinct order of ministers within the Church, since the passage flows: Presbyters must be . . . Likewise, deacons must be . . . Likewise women [deacons] must be (vv. 2,8,11). What is said of these women is parallel to what is said about the deacons in verse 8. [21]

Such a role or office would not, however, include headship, since headship is not a part of the deacon's role as described in the New Testament, as we see when we compare what is said about the different orders. The responsibility of the overseer or presbyter includes teaching and refutation (I Timothy 3.2; Titus 1.6), which is not said of the deacons. [22] Notice that Paul met with the elders of Ephesus, not the deacons, and tells them that "the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20.17).

Here is a clear statement of the responsibility of the oversight of the communities, and it is addressed to presbyters, not deacons.

The role of these presbyters is analogous to their role in their families (I Timothy 3.4-5; Titus 1.6), which is said to be a matter of managing, ruling, and governing (cf. also Hebrews 13.17; I Peter 5.2). This ruling is exercised especially in preaching and teaching: “Let the presbyters who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching” (I Timothy 5.17).

This is not to say that the overseers and presbyters were the only ones who taught, nor perhaps preached, in the early Church. But their teaching and preaching was a primary means of exercising their authority, and therefore presumably carried a weight unlike that of other teachers and preachers. According to our texts, women were not overseers nor presbyters, and this fact coheres with the material we have reviewed about the distinctions in roles between men and women.

Authority in the New Testament

THUS, THE NEW TESTAMENT presents a consistent teaching about authority, even if it allows some variety in applying authority in specific settings. For all of the new respect and responsibility women have in the Christian community, the New Testament gives no indication that this included the exercise of headship within the community, and in fact clearly indicates that it did not.

The passages that teach the subordination of women in family and Church do not contradict the rest of the witness of the New Testament. There is no contradiction between “egalitarian” passages like Galatians 3.28 and Ephesians 5.21 and “hierarchical” passages like I Corinthians 11.2-16 and I Timothy 2.9-15. The Biblical ideal is richer and deeper and thus both more difficult and more life-giving than simple models of equality or hierarchy. We must hold these texts together to discover this Biblical ideal, and challenge the simplified reading of Scripture that reduces its rich message to pure egalitarianism or hierarchialism. [23]

By holding the texts of Scripture together we are forced to define hierarchy, equality, and mutuality in ways foreign to our culture and to many of the practices and assumptions we have inherited in the Church. We are also forced to embody this foreign ideal in ways that are counter-cultural, difficult, and painful. [24]

This requires repentance first. We must repent of clericalism, that is, of seeing ordained ministers as those with the real ministries. We must also repent of thinking of the authority of headship in terms of domination and power rather than servanthood, love, and respect. We must repent of using subordination to justify misogyny and exploitation. We must repent of valuing power and authority more than humility and holiness.

Holiness, Submission, and Inferiority

IF WE PROPERLY VALUED holiness there would be no danger of thinking that submission means inferiority. The greatest of saints is a woman, the one who said, “Let it be unto me according to your word” (Luke 1.38). She thereby set the example for all of us. The humility of handmaid is not inferior in the least to the authority of headship. Both to command and to obey are divine acts, as we see in the relation of the Father and the Son as revealed in the New Testament.

[And, all authority is received only by an act of submission. I get authority only by being under it. There is no source of authority of any sort, other than the law and purpose of God. See *Defining ‘Oughtness’ & ‘Love’*. E. Fox]

It was precisely because Jesus was in the form of God that He emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant (an interpretation not expressed in most translations of Philippians 2.6). This declaration that God is both almighty and humble, is both all-powerful and a servant, sets apart the Biblical revelation from all other religions. It is the reason we may serve in whatever role God has given us, whether in headship or submission, without feeling either shame or self-consciousness.

This is already hinted at in the Old Testament. For example, feminists make much of the fact that Eve is said to be a “helper” for man (Genesis 2.18, 20) and this word is used elsewhere of God Himself. They say that this shows that this text does not teach submission. On the contrary, it is a profound insight that God Himself is submissive to us, in the sense that He serves us in a way that honors Himself and us. [25]

[That is precisely the impact of the feminine role being spiritual power, the mothering gift, which must be established prior to the imposition of authority, the fathering role. The giving of one’s being is the foundation of all else. Not a minor role, but the foundation of all other roles. To see why these masculine and feminine roles must be kept distinct, see *Psychology, Salvation, & the Ordination of Women*, and also the audio tape, *The Expanding Circle of Mother & the Search for Father* (both available in the [Shopping Mall](#)). E. Fox]

While repenting of clericalism, however, we must not fall into the opposite error of denying that God has ordained some to be in authority over His People and has given them power, authority, and awesome responsibility (cf. I Thessalonians 5.12). [26] The New Testament shows both Church and family as patriarchal.

The Implications

AS THE CATECHISM and the description of orders in the Prayer Book both make clear, those ordained to the episcopate and the presbyterate in the Episcopal Church are given authority to teach and responsibility for oversight of the Church.[27] Thus they are presbyters in the New Testament sense, and therefore it is not right (if we wish to be obedient to the Biblical revelation) for women to be ordained to these positions. Both offices are positions of headship as the New Testament understands it, and are thus restricted to men. [28]

The diaconate, on the other hand, does not include these responsibilities and thus it can be argued that women deacons would be within the pattern described in the Bible. Indeed, as I have noted, the Bible may even refer to women deacons, or deaconesses, in I Timothy 3.11. The rank of deaconess is clearly spoken of in ancient Christian writings, but there it is distinct from that of the deacon.

Thus, it is a matter of dispute whether or not women should be ordained to the diaconate today. Part of the problem is the confusion, at least in the Episcopal Church, over the nature of the diaconate itself, and, more generally, the exercise of authority in the Church.

In regard to the priesthood, two “compromise” positions, both held mostly by Evangelicals who acknowledge the teaching of male headship and authority in the Bible, should be addressed. One (held by some of the most prominent Anglican Evangelicals) says that women can be ordained as presbyters as long as they do not serve as heads of a community, e.g., as rector of a parish or bishop.

Now, clearly the office of bishop is one of headship, but ordination to the presbyterate confers the authority and responsibility of a presbyter, even if one is only a curate or associate. Thus, even in this view of ordination it is very hard to see how women should be ordained as either bishops or presbyters.[29]

The second compromise position argues that women (and indeed lay men) ought to be able to preside over the Eucharist because headship refers to teaching and oversight. But while the priest or bishop has been set aside to exercise a headship of authority and responsibility, whatever form that may take in his particular ministry, it is at the Eucharist that his authority is focused most clearly.

For here is the time for the authoritative preaching and, in the eating and drinking, the authoritative proclamation of the Lord’s death until He comes.[30] Here the family is gathered and the father of the family should preside at the meal. All of these are intrinsically acts of authority, and thus limited to the male presbyter or bishop.[31]

The Deepest Revelation

WE MUST LIVE THE life of the Godhead, among Whom we see equality, hierarchy, and submission (see I Corinthians 11.3; 15.28). We see this in our Lord, who says both, “The Father and I are one” and “The Father is greater than I” (John 10.30; 14.28).

The fact that equality and hierarchy together reflect the life of the Godhead indicates that those incorporated into Christ must express them properly in their own lives. Rightly living out the two is part of what it means to be “in Christ.”

Scripture makes it clear that *a* (if not *the*) principal way in which we embody and reflect the life of the Trinity is in the relations between male and female. The man and the woman together are the image of God (Genesis 1.27), yet both unity and subordination are already present in the Creation story of the representative man and woman.

[Again, see [Biblical Worldview](#). E. Fox]

Their relationship before the Fall is clearly to be taken as a model for our own, and includes both profound unity and male authority. “The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman’ “ (2.23). When Adam says she is “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” he expresses his unity with her. When he then names her woman he exercises his authority over her. [32]

One scholar sees several other examples in this text of what he calls the “paradoxical truths of male-female equality and male headship.” First, that the woman is “a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2.18, 20) means that she is equal in her suitability and under his headship as being his helper.

[The relation between headship and equality is not paradoxical because they are about different things. Equality is about our being, our worth as persons. Headship is about what we do, our roles. The role of creation and life-giving, the power of being, is in no way less valuable or important than that of headship. The two necessarily imply each other. Without one, the other is meaningless. They are necessary complements in *any* personal relationship, and, indeed, in any personal identity of one’s own. We have an “inner marriage” of the masculine and feminine which must be of the same order as that between persons. E. Fox]

Second, the woman is said to be from man and for man, not the other way around, nor are both said to be from the ground without any distinction made between them. Third, the man and woman are one flesh, but it is the man who leaves his parents and forms the new household (v. 24); that is, initiating a new household is the responsibility of the head.[33]

[The sense in which woman is “for man” is not that she is his possession, but rather that she is the necessary complement to his authority. The man by himself cannot fully embody the *Imago Dei*. Only together can they do that. Eve is, in that sense, a “helper fit for him”. E. Fox]

Equality and Subordination

BEING MODERN AMERICANS, we easily see and accept the unity and equality of men and women, but the subordination of women to men grates on us. It seems so unfair, so easily misused, such a waste of women’s gifts. Surely, we think, God didn’t intend such inequality.

[That is because we have almost lost the capacity to distinguish between our being and our doing. That is always true in a fallen world. In God’s world, our being is not our doing, it is God’s doing, and always, as He said in the Garden, “very good”. Our doing is what is open to criticism, and often in need of repentance. I never need to repent of my being. Being me is always a “very good” thing. The whole of Biblical salvation is built on that distinction. E. Fox]

Yet the same apostle who said that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3.28) also grounded the hierarchical relation between man and woman (or, husband and wife) in the

relation between God and Christ (I Corinthians 11.3). It is not just a pragmatic, culturally determined judgment about how best to organize the family and the Christian community.

The way we order our lives together is to flow from and reflect the very community of the Godhead. If we do not accept hierarchy, Biblically understood, we will have a false view of both God and reality. These are not secondary issues!

Similarly, the concept of headship is fundamental for understanding the Biblical teaching about salvation (see, for example, Romans 5.12-21). The fact that man can be the head, and thus the representative, of the woman is part of the larger pattern of the First Man, Adam, being the head of the whole human race. Because he is the head, when he fell we all fell. Likewise, Jesus is the Last Adam (I Corinthians 15.45), the Head of the new creation, in whom we die and rise to new life. Because He is head and therefore representative He can be our substitute on the Cross. [34]

The Way Forward

WE MUST BE CERTAIN to learn the nature of this unity and subordination from the revelation of God, not our fallen human nature. For the Church is an otherworldly, eschatological reality. Today, we are in danger of replacing a worldly hierarchialism with a worldly egalitarianism, neither of which is of the Kingdom.

The way forward is for us all to submit (sic!) to the Scriptural teaching and then pray, discuss, study, and listen to God, that we might be given wisdom, courage, and strength to embody a counter-cultural community of men and women here on earth, as we await the coming of our Lord, and life in the New Jerusalem. [35]

Footnotes

[1] If we were true to our Anglican heritage and looked to the ancient undivided Church for guidance in how to understand and embody the Biblical vision, we would not have nearly the confusion we now have, and would be more likely to be truly counter-cultural. I do not question the good faith of many who welcome the innovation. However, its effect on the life of the Church may be much different than their good faith would suggest. Given the clarity of Scripture, and the confirming clarity of Tradition, the acceptance of this innovation by the Episcopal Church jeopardizes its relation to historic Anglicanism.

For a call to return to this heritage see David W. Bercot, *Common Sense: A New Approach to Understanding Scripture* (Tyler, Tex.: Scroll Publishing, 1992), and *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up* (Tyler, Tex.: Scroll Publishing, 1989, revised). The ancient teachers do sometimes disagree, and are sometimes obscure and in need of correction in the light of Scripture. But they represent the matrix in which the canon itself was recognized, and there is indeed a Scriptural mind in the ancient Church (see Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* [Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Publishing, 1972], esp. pp. 9-16, 25-36, 73-103). There is need for further prayer and reflection among those who share the

perspective found in this paper. There will always be a variety of views concerning how the Biblical principles are to be applied. However, the ancient Church would direct us wisely, were we willing to receive its guidance.

[2] In fact, E. L. Mascall argued, “from one point of view . . . the Incarnation exalts the female sex above the male.” It was “male human nature that the Son of God united to his divine person; it was a female human person who was chosen to be his mother. . . . In no woman has human nature been raised to the dignity which it possesses in Jesus of Nazareth, but to no male human person has there been given a dignity comparable to that which Mary enjoys as the Mother of God.” (“Women and the Priesthood of the Church” in Bruce and Duffield, ed., *Why Not?* [Abingdon: Marcham Manor Press, 1972], p. 113.)

[3] See Manfred Hauke, *Women in the Priesthood?* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), pp. 85-205; Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1980), pp. 369-506; Maggie Gallagher, *Enemies of Eros* (Chicago: Bonus Books, 1989), *passim*, but especially the studies referenced in her notes. For an examination of feminist scholarship, see Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

[4] “We may see this more clearly in another relationship—that of parent and child,” wrote the Anglican Biblical scholar Bp K. E. Kirk. “. . . The child is, throughout childhood and adolescence, dependent upon its parents; if it fails to obey them it introduces chaos into the family life, to its own loss as much as to theirs. But no one will say that the souls of child and parent are not equally precious before God. When this obvious truth is considered, it becomes clear that [Galatians 3.28] is in no sense opposed to that principle of the dependence of wife upon husband which is embodied in [Ephesians 5.22].” (*Beauty and Bands* [London, 1955], p. 183.) He also notes that the same combination of “essential” equality and “functional” subordination is lived out by Jesus, who was both “Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior as touching His Manhood,” in the words of the Athanasian Creed.

[5] In contrast, one of the more conservative supporters of women’s ordination, Krister Stendahl, argued that “the general biblical view” is “disfigured and deep-frozen, if the fundamental view [he mean’s Paul’s belief in hierarchy] and the tendencies that prove to be on their way to burst this fundamental view [Paul’s allegedly growing egalitarianism] are allowed to make a harmonious peace within the frame of the Canon.” To which one Biblical scholar remarked that those who saw no contradiction between the two “try to take the texts as they find them, while Stendahl, according to a priori hermeneutical principles, attempts to undo that ‘harmonious peace,’ which undoubtedly is there to the authors, between the first and second half of I Pet. 3.7, and between Gal. 3.28 and I Cor. 14.34f. If Stendahl has not managed to understand how the New Testament writers have been able to avoid feeling that contrast which he himself feels, that is his problem.” (Hans C. Cavallin in Bruce and Duffield, *Why Not?*, p. 87).

[6] Georg Gunter Blum in Bruce and Duffield, *Why Not?*, p. 64. “To no woman,” wrote the Swiss theologian J. J. von Allmen, “does Jesus say, ‘He who hears you, hears me.’ To no woman does he make the promise to ratify in heaven what she has bound or loosed on earth. To no woman does he entrust the ministry of public preaching. To no woman does he give the command to baptize or to preside at the communion of his Body and Blood. To no woman does

he commit his flock.” (Quoted in Peter Moore, ed., *Man, Woman, and Priesthood* [London: SPCK, 1978], p. 71).

[7] For a presentation of the evidence that women exercised headship in the early Church, see T. F. Torrance, “The Ministry of Women” in *Touchstone* 5.4 (Fall 1992), pp. 5-12, effectively rebutted by Patrick Henry Reardon, “Women Priests: History and Theology” 6.1 (Winter 1993), pp. 22-27. In his article, even Torrance, a strong supporter of the ordination of women, concedes that “there is no canonical record of any office of woman presbyters.”

Among the passages forbidding women to speak or teach are: Tertullian, *Baptism* 17, *Prescription* 41, *Veiling of Virgins* 9; *Didascalia* 15; *Apostolic Constitutions* 3.6; *Testamentum Domini* 1.40; *Cyril of Jerusalem, Procatechesis* 14. Those forbidding women to administer the sacraments are Tertullian, *loc. cit.*; *Didascalia* 15,16; and *Apostolic Constitutions* 3.9. In his *Panarion* 49.2, 79.2-4, Epiphanius observed that the priestly office was not given to women. Those on the subordination of women include Augustine, *Genesi ad Litteram* 9,10,11.37; *Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis* 4.7,8; *Chrysostom, In I Corinthians* 26. For more references, see Kallistos Ware, “Man, Woman, and the Priesthood of Christ” in Moore, ed., *Man, Woman, and Priesthood*, pp. 68-90, and Hauke, *Women in the Priesthood?*, pp. 404-444, which includes the Fathers’ many attacks on gnostic sects whose view of men and women is quite similar to some views today.

[8] J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16, WBC 38b* (Dallas: Word, 1988), p. 889.

[9] Several scholars have argued that the metaphorical meaning refers to source or origin (see Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], p. 503), but the word is never used this way unambiguously, whereas it is well attested in the sense of ruler, chief, and authority over. Man is indeed the source of woman, as *I Corinthians* 11.8-9 emphasizes. Besides, “source” seems no more egalitarian than “authority over.” The person downstream, so to speak, is still in a dependent and subordinate position. For the meaning of “head,” see Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989), pp. 140-145; Wayne Grudem, “Does Kephale Mean Source or Authority Over in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples,” *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985):38-59; and Wayne Grudem, “The meaning of Kephale” in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), pp. 425-468.

[10] Wearing a head covering in church does not represent today what it seems to have done in St Paul’s day. The passage makes clear, however, that there are principles behind the practice. If we are not going to follow the ancient Church’s practice, we should at least find some practice in our setting that would express those principles.

[11] Cf. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), pp. 188-191.

[12] Some scholars argue that these verses are not authentic and thus not binding, partly because some ancient manuscripts put them after v. 40, and partly because the prohibition is absolute and thus contradicts what Paul says in 11.5,13.

For the manuscript question, see Fee, pp. 699-700 and the response by D. A. Carson in Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, pp. 140-153, esp. pp. 141-145. There is no manuscript support at all for omitting these verses, and they should be taken as canonical and therefore authoritative. As some scholarly supporters of women's ordination admit (e.g., Duke's Professor Richard Hays in a lecture at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry), these verses are canonical and their opposition to female headship cannot be dodged. I would add that they are quite in line with Paul's thought, as described in this paper.

For the supposed contradiction in Paul's thought, see Fee, p. 706 and the response by Carson. The absoluteness is probably part of Paul's style, which requires us to put together all of his teaching on a subject to understand his thought. Often in Scripture an absolute statement is modified or nuanced elsewhere, often by the same author. There are a number of examples in St John's writings (e.g., compare John 1.11 with 1.12; I John 3.9 with 1.6,8,10). A further example in Paul would be his statement in Galatians 4.7 ("you are no longer a servant but a son") and his language elsewhere (e.g., Romans 1.1; 6.22). On this theme compare also John 15.15 and 13.13.

[13] See my reflections in "Why All the Fuss?" *The Evangelical Catholic* 13.7 (April 1990): 1-7.

[14] Cf. Hurley, p. 144. Colossians 3.11 should be compared along with its context (3.12-4.1).

[15] This is not to say there is no difference in the character of the submission in the case of the wives. St. Paul says the wives are to be subject to their husbands, but he says that children and slaves are to obey their parents and masters. This submission reflects the equality and partnership of the husband and wife, in contrast to the simple obedience that characterizes the relations of slave and master, children and parents. As H. C. G. Moule wrote, "The wife `submits herself' as to a guiding friend; the child, and the servant, recognize in parent and master a lawful commander" (*Studies in Colossians and Philemon* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977, original 1893], p. 131).

[16] John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, tr. by T. H. L. Parker (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1965), p. 204; quoted by C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. 2, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979). Some scholars, such as Cranfield (*ibid*, pp. 660-663), suggest that "mutual honor" is in fact the meaning of *hypotasso* in Ephesians 5.21, so that this text is only making the same command to mutual honor as Romans 12.10 and Philippians 2.3-4. As we have seen, Ephesians 5.21 does include a call to mutual honor, but within the context of submission to authority (cf. 5.22-6.9). The word *hypotasso*, not used in Romans 12.10 and Philippians 2.3-4, always includes an element of submission, though with different nuances depending on the context.

[17] Paul refers to this relationship in I Corinthians 4.14-21. This text also shows him acting as a father in his admonishing, his role as a model, and his authority.

[18] There is a spectrum of teaching in the New Testament, from the general sense in which all Christians are to exhort and encourage one another (e.g., Colossians 3.17; Hebrews 5.12), to the teaching done by those in authority. Paul's prohibition of women teaching would include the

latter but not the former, since Colossians 3.17 and Hebrews 5.12 are addressed to the whole community. The kinds of teaching in between these two which women should exercise is debated. For a helpful discussion of the spectrum, and one attempt to apply Biblical principles, see Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, pp. 242-252.

[19] The meaning of the word *authenteo* is highly debated. For the interpretation given see Andrew C. Perriman, "What Eve Did, What Women Shouldn't Do: The Meaning of *authenteo* in 1 Timothy 2:12," *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.1 (1993): 129-142. Perriman's findings should be supplemented by those of Andreas J. Kostenberger in "Syntactical Parallels to 1 Timothy 2:12 in Extrabiblical Greek Literature," a paper delivered at the Society of Biblical Literature in November, 1992. He found that when two infinitives are in the particular construction found here, they both refer to something positive or both to something negative. Since to teach is always positive in Paul, *authentein* is also positive. It therefore means something like exercise authority over, not a negative notion like domineer.

[20] The reference to childbearing, "Salvation for the woman will be in the bearing of children . . ." (v. 15) recalls Genesis 3.16, but now in the sphere of redemption, not curse. This does not mean that barren or celibate women cannot be saved. After all, Paul thought celibacy a preferable state (I Corinthians 7)! Again, this specific emphasis may reflect aberrations at the time, since some were forbidding marriage (cf. 4.3). It may be a case of Paul's general idea that women should get on with living out their salvation in their appropriate roles (par excellence that of child-bearing—we must be aware of our recent cultural baggage at this point), rather than trying to take on roles reserved for men. Childbearing would be a synecdoche (a part standing for the whole) for the good works of verse 10.

[21] The word *gyne* can mean woman or wife, but it would be strange for Paul to mention the deacon's wives but not those of the overseers. Cf. Hurley, pp. 229-231. For a short summary of the evidence for women deacons, see H. J. M. Turner, *Ordination and Vocation* (Worthing: Churchman, 1990), pp. 79-85. Even the conservative Roman Catholic Louis Bouyer has said that "The attempts already made in the Early Church to find a real distinction between the male and female diaconate were unfruitful"(quoted in Turner, p. 79).

[22] These passages show a lack of precision in the terms overseer (*episkopos*) and presbyter (*presbyteros*). While the matter is debated, the historic Anglican position is defensible, namely, that, since the time of the New Testament, three distinct orders of ordained ministers have been characteristic of the Church (BCP, p. 510). This variety in the terms used does not affect the main point of this paper, that the authority of oversight in the community, however labeled, and however divided between bishops and priests, is to be exercised by men.

[23] The sacrificial nature of authority is expressed very well in the traditional Anglican ordinal: "Have always therefore printed in your remembrance," the bishop tells the ordinand, "how great a treasure is committed to your charge. For they are the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood. The Church and Congregation whom you must [sic] serve, is his Spouse, and his Body. And if it shall happen that the same Church, or any member thereof, do take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue" (1928 Book of Common Prayer, p. 540).

The rest of the charge calls the ordinand to specific forms of self-sacrifice for the good of his people.

[24] The acceptance of women's ordination is not in itself a rejection of hierarchy or even clericalism, even in its worst forms. Indeed, some advocates seem to want to retain them, but now include women as a matter of equal rights to promotion in the corporation. Such a view compounds error.

[25] Cf. Raymond Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3," in Piper and Grudem, pg. 104.

[26] Early Christian texts that spell out this responsibility especially well include St Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration II, "In Defense of His Flight to Pontus," Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, nd), pp. 204-227; St John Chrysostom, Six Books on the Priesthood, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, nd), pp. 33-83; and St Gregory the Great, The Book of the Pastoral Rule, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, nd), pp. 1-72. See also the charge to priests in the classic Anglican Ordinal (1928 BCP, pp. 539-541).

[27] Book of Common Prayer, pp. 855-856 and p. 510. The ordination services flesh out this understanding. The description of the ministry of the deacon (BCP, p. 856) and the ordination service do not include language of oversight.

[28] Some make much of the priest as an icon of Christ, and argue that the priest must be a male because Jesus was a male. Such a view of the priest is the subject of great debate within the Anglican Churches, but even if one rejects this view of the priesthood, there is clearly a symbolic message conveyed by the priest presiding at the Meal that corresponds with his headship role. This is a point grasped by advocates of women's ordination, who argue that it is important for women and for the community to see a woman functioning as president of the assembly. To put it another way, who sits at the head of the table says much about a family and community and its life together.

[29] BCP, pp. 510, 531. There is also the problem of determining where to draw the line. Some have argued that a woman can serve as a bishop because she will still be under male headship, that of the Presiding Bishop, or further that a woman can serve as Presiding Bishop, because she will still be under the male headship of Christ Himself. This is clearly unfaithful to Paul's teaching.

[30] Cf. I Corinthians 11.26. The word used here for proclaim (*katangello*) usually refers in the New Testament to preaching. Hence the idea that the Eucharist is a visible word. Both the preaching and the celebration are an exercise of authority in the Church.

[31] A third position, held almost solely by conservative Evangelicals, argues that headship applies in the home but not in the Church. Besides being unworkable, this contradicts I Timothy 2.8-15, in which the words "men" and "women" in the two opening verses cover everyone in the

congregation, including single women. (R. T. Beckwith in Duffield and Bruce, Why Not? p. 136.)

[32] Cf. Clark, pp. 15-28. This is important to note, because feminists often claim that female subordination is a result of the Fall, which would make a profound difference in how we read the rest of Scripture. Adam's naming Eve indicates that an ordered relationship is created before the Fall. Such a relationship does not contradict their both being made in God's image and having dominion together over creation. But this ordered relationship is "inverted in the fall narrative of Genesis 3. The serpent assumes the role of God in relation to the woman and the woman assumes the role of the man and becomes the initiator in that relationship. The judgment of God imposed in 3.14-19 involves a re-establishment of his created order. However, because of sin those relationships will now be painful." (Report of the Sydney Doctrine Commission, 19 July 1985, 3.3-4.)

[33] Ortlund, pp. 100-103.

[34] For this reason it is unwise to do away entirely with the generic use of the masculine in English. If the word "man" can no longer refer to a group of men and women, we distance ourselves not only from Biblical language but also make it harder to grasp essential truths about our humanity and our salvation.

[35] I wish to express my appreciation to the many people who have commented on this paper. Mr. David Mills, in particular, edited the manuscript and made many substantive contributions.

* * * * *

<http://theroadtoemmaus.org/RdLb/12The/SxTh/WmO/WmOWhtkr.htm>