

Biblical Hermeneutics and Headship in First Corinthians

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The task I was assigned was to consider the headship passages in 1 Cor 11 and 14 in the light of the “Methods of Bible Study” document (MBSD),¹ which has been taken as the fundamental exposition of Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) hermeneutical method to be followed in the study of the theology of ordination. I will begin by summarizing some of the key aspects of the hermeneutical method that will be utilized in approaching the passages in 1 Cor 11 and 14. Then I will proceed to look exegetically at the two salient passages, attempting to follow this method, while responding to objections and alternative interpretations. Finally, I will consider implications for the church’s practice and draw conclusions regarding the appropriate direction for the SDA Church to take based on this hermeneutical method and corresponding interpretation.

“Methods of Bible Study” and Hermeneutical Method

The preamble to the MBSD makes very clear that the use of the historical-critical method of Bible study, which “de-emphasizes the divine element in the Bible as an inspired book (including its resultant unity)” and “minimizes the need for faith in God and obedience to His commandments,”² is to be rejected. Some would insist that they can safely use the method so long as they reject its antinatural presuppositions; however, the preamble is clear that “even

¹“Methods of Bible Study” [MBSD], a statement voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 12 October 1986, available from <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/other-documents/other-doc4.html>, accessed 22 May 2013.

²Ibid., section 1: Preamble.

a modified use of this method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists.”³ Ultimately, it is the retention of the principle of criticism⁴ that still undermines the message of the Scriptures by making the interpretation subject to external factors based on human reasoning rather than to the internal control of the “analogy of Scripture” principle. This latter principle states that Scripture is self-interpreting, since there must be a fundamental unity and homogeneity within Scripture because it all originates in the divine mind. While the historical-critical method denies the unity of the Scriptures, claiming that each author reflects merely his own personal views or the views of his community, since there can be no fundamental homogeneity apart from supernatural intervention by revelation, the SDA theology of revelation holds that the Holy Spirit is the divine mind behind the human penmen, requiring the entire canon of Scripture to be in theological unity.⁵ The teachings of Scripture, therefore, produce no conflicting opinions or opposing theological views, but “all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17).⁶ Also, “the analogy of Scripture” principle, also known as “the Scripture principle,” is valid. As the MBSD expresses it, “The Bible is its own best interpreter and when studied as a

³Ibid.

⁴The principle of criticism is the principle of methodological doubt. Its essence is “higher criticism,” which places human reason and scientific investigation above the testimony of the biblical text and makes judgments on what is accurate and what is not by appeal to factors outside of the text, assuming that the text is culturally conditioned and the human factor in the production of the text makes interpretation subject to human reason. Consequently, one cannot assert the truth or accuracy of a straightforward reading of the text, but one must assert only what is more or less probable. Cf. Clinton Wahlen, “Hermeneutics and Scripture in the Twenty-First Century,” a paper written for the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, MD, n.d. (2013), 5.

⁵Ibid., 2; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, 1911 ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), v, vi.

⁶All Scripture quotations in this paper are from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

whole it depicts a consistent, harmonious truth.”⁷

Another important point made under section 3.a (“Origin”) is that, “although it was given to those who lived in an ancient Near Eastern/Mediterranean context, the Bible transcends its cultural backgrounds to serve as God’s Word for all cultural, racial, and situational contexts in all ages.”⁸ While many have argued that the Bible is entirely culturally conditioned and must be read accordingly—a historical-critical assumption based on its rejection of divine revelation as the source of Scripture—the SDA position is that the message of Scripture transcends its cultural backgrounds and sets forth principles that are valid for all people at all times and places. This does not imply that relevant historical-cultural contexts can be safely ignored when studying the text. The MBSD clearly states, “In connection with the study of the biblical text, explore the historical and cultural factors. Archaeology, anthropology, and history may contribute to understanding the meaning of the text.”⁹ However, there is a clear and important difference between studying the historical-cultural backgrounds that may enlighten a better understanding of the setting in which the text was written, and believing that the text was culturally conditioned such that it does not set forth universal principles but only that which was perceived by the penman to be valid for the local situation at the time or, even worse, reflects then-current prejudices and misunderstandings. Thus its relevance for other times and places is muted, and it may not even reflect divine truths or principles.

This is an important distinction to keep in mind when reading the counsels of Paul to the Corinthian church. What evidence does the text provide that the counsels given therein are

⁷MBSD, section 2.a.(3).

⁸Ibid., section 2.a.(4).

⁹Ibid., section 4.k.

culturally conditioned or of timeless value? How would one discern the difference?

According to the MBSD, because the Bible “is an indivisible blend of the divine and the human,”¹⁰ “the usual techniques of historical research, based as they are on human presuppositions and focused on the human element, are inadequate for interpreting the Scriptures, which are a blend of the divine and the human. Only a method that fully recognizes the indivisible nature of the Scriptures can avoid a distortion of its message.”¹¹ This counsel does not denigrate research per se, but it does caution the interpreter against elevating the human element above the divine and seeing only the writer’s own personal prejudices coming through rather than the thoughts that are inspired by the Holy Spirit. It also warns against assuming that the interpreter has all the information needed to understand the full implications of the text, even to reading things into the text that are not self-evident therein. The danger of creating what has come to be called a “trajectory” that lies outside of the text is here cautioned against, especially when there is nothing within the text that would point to such a trajectory, or even worse, when such a trajectory actually would be contradictory to the explicit intention of the text itself. To claim, for example, that what Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians is in conflict with what he teaches elsewhere, or with what the Bible teaches elsewhere, then creating a supposed trajectory from outside of 1 Corinthians that would negate the teaching that seems to be self-evident in 1 Corinthians, would constitute a clear violation of this principle.

Various theological methods have been proposed at times to avoid the clear intention of particular texts as understood in their most natural, plain reading. The goal of such methods is sometimes to impute meaning into the text according to the theological presuppositions of the

¹⁰Ibid., section 2.b.(3); cf. section 2.a.(2).

¹¹Ibid., section 2.b.(3).

reader rather than drawing meaning out of the text according to the clear intention of the author.¹² This is usually done because there is an assumption that the text was culturally conditioned and that the author's intention was misguided and there needs to be a corrective brought to the teaching based on other factors outside of the text. This is most dangerous when the outside factors are socio-cultural rather than biblical, but it can be dangerous even when there is an assumption of biblical disparity rather than of biblical unity. Instead of working out the apparent disparity on the assumption of unity, various biblical passages are pitted against each other and the value of some is exalted above the value of others, and some are declared to be erroneous, even if their message is clear. This has too often been the case with the texts with which this paper is concerned. Paul is accused of being in conflict with his own statements elsewhere or with the Genesis account, which he cites as theological precedent for his counsels.

Section 3 of the MBSD is concerned with principles for approaching the interpretation of Scripture. The very first principle is that one must be prepared, by seeking divine power, to render obedience to all scriptural requirements if one is to receive further understanding of truth. "Only those following the light already received can hope to receive further illumination of the Spirit."¹³ Jesus declared in John 7:17, "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority." It is important, therefore, that the reader submit to doing what the text requires if he or she is to understand what God is trying to communicate through the text. If readers decide in advance, for whatever reason, that they are not willing to comply with what the text appears to teach, they will not be able to receive

¹²Cf. Wahlen, 6, who states regarding reader-centered approaches to the text, "The text represents a filtered reflection of the ideas and horizon of the author. Readers do not have direct access to the text directly inasmuch as they receive the text through their own filter of ideas or horizon." The reader is the ultimate interpreter of meaning.

¹³MBSD, section 3.a.

God's Spirit to teach them what He would like to teach them. This is a critical point, since many individuals have already made firm prior commitments to a particular theology or practice before they come together to study this topic with the church community. How can the Spirit work to guide the church in a process in which many already have long-standing prior commitments that they may not be prepared to lay aside as they study the biblical text? The only result in such a case is a matter of implementing prior commitments according to majority vote.¹⁴ I would appeal to the members of the study committee to lay aside all such prior commitments and come to the text with an openness to listen for the voice of God's Spirit in the text. "Any study of the Word should commence with a request for the Spirit's guidance and illumination."¹⁵ This implies a need not only for prayer but also for a readiness to listen and to obey, not to advocate for a particular point of view. Interpreters "must be willing to submit all presuppositions, opinions, and the conclusions of reason to the judgment and correction of the Word itself."¹⁶ "The investigation of Scripture must be characterized by a sincere desire to discover and obey God's will and word rather than to seek support or evidence for preconceived ideas."¹⁷

Section 4 of the MBSD deals with specific methods of Bible study. Drawing on the principles established in the first three sections, it enumerates various procedures that result from following a careful biblical hermeneutic. I will mention only a few of these. There is some redundancy from the previous sections. Point *c* is very important. It states, "Seek to grasp the

¹⁴A small sign in the office of the North American Division observes wisely, "Never confuse the will of the majority with the will of God."

¹⁵MBSD, section 3.b.

¹⁶Ibid., section 3.c.

¹⁷Ibid., section 3.d.

simple, most obvious meaning of the biblical passage being studied.”¹⁸ Frequently, when readers do not like the tenor of the most obvious meaning of a passage, they seek to discover a deeper, hidden meaning that will yield a different message for them. But the deeper meaning, if there is one, should never be in conflict with the plain meaning of the text. It may enrich the surface meaning, but it cannot invalidate the obvious literal meaning of the text. Ellen White repeatedly insists upon the importance of paying careful attention to the plain meaning of the text. She declares, “Let the Bible explain its own statements. Accept it just as it reads, without twisting the words to suit human ideas.”¹⁹ “All who exalt their own opinions above divine revelation, all who would change the plain meaning of Scripture to suit their own convenience, or for the sake of conforming to the world, are taking upon themselves a fearful responsibility.”²⁰ “When those who profess to believe present truth come to their senses, when they accept the Word of the living God just as it reads and do not try to wrest the Scriptures, then they will build their house upon the eternal Rock, even Christ Jesus.”²¹ Any other reading of the text is not justified unless it is very clearly symbolic or figurative, which is not the case in 1 Cor 11 and 14.

Another good procedure is to “study the context of the passage under consideration by relating it to the sentences and paragraphs immediately preceding and following it. Try to relate the ideas of the passage to the line of thought of the entire biblical book.”²² This means that the

¹⁸Ibid., section 4.c.

¹⁹Ellen G. White, *Loma Linda Messages* (Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn Books, 1981), 55.

²⁰Idem, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, 1911 ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), 268.

²¹Idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981, 1987, 1990, 1993), 21:346.

²²MBSD, section 4.f.

literary context of the passage is important to understand. The key to understanding any passage is its own literary context. Before going outside of the local literary context, the text must first be understood within its own context. Subsequently, it may be appropriate to enlarge the context to the book, the author, the Testament, even the entire canon. This is particularly true where there are pointers in the text to parallel ideas elsewhere in Scripture. Parallels may be in terms of vocabulary, theme, or structure. The more parallels there are, or the more direct the evidence for allusions, citations, paraphrases, or quotations, the stronger the case that can be made for using another passage as a basis for bringing added meaning to the text. Again, there will necessarily be a fundamental theological unity, not a discontinuity, between the various canonical parallels.

The role of Ellen G. White in interpreting Scripture is also addressed in the MBSD: “Her expositions on any given Bible passage offer an inspired guide to the meaning of texts without exhausting their meaning or preempting the task of exegesis.”²³ Ellen White was not an exegete, but she was an inspired interpreter of Scripture, depending not on exegesis but on revelation to explain the significance of a particular text. Seventh-day Adventist interpreters take this role very seriously. If White understands a passage literally, that should suggest that we take it literally as well. If she understands it within a particular context, we should take that context seriously as well. If she makes a particular application of a text, we should not lightly regard her application and readily dismiss it as not an exegetical interpretation.

The MBSD also discusses the relationship of parallel accounts in Scripture, which “sometimes present differences in detail and emphasis.” “When parallel passages seem to indicate discrepancy or contradiction, look for the underlying harmony.”²⁴ In the case of the

²³Ibid., section 4.1.

²⁴Ibid., section 4.o.

topic at hand, there are a number of parallel passages, including not only our passages in 1 Cor 11 and 14 but also passages in Eph 5, Col 3, 1 Tim 2, Titus 2, and 1 Peter 3. We cannot address each of these passages in this paper, but we do need to keep in mind that these passages should have an underlying harmony to what is being taught, which should at some point be introduced into the larger discussion in connection with the goals of this study committee. Because there are many similar passages spread across the New Testament (NT), there is broad textual evidence for this topic, and it can be demonstrated that this evidence is in internal harmony. Therefore, it would not be wise to readily dismiss its significance as instruction for the Christian church. Since there is no clear NT evidence pointing to the invalidation of this instruction, as if it were part of the ritual law of the sanctuary that came to an end with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (cf. Eph 2:14-16; Col 2:13-17; Heb 8:6-13; 9:9-10; 10:1), it still needs to be taken seriously.

I pointed already to the importance of exploring the historical and cultural backgrounds to the text, as addressed in MBSD, section 4.k. The next-to-last point of section 4 comes back to that issue and attempts to nuance it more fully. It states, “The Scriptures were written for the practical purpose of revealing the will of God to the human family. However, in order not to misconstrue certain kinds of statements, it is important to recognize that they were addressed to peoples of Eastern cultures and expressed in their thought patterns.”²⁵ After providing several examples of expressions that are commonly misunderstood because of the differing understandings that we have in our own modern culture, the statement concludes, “While there is an overarching unity in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and while all Scripture is equally inspired, God chose to reveal Himself to and through human individuals and to meet them where they were in terms of spiritual and intellectual endowments. God Himself does not change, but

²⁵Ibid., section 4.p.

He progressively unfolded His revelation to men as they were able to grasp it. . . . Every experience or statement of Scripture is a divinely inspired record, but not every statement or experience is necessarily normative for Christian behavior today. Both the spirit and the letter of Scripture must be understood.”²⁶ It is important to distinguish that which is merely descriptive from that which is normative, else we would be practicing many of the sins of our forefathers, including idolatry, lying, polygamy, slavery, and even murder. The text provides clues as to what is considered normative. Certainly, it must be in harmony with God’s moral law and the practice of heaven. In fact, Jesus gave a great clue as to what constitutes normative behavior when He prayed, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10; Luke 11:2). Practices that reach back to the original creation or extend into the new creation constitute God’s will for all humanity. These horizons extend far beyond any individual author or historical-cultural setting, so they represent God’s transcendent plan and purposes for all humankind. We will take a closer look at this principle as we examine our text below.

Since revelation is progressive, the later Scriptures should be a further representation of God’s will for mankind, though all must be in essential unity and harmony. Certainly, those instructions that were given to the church after the cross must be considered to be part of the new covenant for God’s people and how they were to behave toward one another and toward God in interpersonal relationships under the new covenant. It would not be appropriate, then, to argue that any of the NT instructions for the church that are given as normative should be considered to be done away with as part of the old covenant, certainly not without any explicit statement to that effect. In the theological context of Paul’s instructions to the church, everything that is to be done is to be done “in Christ,” that is, with a view to the centrality of Christ’s life and death and

²⁶Ibid.

heavenly ministry on our behalf as redeemed from sin and called to holy living, walking in His steps according to the eternal principles of His holy law. This is the truth as it is in Jesus.

The final point made by the MBSD, aside from the conclusion, is that application is the final goal of the text.²⁷ Apart from practical application, the text has little value other than satisfying historical curiosity. God did not give us the text of Scripture merely to satisfy our curiosity about what was happening in the city of Corinth in the first century, for example. In fact, Scripture gives us very little insight into what was happening in Corinth at that time. We are forced to go to extrabiblical sources to discover that information. What could those understand from the text who have no access to those sources if that were essential information for understanding the text? The Scripture would be rather meaningless for them, and they would be very confused about how to apply the text. In fact, the text would be misleading, and God would be to blame for not providing adequate context for His instructions. Scripture is supposed to be self-interpreting, internally coherent without recourse to extrabiblical sources. The MBSD states that “although many biblical passages had local significance, nonetheless they contain timeless principles applicable to every age and culture.”²⁸ Of course, the text had local significance, but for it to have timeless, canonical significance, “written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Cor 10:11), it must contain eternal principles which bridge time and space to speak to us in ways that we find relevant and meaningful so that we can apply them to our own lives. We need to discover those principles from the text, then find how we ought best to apply them to our lives. Principles are demonstrated by their timeless application, being found in a variety of circumstances in both Testaments, even if the specific applications may vary.

²⁷Ibid., section 4.q.

²⁸Ibid.

Introduction to Exegesis

The main passage I have been assigned for study is 1 Cor 11:2-16, which deals with the issue of headship and its implications for the church. This passage is part of Paul's first letter to the church of Corinth,²⁹ written from Ephesus during the latter part of his stay there, on his third missionary journey, about A.D. 55 or 56 (16:5-9).³⁰ His purpose in writing this letter was to deal with the problem of schism in the church there (1:10-12) as well as other problems reported to him (5:1; 11:18; 15:12), to answer a number of questions that had been posed to him in writing (7:1; 8:1,4), and to address issues that he deemed important for them, although it is unclear as to what may have prompted him to write about them (6:1; 9:3-6; 10:1,14; 11:2; 12:1; 14:1; 16:1). The issue in 11:2-16 is one of the latter, with no clear indication of his motivation for writing to them on this subject, although v. 16 may suggest that reports were circulating that there were some who were debating the need to practice the sign of headship in the church at Corinth, and he intends to make clear that there is no room for diversity in this area.

The fact that this is the earliest place in Paul's letters where he addresses this subject means that he lays the groundwork rather thoroughly, and this forms the theological basis for his later instructions on the same subject. We note also that it was about twenty-five years after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, so it must be written in light of the Christ event and any theological ramifications of that event. Further, it was not written at the beginning of Paul's ministry, but at least twenty years into his ministry, so it was not something that he had not had time to think about theologically. The fact that his teaching remained consistent in this matter

²⁹That is, the first extant, canonical letter. Paul's apparent reference to a previous letter in 5:9 would make it actually his second letter to them. However, our convention is to refer to it as the first letter to the Corinthians.

³⁰Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles: In the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 298.

until near the end of his ministry, as seen in 1 Tim 2 and Titus 2, written perhaps nine years later, reveals that it was grounded in a solid biblical theology, not merely in a local context in Corinth. The fact that it was written very shortly prior to his letter to the Galatians, which was penned from Corinth a few months later,³¹ suggests that Gal 3:28 should not be considered to teach something different from what Paul teaches in 1 Cor 11, as some have argued,³² especially given the fact that nine years later he was still teaching the same thing. According to the hermeneutic in the MBSD, we must look for the harmony between these teachings.

There is no doubt about the authorship of 1 Corinthians, even among the most critical scholars, so the apostolic authority of the teaching should be unchallenged. Paul was the greatest theologian of the early Christian church, highly educated as a biblical scholar and inspired by the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:12-13; 7:40; 1 Thess 2:13). If he is off-base theologically, we are in deep trouble, for much of our NT theology is derived from the writings of Paul. In fact, already in the NT period the apostle Peter considered Paul's writings to be equated with "the rest of Scripture," albeit sometimes difficult to understand fully (2 Pet 3:15-16).

Although we know from extrabiblical sources that Corinth was a port city that was known for its cosmopolitan populace, its commerce, its immorality, and its Temple of Aphrodite up on the Acrocorinth, these characteristics receive no specific mention in the biblical text. It would not be fair to assume, then, that these must play a significant role in the instructions given to the church in 1 Cor 11, since there is no allusion to them in the rationale given for the instructions, but biblical and theological reasons are given instead (1 Cor 11:7-9). Thus the instructions given

³¹Ibid., 383.

³²Leo S. Ranzolin Jr., "The Trajectory of an Egalitarian Ethic in the Letters of Paul: The Case for Women's Ordination," a paper presented to the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, Chicago, IL, 16 November 2012, 3, 15-18; Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 112-13.

in the passage took on more than just a local application, but had significance for NT churches everywhere. Paul suggested this universal application when he closed the section by affirming that the churches of God were united in their practice in regard to the instructions given (11:16). In other words, it really didn't matter where the church was located, the same rules applied to all. This is because the instruction was grounded in a biblical and theological principle, as this study will show. This was not a case of culturally conditioned teaching applying only to Corinth.³³

The literary genre of the book is epistle, which consists primarily of theological instruction and practical admonition. Although most of Paul's epistles were addressed to specific churches or individuals, epistles as a genre could also be addressed more broadly, like the General (or Catholic) Epistles. That Paul's epistles were not meant to be limited to the specific churches addressed is shown by several factors. In Col 4:16, Paul instructs the church at Colosse, "And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea." This is similar to the instructions Jesus gave to John on Patmos to write in a scroll what he was shown and send it to seven churches in the province of Asia Minor (Rev 1:11). It was circulated to all of the churches, because there was something for every church to learn from each other's messages. Paul understood this, and so did the early Christian church. Paul's letters were collected, bound in a corpus, and circulated to the churches for their instruction. We have no manuscript evidence today of any independent circulation of the Pauline epistles. They appear only in the form of the Pauline Corpus.³⁴ There is evidence that some early manuscripts omitted the addressees to

³³Nonetheless, this study has investigated the situation in Corinth and noted the pagan Greco-Roman influences abounding there, including the many temples to different gods, the sexual promiscuity practiced there, the customs of dress and decorum, the worship practices, etc. Yet Paul gives no hint of appeal to any of these matters.

³⁴Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, transl. by Errol F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

specific churches, such as those to Ephesus and Rome, so that they could be sent more generally to other churches as pastoral and theological instruction.³⁵ Given this characteristic of epistles, it seems reasonable to conclude that the instructions given were not limited to a specific church but were for the church as a whole. This seems to be true also in 1 Cor 14:33, where that passage begins with the words, “As in all the congregations of the saints” This is not instruction for the Corinthians alone, but they do need to be brought into harmony with the practice of the rest of the church.

The literary background to the passage in 11:2-16 is warnings against idolatry and even rebellion in chaps. 8-10. Chapter 8 introduced the topic of eating foods sacrificed to idols, which had been forbidden by the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:28-29). Some apparently felt that they had knowledge which allowed them freedom to do as they pleased, but Paul warned that “‘knowledge’ puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Cor 8:1). It is better to care about one’s Christian brother than about one’s own rights. Paul argues that one surrenders one’s own rights, out of love, rather than offending a fellow believer by insisting on exercising the freedom of “knowledge.” He had made this point already in 6:7 when he proposed that it was better to suffer wrong and be defrauded than to take a fellow believer to court. He declares in 8:12 that to put self first is sin, and he affirms that “if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (v. 13). In chap. 9 he continues to distinguish between his rights to expect financial support from the church and his willingness to surrender his rights for the sake of the gospel. His reward for this is “that in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as

1987; Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1987), 48-49.

³⁵Clinton E. Arnold, “Ephesians, Letter to the,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters (DPL)*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 244; James D. G. Dunn, “Romans, Letter to the,” in *DPL*, 838.

not to make full use of my right in the gospel. For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them” (9:18-19).

In chap. 10, he cites the rebellion of Israel in the wilderness as an example of putting their own evil desires ahead of God’s will for them, and he labels it idolatry and immorality. He calls the believers not to repeat the errors of ancient Israel: “Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did” (10:6). The fact that these events were recorded, Paul declares, is for posterity to learn from. They were not isolated incidents of merely local significance: “Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come” (v. 11). We could say the same today of the instructions Paul has given to the church in the letter to the Corinthians. They are recorded for the benefit of succeeding generations, because in them God has established principles that are universal. Submitting self to the will of God and submitting one’s own rights for the good of the community are principles found in the immediate literary context of our passage. Submitting to all levels of God-ordained authority is then introduced (11:3; cf. Rom 13:1-2; 1 Pet 2:13-17).

As Paul prepares to approach the topic of the Lord’s supper, he urges believers to “flee from idolatry” (10:14), to prepare their hearts and minds by submission to the counsel of the church (Acts 15:29) to not indulge in eating foods sacrificed to idols. They may believe that an idol is nothing, that they can do as they please, but there is a reality they may not understand: “what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons” (vv. 20-21). There is an unseen world with powers of darkness in conflict with the Lord and His will for us. We may not see these powers, but we need to comprehend the dynamics that are at play. All things may be legal, but not all

things are helpful and edifying (v. 23). “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor” (v. 24). He concludes, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God” (vv. 31-32), and he invites his readers to consider his example and imitate him to the extent that he imitates Christ (10:33-11:1). “Give no offense . . . to the church of God” by following Paul in pointing to the model of Christ’s submission is the most immediate context for our passage. This is very significant to keep in mind as we begin our exegesis of 1 Cor 11:2-16.

Exegesis of 1 Cor 11:2-16

Our passage begins in 11:2 with Paul requesting his readers to remember him in everything and hold onto the traditions just as he delivered them to the church of Corinth. The word “traditions” is not a negative concept here but merely a word for those teachings which were handed down by him to them, presumably from Jesus Himself, who he claims in Gal 1:12, 16-17 taught him that gospel message that he preaches (cf. 1:8-9). In fact, 1 Cor 11:23 explicitly states, “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you” (cf. 15:3). The Greek word for “tradition,” *paradoseis* (παραδόσεις), is the plural noun form of the cognate verb *paradidōmi* (παραδίδωμι), which appears as the verb “delivered” in this verse. It literally means “given over” or “handed over.” It could also be rendered “passed along.” These are the teachings that Paul received from the Lord and which he is passing along to them.³⁶ They include what follows.

Paul begins his instruction per se in v. 3, with something that he wants them to know or understand. There are categories of nonreciprocal relationships in which some individuals are

³⁶David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians: Life in the Local Church*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 178-79, says that “traditions” refers to “the twin process of hearing and of passing on, and is normally used to refer to those essential Christian truths that are at the heart of the gospel.”

designated as “head” while others are not in a reciprocal relationship with them.³⁷ It is possible to be a head in relationship to one party but not to another. In the three nonreciprocal relationships defined in the text, God (the Father) is the only one who is under no one else’s headship, and the woman is the only one who has no explicit headship over another. “The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (NIV). This headship principle is the ground for all that follows in the passage, so it is important to be clear on what it says.

First of all, it is important to understand what is meant by “head.” The Greek word is *kephalē* (κεφαλή), which can mean either a literal, anatomical head (on a body) or a metaphorical head (ruler, leader, director, authority figure, even source or origin). Its use here may be readily deduced by clear parallels to the first phrase, “the head of every man is Christ,” in other passages such as Eph 1:22-23; 4:15; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19, as well as in 1 Cor 12. In 1 Cor 12, Paul illustrates the church as a body with many members: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (v. 12). “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (v. 27). Clearly, the illustration is meant to be a metaphor, but with what significance? The head is not the source of the body, but it is the part that sends directions to the body and coordinates its activities. It is the first among equals by virtue of its role as the brain or authority that directs the other members. Of Christ Paul declares in Col 1:18, “And he is the head of the body, the church. . . . that in

³⁷In each pair, only one is the head. The other submits to the head. Even in the Trinity, biblically, the Father is the Head, and Christ submits to His headship. The Father may honor Christ and give him all power and authority, but 1 Cor 15:27 clearly states, “But when it says, ‘all things are put in subjection,’ it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him.” There is no reciprocity in headship relations, even within the Godhead. Mutual submission is outside of the headship relation. Within the headship relation, there no reciprocity, although Christ's attitude as Head of the church was one of self-sacrificing love, and the same is supposed to be true of the husband's relation to his wife. That is not the same as reciprocity, where the husband would submit to the wife as head or where Christ would submit to the church as head, even where the Father would submit to the Son as Head.

everything he might be preeminent.” His preeminence implies that he is the leader, ruler, or authority figure, a person of first rank.³⁸ As v. 16 says, every dominion, throne, ruler, and authority was created by Him and for Him, making Him not only the source but also the supreme ruler (head) not only of the church but also of all creation, including every created authority.

What are the implications of an authoritative headship? Paralleling 1 Cor 11:3, Paul writes in Eph 5:23, “For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.” So whatever it means for Christ to be head of his body, the church, or of “every man” in 1 Cor 11:3, it is not essentially different, according to the text, from what it is for the husband to be the head of the wife in Eph 5:23 or the man to be the head of the woman in 1 Cor 11:3.³⁹ This relationship is explicitly described in Eph 5 both before and after v. 23. Verse 22 says, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” And v. 24 says, “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.” Leo Ranzolin Jr. concludes that whether *kephalē* means “ruler” or “source,” “it is hard to escape the notion that κεφαλή [*kephalē*] conveys a sense of subordination.”⁴⁰

³⁸Cf. Eph 1:20-22, in which Christ’s headship over the church is paralleled with His being seated above all rule and authority. Egalitarians have argued for interpreting *kephalē* as “source.” This meaning seems possible in Eph 4:15-16 and Col 2:19; however, this simply does not work in 1 Cor 11:3 or Eph 5:23. Rather, it results in both logical and theological problems. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 166, shows that then “there is no way to construct a satisfactory set of parallels” in 1 Cor 11:3. Is man the source of woman (or husband, of wife) or is God the source of Christ in the same sense that Christ is the source of man? The obvious answer is No. The same is true of husband and wife in Eph 5:23. However, “head” as “authority” works well in these verses. Both meanings may be true for Christ, but not for other relationships.

³⁹Some have complained that this cannot include the part about being the savior of the body. That may be true, perhaps, since the main point of comparison is headship with headship. However, the syntactical relationship of the last clause to what precedes it suggests a probable logical or causal relationship in which it would be impossible to separate the two ideas entirely. *Sōtēr* (σωτήρ) means savior or healer, one who restores to wholeness. It may be in the context of the self-sacrificing love of Christ for His church in Eph 5 that this is a role the husband should be playing in relation to his wife, parallel to the relation of Christ to His body, the church.

⁴⁰Ranzolin, 6. For an extensive discussion of the meaning of *kephalē*, see Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of κεφαλή (‘Head’): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44 (2001):25-65. Grudem concludes from lexical studies that there is no basis for *kephalē* as “source” (61).

Headship, then, has to do with a nonreciprocal relationship in which one party submits to another in a trust relationship of submission to the headship authority of the other. Christ and His church form the model for this relationship, as described in Eph 5. It is a relationship in which self-sacrificing love on the part of the head begets trust and submission on the part of the other party: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (v. 25). Thus, in 1 Cor 11:3, the relation between Christ and every man is listed first, a relationship which has been demonstrated by the sacrifice of Christ, the Head.

Next is listed the expected corresponding earthly relationship: “the head of the woman is man” (NIV). The ESV renders this, “the head of a wife is her husband,” although the margin states, “This term may refer to a woman or a wife, according to the context.”⁴¹ This reading is certainly in harmony with the sentiment of Eph 5; however, whether it is the best reading here is debatable. This will be addressed further below in the context of what follows. Certainly, the principle is minimally valid for husbands and wives, if not for gender groups as a whole.⁴² Thus one cannot argue that the headship principle, as such, is no longer valid, as some have argued based on the premise that it was brought in after the Fall in Gen 3 because of sin and that the

⁴¹*The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, Good News Publishers, 2001), 1 Cor 11:3 margin.

⁴²Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 141-42, writes, “In early times the father was the ruler and priest of his own family, and he exercised authority over his children, even after they had families of their own. His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head, in both religious and secular matters. This patriarchal system of government Abraham endeavored to perpetuate, as it tended to preserve the knowledge of God. It was necessary to bind the members of the household together, in order to build up a barrier against the idolatry that had become so widespread and so deep-seated. . . .

“It was a wise arrangement, which God Himself had made, to cut off His people, so far as possible, from connection with the heathen, making them a people dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations.”

Clearly, Ellen White believed that the patriarchal system of male headship was ordained of God for a good spiritual reason, to preserve His people faithful to Him in all things by preserving the knowledge of Himself. She also quotes 1 Cor 11:3 and cites the headship of Christ over the church as having to do with control, in contrast to man: the church “is to obey Christ as its head. It is not to depend upon man, or be controlled by man. Idem, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 414. Thus she supports “head” as “authority” or “leader.”

gospel under the new covenant does away with the inequalities introduced through sin, a concept nowhere taught in the Bible, although Gal 3:28 is often cited for such a notion.⁴³

The third element of the trio of headship relationships states that “the head of Christ is God.” Some have objected that because this element appears last, there is no chain of authority found in the text. This is a fallacious argument. If one were to write that the head of the faculty is the principal, the head of the students is the faculty, and the head of the principal is the school board, there would be no basis for denying a chain of authority.⁴⁴ One would merely want to inquire as to why the sequence was expressed in the order it was. H. Wayne House has expressed concerning the sequence in 1 Cor 11:3 that there is a literary inclusio in which “Paul surrounds the main theme, the headship of man, with the headships of Christ and of God.”⁴⁵ The purpose would presumably be to provide the model for the headship relationship between man and woman by virtue of the two relationships before and after it. Simon Kistemaker points out that the first and third clauses are balanced with Christ having a role in each.⁴⁶ This suggests a Christological and theological framework for the headship of man in relation to woman. What is implied by this Christological and theological framework?

The headship of Christ and the headship of God the Father form the pattern for the

⁴³See, e.g., Richard M. Davidson, “The Bible and the Ordination of Women Pastors,” paper, Andrews University, February 2013, 8-9; cf. Brendan Byrne, *Paul and the Christian Woman* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 6; Don Williams, *The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church* (Los Angeles, CA: BIM, 1977), 82.

⁴⁴Although a case may be made for a chain of authority, as many commentators observe, by reordering the statements into a more natural order—God is head of Christ, who is head of man, who is head of woman—this does not imply a conflict with the concept of the priesthood of all believers, in which each person has an unmediated spiritual relationship with God through Christ. Scripture is clear that there is only one Mediator between God and humanity, namely, Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5). Headship has nothing to do with spiritual mediation. Woman does not need to come to God through any man, including her own husband.

⁴⁵H. Wayne House, *The Role of Women in Ministry Today* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 111.

⁴⁶Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 365.

headship of husband-wife (in the home) and man-woman (in the church).⁴⁷ Since the context of 1 Cor 11 is the church (vv. 4,5,16), not the home,⁴⁸ the primary significance in this passage would seem to encompass gender relationships in the church. We will provide more support for this below. One objection has been that the principle of submission is a negative concept, a consequence of sin.⁴⁹ This verse invalidates that objection, since Christ is shown to be in submission to the headship of God and every man is in submission to the headship of Christ, and these are not negative relationships. There is no essential conflict between ontological equality and submission, for God and Christ are ontologically equal, yet Christ submits to His Father. The submission is functional, providing for different role relationships; it does not express any ontological inequality. In fact, it has been pointed out that the fullest form of submission is between equals, as in the case between Christ and His Father.⁵⁰ And this submission to headship authority is not a consequence of sin, for it existed already in heaven before sin. When Michael, the eternal Word, agreed before the foundation of the earth to take the role of the Son of God and come to this planet to die for mankind (Eph 1:3-5; Heb 10:5-10), He was already in submission to His Father's role as authority figure in the divine Trinity. And, according to 1 Cor 15:24-28,

⁴⁷Craig L. Blomberg, "Women in Ministry: A Complementarian Perspective," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, rev. ed., ed. James R. Beck, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 156-57, observes regarding the order Paul uses, "This makes good sense if Paul is leading up to commands to Christian men and women. It would be natural to refer to their heads first and then draw the comparison between Christ and God."

⁴⁸Prior, 181.

⁴⁹Davidson, 5, argues that submission was introduced only as a result of the Fall and cites Ellen White as saying that it "was part of the curse" which was to be reversed by the plan of redemption. However, this is too narrow a view of the subject, focusing only on the curse that came about as a result of sin. It was the "subjection," not a voluntary submission, of the woman to her husband's rule that was a part of the curse which was to be reversed by the plan of salvation. To apply to submission what was true for subjection is to distort the truth of Scripture.

⁵⁰Beatrice S. Neall, "Relationships in the Godhead: A Model for Human Relations," in *Women in the Church: The Feminine Perspective*, ed. Lourdes E. Morales-Gudmundsson (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1995), 24, states, "Jesus cited his submission to the Father as the strongest evidence that he was God." Striving for status, rank, or position forms de facto evidence that one knows oneself to be essentially inferior. Contrast the voluntary submission of Christ in Phil 2:5-8 with the striving of Lucifer in Isa 14:12-14.

in the new creation, “when everything is subject to Christ, then the Son Himself will also be subject to the One who subjected everything to Him, so that God may be all in all” (v. 28 CSB). The text further points out that “when it says ‘everything’ is put under Him, it is obvious that He who puts everything under Him is the exception” (v. 27 CSB). Even in the new creation, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will be in voluntary submission to His Father, “so that God may be all in all.”

We may conclude, therefore, that the submission implied in the headship relations in 1 Cor 11:3 is both positive and normative, expressing a voluntary spirit of complementarian role function that is neither sinful or oppressive nor in conflict with full ontological equality. After all, it is characteristic of the role relationships between Christ and His Father that extend from eternity past to eternity future, and it is illustrated by the relationship between Christ and the believer, in which the believer chooses to submit to Christ in a relationship built on love and trust. Surely, the truth as it is in Jesus should be sufficient to quell all thought of submission as a negative concept in Scripture. In fact, a thorough study of the principle of submission in Scripture, which is beyond the scope of this paper, demonstrates that Jesus Christ teaches the principle by both precept and example to be an essential aspect of the divine character of love for others.

At this point, it may be helpful to add a note about the structure of the passage. There is a set of four parallel statements that speak of relationships that exist between man and woman. As adapted from Brendan Byrne’s list of only four points,⁵¹ they appear as follows:

1. . . . the head of every man is Christ
- . . . the head of the woman is the man (v. 3)

⁵¹Byrne, 41.

2. . . . every man who prays with covered head dishonors his head (v. 4)
 . . . every woman who prays with uncovered head dishonors her head (v. 5)
3. . . . a woman ought to cover her head (v. 6)
 . . . a man ought not to cover his head (v. 7a)
4. . . . man is the image and glory of God
 . . . but woman is the glory of man (v. 7b)
5. . . . man did not come from woman
 . . . but woman [came] from man (v. 8)
6. . . . neither was man created for woman
 . . . but woman [was created] for man (v. 9)
7. . . . there is not a woman apart from man
 . . . or a man apart from woman (in the Lord) (v. 11)
8. . . . for just as woman is from man
 . . . so man comes to be through woman (v. 12)

This structure provides a real sense of what the passage is trying to tell us. There are very real distinctions between the genders that need to be observed and preserved. These derive from the order and purpose of creation, as will be discussed further below. There is a complementarity that exists by the plan and design of God, and the church is to preserve these distinctions.

Having established the headship principle in 11:3, Paul moves on to make application of the principle in the life of the church at Corinth. It has to do with the first two elements of the principle enunciated in v. 3, first the man-Christ relation, then the woman-man/wife-husband relationship: “Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every wife [or woman] who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven” (v. 4). The context here is public worship in the church. Both men and women may pray or prophesy in the church, but they must do so under particular conditions which are appropriate to each, following the headship principle, and it is

clear that the same conditions are not appropriate to each. There is important symbolism in the covering or uncovering of the head, which is now the literal, physical head of the literal, physical body, not the metaphorical, spiritual head of the metaphorical, spiritual body.⁵² The literal head now represents the spiritual head. In the case of the man, interpreting from the previous verse, it represents Christ. In the case of the woman, it represents the man, or husband, as the case may be.⁵³ To cover or not to cover signifies honor or dishonor, depending on who the head is. In the case of the man, the head is Christ and should not be covered, or He is dishonored. In the case of the woman/wife, the head is the man and should be covered.⁵⁴

The language in Greek appears to be the language of veiling. In v. 4, the Greek literally says, “Every man who while praying or prophesying has (something) (hanging) down from the head dishonors his head.” Verse 5 is more explicit, using *akatakalyptō* (ἀκατακαλύπτω), which means “unveiled,”⁵⁵ to read, “But every woman who prays or prophesies with the head unveiled dishonors her head, for it is one and the same with being shaved.” Similar language is used again in vv. 6-7, with various verbal forms of *katakalyptesthai* (κατακαλύπτεσθαι), meaning “to be veiled,” used three times. There is considerable debate as to just what practice is represented by

⁵²Kistemaker, 367.

⁵³Ibid., 375, supports this interpretation. Various theories abound as to what the covering signifies.

⁵⁴There is a hot debate about how these instructions may relate to cultural practices in Corinth. Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 2d rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 266-67, argues that Paul’s instruction was counter-cultural, since Greek women in Corinth would not have covered their heads, while Jewish and Roman men would have covered their heads while praying. See also Lee Anna Starr, *The Bible Status of Woman* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1926), 288-90. However, Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 507, contends that “there is almost no evidence . . . that men in any of the cultures (Greek, Roman, Jew) covered their heads.” “In the final analysis, however,” he adds, “we simply have to admit that we do not know” (508). At best, it seems, local cultural practices are not determinative for understanding Paul’s counsel apart from his own internal explanation.

⁵⁵Literally, “without a veil hanging down.” *Kalymma* (κάλυμμα), a veil or covering, is the same word used for the veil in the Hebrew sanctuary or temple. It is a cognate of the verb *kalyptō* (καλύπτω), I cover, hide, veil. Cf. Prior, 183.

the language here. The exact nature of the practice does not need to be resolved. Perhaps Paul left it vague enough that various practices might be allowed with a similar purpose of applying the principle. In any case, whatever form the covering or veiling took, it represented a means of showing honor or respect for the head or authority. The means may change with time and place in different cultures, but the principle of showing that honor and respect should never change. It is a principle honored even in heaven, as v. 3 makes clear and as v. 10 may further suggest. God demanded that Moses show respect for His presence in Exod 3:5 by removing his shoes from his feet, but he removed the veil from his face when he entered the presence of God in the temple in Exod 34:34. However, angels do cover their faces in the presence of God (Isa 6:2),⁵⁶ and biblical women did veil their faces in the presence of men (Gen 24:65; 38:14; Cant 4:1,3; 6:7).⁵⁷ Isaiah 47:2-3 reveals that removing a woman's veil (*katakalymma*) is a shame and a disgrace to her. Paul here compares it with being shaved or shorn of her hair (1 Cor 11:5-6), which is her glory, given to her by God for a covering or wrap⁵⁸ (v. 15). Clearly it was God's original intent in the creation to make a distinction between the man and the woman, with long hair provided to the woman for a sort of natural veil or covering. This was to be her glory, her honor, not a shame but a sign of specialness. Paul goes on to say more about the purpose of God in the creation of man and woman and what sets them apart in relation to the headship issue.

⁵⁶White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 252; idem, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, 1911 ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), 414.

⁵⁷Interestingly, the Greek word for "veil" in these passages from Song of Solomon is *siōpēsis* (σιώπησις), which is a cognate of *siōpaō* (σιωπάω), "I am quiet, silent, hushed." *Siōpēsis* also means "the state of being quiet." In Exod 34:33-35 (LXX) and 2 Cor 3:13-16, *kalymma* is used, while in the LXX of Isa 47:2, *katakalymma* is used for the veil, the cognate of *katakalyptesthai* in 1 Cor 11:6-7. These latter are veils draped for a covering.

⁵⁸As we shall see below, a different term is used here. The hair is not given for a veil but for a *peribolaion* (περιβολαίον), which is a wrap, shawl, or cloak which is "thrown around" (*periballein*) the person for a covering.

In v. 7, Paul begins giving a theological rationale why a man should not cover his head:⁵⁹ “For⁶⁰ a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.” It is notable here that Paul’s rationale for why a man ought not to cover his head says nothing about the situation in Corinth or in the culture of the Greco-Roman world. His rationale is purely biblical and theological: there is a distinction to be made between the creation of man and the creation of woman. They were not created for the same purposes. Man—as a gendered human being, not as a husband—was created to be the image and glory of God, while woman, although also created in the image of God, was created for the glory of the man, not for the glory of God. This explicit distinction in the purpose of the creation of the man and the woman has both theological significance and practical consequences. Man, according to the express purpose of God delineated in this text, was created for the glory of God, his Maker, while woman was created subsequently for the glory of the man.⁶¹ This distinction Gen 2:20-25 spells out in detail. Man existed and accomplished tasks for God before he began to experience a need for a helper.⁶² Woman was made as a helper for him, to supply a felt need he had within himself,

⁵⁹Except where specific practices are referred to, from this point, I will refer only to covering the head without further qualification as to the precise nature of the covering, which is highly debated.

⁶⁰Whether the introductory, though postpositive, *gar* (γάρ) here is causal (“because, since,” “for the reason that”) or explanatory (“for”), makes little difference in interpretation. As Kistemaker, 373, states, “The first word, the causal conjunction *for*, connotes that the entire present passage is an explanation of the preceding verses (vv. 5-6) that alludes to the creation account (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18-24).” It explains Paul’s rationale for covering the head as having to do with the purpose and order of creation.

⁶¹It is critical that this distinction not be confused with ontological inequality. Both man and woman were created in the image of God. Both had equal value before God. This is a distinction not of essence or value but of purpose in creation and of function or role. They were not created for identical purposes or functions, God says. Wayne Grudem, “The Key Issues in the Manhood-Womanhood Controversy, and the Way Forward,” in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem, Foundations for the Family Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 25-37, after first establishing the full equality of the man and woman, identifies ten evidences from the creation account in Gen 1-2 that indicate that God gave men and women distinct roles before the Fall.

⁶²Some have made much of the fact that God Himself is sometimes referred to as our helper (*‘ezer*), to show that *‘ezer* “does *not* denote a subordinate helper or assistant” (Davidson, 4). While it does not necessarily denote a subordinate, it does denote a helper or assistant nonetheless, one who comes to assist another in a task or mission, as

not in relation to God. God Himself observed, “It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:27). The woman was created to meet the man’s need for companionship, according to the Genesis record, to which Paul appeals for his theology.

Paul goes on to explain further, still following the creation story, “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.” This expresses a unidirectional purpose and result. As Gen 2:21-23 describes, the woman was made from one of Adam’s ribs, so that she was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Clearly, there was a priority that was according to God’s plan and purpose for humanity. The woman was not independent of man, but was from man and for man. Thus Paul concludes, “That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels” (v. 10).⁶³ Leaving aside for a moment the reference to the angels, the issue at hand is what the symbol of authority on her head entails. The Greek does not actually speak of a symbol, just of authority, but the text has already asserted that she should have a covering on the head (v. 6); now it asserts that she should have authority on her head. The “authority” seems to be a metonym for the covering.⁶⁴ Or, to put it another way, the covering must be the symbol of authority,⁶⁵ the sign that the woman is under the authority of another. The NIV reads, “For this reason, and because of the angels, the

shown by a variety of other passages (Josh 1:14; 10:6; 2 Sam 21:17; 1 Chr 12:20-21; 2 Chr 26:13; 32:3; Isa 30:5; Ezek 12:14; Dan 11:34). As an *‘ezer kenegdo* for Adam, “a helper corresponding to him” or “an assistant appropriate for him,” Eve functioned as the counterpart he lacked. The language is very much that of complementarity, not of functional identity. She completed those aspects of his being which were incomplete—“It is not good that man should be alone”(Gen 2:18)—so that the image of God could be more perfectly represented by the united pair.

⁶³Kistemaker, 377, notes that this verse has two causal expressions, making it not only awkward to translate but also difficult to interpret. Both need to be accounted for in the interpretation somehow.

⁶⁴Samuele Bacchiocchi, “Divine Order of Headship and Church Order: A Study of the Implications of the Principle of Male Headship for the Ordination of Women as Elders and/or Pastors,” a paper prepared for the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, MD, November 1987, 19.

⁶⁵Ranzolin, 7, states, “The ‘authority on the head’ of the woman appears to refer to the head covering.”

woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.” The context, since this verse is a causal explanation of v. 9, suggests that the authority is that of the man, who is her spiritual head by virtue of priority in creation.

All the references Paul has appealed to come from Gen 2, the story of creation before the Fall. The issue is not ontological equality; it is purpose and function in creation, which focuses on differentiation of genders. Both man and woman were created in the image of God, but for different purposes and functions, and man had the priority in that creation. His purpose in creation, Paul states, was for the “glory of God.” The woman’s purpose in creation was for “the glory of man.”⁶⁶ Thus Paul points out that man’s headship was established already in Gen 2, prior to the entrance of sin. What sin brought in was a dysfunction in that relationship as man and woman turned inward to focus on their own needs and priorities rather than on the purposes of God and the needs of the other person. Through a rediscovery of the true significance of the headship principle as exemplified by Jesus Christ in His incarnation and self-sacrificing death, modeling loving service and submission to the will of His Father, God would have His people learn the value of humility and service as opposed to pride and self-gratification, in which one’s own interests are put ahead of the interests of others. In the context of 1 Cor 11, this is a lesson that the church in Corinth needed to learn before they would be prepared to come to the fellowship meal and the Lord’s supper in the spirit of humility and service instead of each seeking his or her own interests (1 Cor 11:17-34).

We need to address the issue of whether the text is speaking only of husbands and wives

⁶⁶This does not imply that woman did not have a direct, unmediated relationship to God, in whose image she was created. But it does suggest that her purpose and role in creation was intentionally different from that of the man, even prior to the entrance of sin. There is nothing about functional difference that implies inferiority of being. As Prior, 181, states, alluding to 1 Cor 11:3, “The husband is no more superior to his wife than God is superior to Christ.” There is no injustice in functional differences created by God, for there is no injustice with God (2 Chr 19:7; Zeph 3:5; Rom 9:14). The issue of injustice merely detracts from the real issues that need to be addressed.

or also of men and women as gender categories. While it is possible to translate a few of the verses in terms of husbands and wives, the larger context does not permit such a translation. For that reason, no English version that I could discover translates the text consistently throughout as pertaining to wives and their own husbands.⁶⁷ At some point, it is necessary to broaden the understanding to include the gender categories per se. For example, the text would make no sense in v. 12 if it were made to read, “For just as the wife [came] from the husband, so also the husband [came/comes] from the wife.” Clearly, that would not be a true statement. It is not the intent of the text. The text does not pertain only to married individuals; it pertains to male-female relationships, especially in the context of the church.⁶⁸ It is stating that men and women as gender classes are interdependent. Although originally woman came from a man, now men are born from women. Males cannot propagate themselves. Women need men, and men need women. So they must behave in relationship to one another. And the nature of that relationship is properly defined by the creation, from which derives the headship principle here outlined. Ultimately, “everything comes from God” (v. 12), so we must also behave in proper relationship to God, which is also based on the headship of Christ and of God.

Some scholars have argued for a contrast between vv. 7-10 and vv. 11-12,⁶⁹ but there is no contrast intended, only a clarification to prevent misunderstanding or overreaching on the part

⁶⁷Most versions have “man” and “woman” throughout, including v. 3. With the exception of the ESV, each of the seven versions I found which have “husband” and “wife” in v. 3 (or “husband” and “woman” in the YLT) switch to “man” and “woman” after v. 3. The ESV switches back and forth, using “man” after v. 3 but “wife” in vv. 5,6,10,13 and “woman” elsewhere. The MIT uses “grown male” in v. 4, intentionally diverging from the use of “husband” in v. 3. It seems evident that the context is unable to sustain the notion of husband-wife language.

⁶⁸F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 258, states regarding *anēr* and *gynē* in v. 11, “The absence of the articles in the Greek shows that these words do not refer to a man and his wife but to men and women in general. Both are in the sphere of Christ.”

⁶⁹Ranzolin, 7-8; Craig S. Keener, “Women in Ministry: Another Egalitarian Perspective,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 2d ed., ed. James R. Beck, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 240.

of men who may take what Paul has said in vv. 7-10 too far and become arrogant and domineering, thinking women were created for their pleasure, to treat as they please. The fact is that Paul repeats his assertion from v. 8 that woman came from man, but because man in turn comes from woman, by birth, there is no room for independence. They are interdependent. This interdependence, however, does not abrogate the headship principle,⁷⁰ which is why Paul goes on to argue for the application of the headship principle in vv. 13-16. Were Paul, in vv. 11-12, intending to contrast rather than qualify what he had said in vv. 3-10, he would not have added further defense of the headship principle in vv. 13-16. One should not, therefore, interpret vv. 11-12 as an intentional contrast, but merely a nuancing of man's priority in creation as not making him independent of woman and so freeing him to assume some kind of superiority. The interdependence of man and woman is an argument for ontological equality while still maintaining a full functional complementarity in regard to their individual roles.⁷¹

Paul cites the angels as part of his rationale for women in the church to practice covering the head. This reference has not always been understood, but it seems reasonable in the context that their example of showing respect, honor, and submission to authority may be cited here as a model for the women of the church to follow.⁷² I mentioned earlier the practice of the angels in covering or veiling their faces in the presence of God, as described in the Bible and in the

⁷⁰Blomberg, 159.

⁷¹Davidson, 5, argues for both ontological and functional equality, but he fails to demonstrate the latter. The commands to Adam and Eve to rule over the plant and animal creation and to procreate, which he cites as evidence, do not demonstrate full functional equality, only shared responsibilities in those two areas, neither of which address the headship issue. The fact that the Gen 1-2 account does not raise the headship issue directly enough for scholars to be able to prove it is there does not invalidate the inspired NT writer's theological insight into the matter. The NT provides many insights into the Old Testament (OT) that scholars today want to deny are actually present there. Fortunately, we have the insight of the NT apostles to provide additional understanding of the OT texts.

⁷²Opinions vary on this matter. Some suggest that it may refer to a hierarchy within the angels. Others think it must refer to a sense that the presence of observing angels in the place of worship should provide motive.

writings of Ellen White. If the angels cover their faces in the presence of God, how much more should human beings show the proper respect that God has called for in His written word? Men should honor Christ as their head by not covering their heads. Women should honor their heads (men placed in positions of spiritual authority)⁷³ by covering their heads in a worship setting, in the presence of God, according to Paul's instructions. Whether covering the head is appropriate to today's culture as a sign of submission is not the purpose of this paper to resolve, but there must be some appropriate way of demonstrating submission to the headship principle.⁷⁴ The question for the church to resolve is not whether the headship principle is a valid biblical—and NT—principle but rather how best to practice the principle in the modern era. If we will not practice covering today, how will we demonstrate our practice of the headship principle? It does have serious implications for the role and function of women in the church today.

Paul does not stop there. He continues to give further evidence for the universal nature of the headship principle. “Judge for yourselves,” he insists in v. 13, asking them to come to a conclusion. “Is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered?” Then he provides another answer, drawing from universal practice: “Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering” (vv. 14-15). The Greek word for “nature” here is *physis* (φύσις).

⁷³Samuele Bacchiocchi, “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture,” in *Prove All Things: A Response to Women in Ministry*, ed. Mercedes H. Dyer (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2000), 98, rightly declares, “The writings of Paul do not assert the subordination of all females to all males but the subordination of females under their proper heads. In the home, the proper head is the husband or father. . . . In the church family, the proper head is not all males but the appointed male leadership of the elder or elders, who serve in the role of father to the entire church, both male and female (see 1 Tim 3:2-5).”

⁷⁴Whether this would involve some manner of outward appearance or other concrete symbol of submission to headship, as in 1 Cor 11, or whether it would involve merely a demonstrable attitude and decorum of submission, should be left with the church body to work out. It would probably vary somewhat according to local or regional culture. Certainly, a demand for full access to all male prerogatives of headship office (of elder and gospel minister), as suggested in 1 Tim 2, would be excluded from such an attitude.

It means what is considered a natural or normal state or condition, generally by virtue of creation. It refers to the natural order of things, the way things are meant to be and normally are.⁷⁵ In other words, after Paul has appealed to a biblical and theological argument based on the created order, and after citing the example of how things ought to be done in light of the heavenly angels, he turns to those who might reject the biblical and theological arguments and the heavenly model and insists that they consider the understanding of the world at large regarding the created order. The universal practice that has always existed of women having long hair and men having relatively shorter hair, he says, speaks of the created order, for God gave the woman long hair for a covering⁷⁶ (v. 15), and people have continued their practice from creation forward.⁷⁷ The notion that Paul’s advice might be novel or innovative is nullified by the reality that the concept of covering began in Eden when woman was created with long hair for a covering. Everyone can see the truth in this reality and judge for themselves. The evidence for universal practice is irrefutable.

Yet there still may be some who remain unconvinced. To them Paul declares, “If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such⁷⁸ practice—nor do the churches of God” (v. 16).

This statement is intended to put an end to controversy about the matter. He cites the consistent

⁷⁵Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), s.v. φύσις.

⁷⁶The Greek says *anti peribolaïou* (ἀντὶ περιβολαίου), which means literally “in the place of a wrap,” which might be a cloak, coat, blanket, shawl, or other garment to throw around (*periballō*) oneself for a covering.

⁷⁷Special biblical exceptions for a Nazirite vow were temporary and did not affect the general principle. Paul is not concerned with exceptions here but with the general trend that has been universally acknowledged.

⁷⁸Understanding that “such” (*toioutēn*) apparently refers in the context to the practice of flaunting one’s independence by declining to wear the appropriate covering, a number of versions, including the NASB, NET, and NIV, read “we have no other practice.” Whichever way it reads, the emphasis is on the universal and consistent practice that all Christian churches share in this regard. Grosheide, 261, interprets “such custom” as referring to being contentious on important issues. Paul and his helpers are not contentious. “What he asks of them he asks everywhere (7:17; 14:33).”

and universal practice of the churches in this regard, leaving no doubt in the mind of his readers what they are expected to do. Some will always want to be contentious about this topic, but Paul says that there is no justification whatsoever for controversy on this matter.

Exegesis of 1 Cor 14:33b-38

After Paul's discussion about proper conduct at the Lord's supper in 1 Cor 11, he moves into the topic of spiritual gifts in chap. 12. In chap. 13 he compares spiritual gifts with the higher values of faith, hope, and especially love, in which context all gifts must be practiced. To have spiritual gifts apart from love is worth nothing (13:1-3). In chap. 14 he describes some abusive practices of spiritual gifts in which love is not in view. The context suggests that the gifts were expressed in such a way that rivalry was engendered. Although prophecy is the spiritual gift most to be sought after (14:1), if it is not practiced in a spirit of love and orderliness, or self-discipline, there will be no benefit to the church. Self must be put aside. The primary concern should be that the church will be edified. As Paul said in 8:1, "'Knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up." Paul's instructions here for proper conduct in the house of God pertain to being willing to submit one's personal goals and interests to the higher goal of building up of the body of Christ. The major focus is on maintaining church order for edification: "All things should be done decently and in order" (14:40), "for God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (v. 33a).

Our passage begins following this last premise, picking up in v. 33b-34 with instruction to the women of the church: "As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says." Although the first phrase is found in v. 33b, the context strongly suggests that it belongs with v. 34, not with what precedes it,⁷⁹ and it is generally translated accordingly in a

⁷⁹William Richardson, "An Interpretation of 1 Cor 14:33b-36," available from <https://drive.google.com/>

number of modern versions, including the ESV, MIT, NET, NIV, and RSV. This phrase declares from the outset that there is no variance permitted in this practice, but it is a universal practice. The rationale is also given: the Law says that women should be in submission. One cannot question what the Law says. It is not certain what Law the text is referencing, but it is not just *a* law but *the* Law, presumably the Torah, at least the OT Scriptures.⁸⁰ Most scholars believe this to be an allusion to Gen 3:16, in which the curse on the woman as a result of her leading Adam into sin is that her desire would be for her husband and he would rule over her.⁸¹ If Paul were referring to that text, we would need to understand the pronouncement there to be not only *descriptive* but *prescriptive*. If submission is being prescribed in Gen 3:16, then it is not to be understood in a negative sense, for God would never prescribe a negative behavior. There is, however, perhaps an even better way of understanding Paul's reference to the Law.

According to F. F. Bruce, the assumption that Paul is referring to Gen 3:16 "is unlikely," since both the Hebrew and Greek of Gen 3:16 speak of "the woman's instinctive inclination or passionate desire . . . towards her husband, of which he takes advantage so as to dominate her."⁸² He says that the reference is more likely to the creation narratives of Gen 1 and 2, upon which

#folders/0B2DN0m73JHISamNWQUIHdE5yRHM, accessed 28 May 2013, 5. Kistemaker, 511, notes that although the repetition of "in the churches" seems stylistically inelegant, it has a function: the first occurrence refers to all churches in general, while the second refers to the worship services of the churches.

⁸⁰Some scholars propose that it is either the oral Torah or Roman law, but Paul would not cite either of these as theological precedent for conduct in church. Jesus reproved the Pharisees for "teaching as doctrine the commandments of men" (Matt 15:9; Mark 7:7), referring to their oral law. It seems highly unlikely that Paul would appeal to the same as authoritative. And Roman law was not the basis for Paul's church teachings. Rather, he states in 1 Cor 14:37, "The things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord." In v. 21, he states, "In the Law it is written," and he quotes from Isa 28:11-12. Clearly, he has a biblical and theological context in mind.

⁸¹Davidson, 6, asserts, "Regarding 1 Cor 14:34-35, Paul clearly refers to Gen 3:16 ('as the law also says'), and this relates to the husband-wife relationship; only in Gen 3:16 do we find a divine remedial, provisional arrangement regarding the submission of women/wives to their men/husbands." Kistemaker, 512, on the other hand, thinks Paul is referring to the order and purpose in creation from Gen 2:18-24, which he has already cited in 1 Cor 11:8-9. Bacchiocchi, "Headship, Submission, and Equality," 101, thinks Paul refers to creation order from 1 Cor 11.

⁸²F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1971), 136.

Paul has based the argument of 1 Cor 11:3-9, which appeals to the created order.⁸³ Anthony C. Thiselton finds this interpretation compelling and carries it further. He says, “The patterns of **order** demonstrated in divine actions of creation through differentiation and order and in the Levitical and Deuteronomic codes are integral to the Pentateuch.”⁸⁴ He goes on to cite examples, then adds, “This conviction that God the Holy Spirit creatively transforms chaos into **order** runs throughout the scriptures.” He suggests that Paul is establishing “boundaries” and “markers” for drawing lines between what is “in place” versus “out of place” in the life of God’s holy people.⁸⁵ He would translate ὑποτασσέσθωσαν (*hypotassesthōsan*) in 1 Cor 14:34 as “let them keep to their ordered place,” pointing to the original order in creation before the Fall. Whether it refers to the pre-Fall order or to a prescriptive post-Fall submission, Paul seems to understand it as something ordained by God in the earliest part of Scripture, from the very beginning of time.

Silence, or not speaking out, in the church is the means by which submission is shown in the context of 1 Cor 14. However, it should be pointed out that this is not discriminatory. In two previous verses, others who were out of harmony with the spirit of love and orderliness were also instructed to keep silent. In v. 28, anyone speaking in tongues without an interpreter was told to “keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.” In vv. 29-31, Paul instructed the church members to show respect for one another by taking turns speaking while the others listen, and no more than two or three should monopolize the time. “If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent.” His instruction in v. 34 is fully in line with that context.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000; Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2000), 1153. Emphasis is his.

⁸⁵Ibid., 1154. Emphasis is his.

Paul explains the situation more fully in v. 35: “If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.” It seems that their desire to learn instigates their speaking. This suggests that someone else is also speaking, whether prophesying or interpreting tongues or whatever. Someone else has the floor, but what they are saying is not clearly understood, so with a desire to learn and understand, a woman speaks up and asks questions. This becomes interruptive to the service. Paul says that the woman, with a submissive attitude, rather than speaking out in a way that is disorderly, even though she has the basic right to pray or prophesy (11:5), should keep her query to herself and ask her husband when they get home. It seems clear, then, that they are not at home. They are in a house church, probably, but it is not home. It is a public meeting, so different rules apply from those that would apply at home. These are not one-on-one conversations between a husband and his wife, so one needs to respect the public order of the worship service. It does not appear that the issue here is teaching authority, as in 1 Tim 2:11-12, but more likely it is simply disruptive behavior that brings dishonor to the Lord and confusion to the worship service. That is certainly the context in which this passage is set. The silence here is a willingness to set aside one’s own interests in the worship setting in favor of the edification of the whole church.⁸⁶ The same submissive attitude should characterize all members of the church in their appropriate roles, but the role of the woman is especially appealed to here in harmony with the spirit of the Law, which expects women to manifest a submissive spirit, especially in the presence of men in the context of worship, where, according to chap. 11, men have a spiritual headship. This passage must be read in the light of 1 Cor 11.

It is helpful here also to remember that Paul’s understanding of the church is that it is the

⁸⁶It “cannot be a total ban on speaking” (Kistemaker, 512), but is a respectful refrain from disorderliness.

household of faith (Gal 6:10) or the household of God (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; cf. 1 Pet 4:17), in which the believers are family members and need to treat one another with appropriate love and respect (1 Tim 5:1-2,4,8).⁸⁷ In 1 Tim 3:4-5 Paul expects the elder to act as the head of the spiritual family and demonstrate the same care and management for the household of God that he does for his own family at home. Paul expresses his purpose for writing to them, saying, “I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tim 3:14-15). The church, he teaches in Eph 5:22-33, is a parallel institution to the family and both should demonstrate the same principles of love and respect, with appropriate submission to the respective head. How that submission is demonstrated in the church setting is indicated, at least in part, in the two passages in 1 Cor 11 and 14.

As in 1 Cor 11, Paul anticipates that there will be some who will want to challenge his counsel in this matter. There may even be some who, claiming to have the gift of prophecy, will dispute with Paul about the matter. However, Paul will not back away from his stand. He asks any potential challengers, “Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized” (vv. 36-38). Paul has already observed that “the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets” (v. 32), and Paul claims to have the gift of prophecy. Anyone who claims to have the gift of prophecy must find his or her message to be in harmony with prior revelation. One cannot come up with something that conflicts with the message of previous prophets, for the

⁸⁷See Peter T. O'Brien, “Church,” in *DPL*, 128; Robert J. Banks, “Church Order and Government,” in *DPL*, 132-33.

same Spirit inspires them all. Anyone who has a true prophetic gift, Paul avers, must acknowledge that he himself received his messages, including these very things, as “a command of the Lord.”⁸⁸ If they are a command of the Lord, they must be believed and practiced. If the claimant to a prophetic gift is not willing to acknowledge Paul’s prophetic gift in this matter, Paul will not recognize him or her, and neither should the church. No other teaching can be true, for this is a command of the Lord by revelation to Paul.

Implications of the Exegesis

The reading of the text is not too difficult. Although there are some difficult verses, the text is quite clear and straightforward in most places. It seems rather odd that, after two nearly thousand years of understanding the general tenor of the text, suddenly, for many, it has become obscure in its meaning. Not that the text is too obscure, but its implications are no longer deemed acceptable for the modern church. It is no longer politically correct, so great efforts have been put forth by some to find some obscure way of interpreting it to mean something other than what it means when read at face value, taking it just as it reads, as Ellen White says should be done.⁸⁹ Some reinterpret the NT text based on their interpretation of certain OT passages, rather than vice versa. Others find some apparent conflict between what Paul writes in these passages and what he seems to say in Gal 3:28, and they prefer their interpretation of the one verse over the repeated statements found in a cross-section of passages from both Paul and Peter, which appeal to the OT as biblical and theological precedent and clearly declare the universal value of what is taught. Still others look for a new hermeneutic that will somehow invalidate the clear

⁸⁸In light of Paul’s earlier statements in 7:6,12,25,40 distinguishing his own “trustworthy” judgment, guided by the Spirit of God (v. 40), from the direct command of the Lord in 7:10, he wants his readers to know that this counsel is not his own opinion but is a direct command from the Lord.

⁸⁹White, *Manuscript Releases*, 21:346.

teaching of these NT texts in favor of something more palatable to modern sensibilities. And a variety of theological approaches see the text as a culturally-conditioned document that cannot speak to the modern reader without its being reinterpreted by weeding out the faulty human concepts that make it unworthy of its claim to being divine revelation.⁹⁰

But God's word has not changed. It is timeless. Its principles are universal, and we must understand the truths that His word proclaims unashamedly and without equivocation. Although submission is not a popular concept today, it is at the heart of the gospel. Lucifer would not submit to God and His will. He hardened his heart and set out to overthrow the government of God. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," says Prov 16:18. Pride and self-sufficiency got the best of him, and he fell. Paul says in 1 Cor 10:12, "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." God calls us to submit ourselves to His will and purpose for His people, not according to the elementary principles of the world, but according to the principles of Christ, "who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil 2:6-8 NKJV).

Following the hermeneutic presented in the MBSD, we see that the passage in 1 Cor 11:2-16 is set in the literary context of practical counsels to the church of Corinth, with theological roots, regarding various aspects of interpersonal relationships that affect their relationship

⁹⁰This summary of alternative methodologies is not meant to suggest that no one using the MBSD methods can read the relevant texts in a way different from that suggested in this paper, for many have. However, the most prevalent ways of reading the texts differently do follow alternative methodologies, and some of those who would claim to follow the MBSD principles have been unwittingly lured into succumbing to some of these methodologies. Others have merely been somewhat careless in the logical arguments used or in their analysis of the texts, while still others, with the very best of intentions, have allowed their own presuppositions to be read into the texts. I believe that a consistent use of the MBSD principles will not only help to ensure a harmony between all of the various passages but also will obviate a search for a new hermeneutic that will lead to different conclusions than in the past.

with God. These are ultimately spiritual issues, and they affect the whole church. Selfishness, or self-centeredness, is at the heart of the spiritual problem, and Paul counsels the believers to learn to be submissive and put the well-being of others ahead of that of oneself. In so doing, however, Paul points out, not all relationships are reciprocal and not all are egalitarian. The relationship between Christ and man is not egalitarian, for example, and while there may be an ontological equality between God and Christ and between man and woman, there are differing functional statuses, with God being the head of Christ and man being the head of woman. Headship is a metaphor for designated authority. The proper response to designated authority is submission, honor, and respect for that authority. All authority that derives from God must be respected. Those who do not honor the authority God has established do not honor God.

There was a symbolic way of recognizing the headship authority in the NT, and that was by covering the head, in the case of the woman, and not covering, in the case of the man. The literal head stood for the metaphorical head, and Christ was not to be covered, but the man was. If a man covered his head, he dishonored his Head. If a woman did not cover her head, she dishonored her head. It was just as if she had her hair cut or shaved and pretended to be a man, who was not to cover his head. A woman's hair is her glory and is given to her by God for a covering. It is supposed to be long, by virtue of God's plan and purpose in creation, whereas a man's hair is supposed to be relatively short, since he does not require the covering. In fact, the text says that "if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him" (1 Cor 11:14). This was generally true across cultures, as Paul notes, until relatively recent years, when some men have begun to wear their hair long like women and many women cut their hair short like men, defying the old norms and standards. Over time, we become desensitized to these changes and begin to see them as new norms, but for the Christian the biblical norms should continue to provide the standard,

including the headship principle. The church needs to seriously wrestle with the application in modern culture, but it should not need to wrestle with the underlying principle. As Paul said, there is unity among the churches of God regarding the need to implement the principle (v. 16).

Paul returns to the headship principle in 1 Cor 14:33-38 when addressing conduct in the worship services of the church. He appeals to the Law, probably Gen 3:16, as teaching that the woman should have an attitude of submission rather than speaking out in the worship service. In other words, she is not free to do as she pleases, but according to the principle of doing all things decently and in order (1 Cor 14:40), she should keep silent and ask questions of her own husband at home. Some have suggested that this reference to her husband at home means that this is not instruction for the church but rather instruction for the home. That is clearly not the case. The home is the *alternative* to the church in this situation, but it is conduct in the church that is in view, and the ones she would be speaking to would not be her own husband. Again, he is the *alternative*, in this situation, to which she is being directed. Her speaking in the church would be to other individuals, yet she is instructed to keep silent under the existing conditions. At the same time, she is encouraged to speak to her own husband at home. The headship of the husband at home and the submission expected of the wife by the Law is precedent for her submission also in the church, for which the home is a parallel structure (Eph 5:31-32).

Again, Paul points out that what he is saying is a command from the Lord, and if anyone does not recognize his prophetic authority in this regard, such a person will not be recognized by the church, which has a very consistent practice (1 Cor 14:33,37-38).

If a spiritual headship authority has been entrusted to the man, at least to particular individuals designated as spiritual fathers or leaders, whether in the home or in the church, how would that play out in relation to the issue at hand, the role of women in the church? Women can

be engaged in praying, prophesying, studying, witnessing, ministering, and the normal activities of the church, as plenty of examples in the NT show, but they should not be attempting to usurp the headship authority delegated by God to men, as taught in 1 Tim 2:12, but should be willing to learn with a submissive spirit. The headship authority in the church would seem to be vested especially in apostles and elders (or overseers/pastors) in the NT church, although that is a separate study.⁹¹ These particular offices or authorities would seem to be outside of the scope of activities appropriate to women in the NT church. Although some exceptions have been proposed,⁹² there is no clear, undisputed example of a woman serving in one of these two capacities in the NT. The headship restriction would not include activities which are explicitly permitted to women in the NT, including praying and prophesying (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor 11:5), training younger women (Titus 2:4), witnessing (Luke 24:9-10), giving Bible studies (Acts 18:26), ministering to the needs of individuals (Matt 27:55; Mark 15:41; Acts 9:36), working hard for the Lord (Rom 16:3,6,12), functioning as a financial patron (Rom 16:1-2), even hosting a church in her home (1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15). None of these activities involves headship authority. Apart from any clear evidence that God has entrusted such headship authority to women, it would not seem appropriate to argue for giving the same to women, even at this late stage in church history. It would be outside of biblical precedent and in apparent conflict with the male headship model that appears to be clearly taught in the NT.

⁹¹But see, e.g., Acts 14:23; 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4; 20:17,28; 21:18; 1 Cor 7:17; 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10; 1 Tim 3:4-5; 5:17; Titus 1:5; 2:9; Jas 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1-3,5; 3 John 9; Rev 4:4.

⁹²The most notable of these is Junia/Junias (*Iunian*) from Rom 16:7, of whom, with Andronicus, the text says that they were Paul's fellow prisoners and that "they are well known to the apostles." The reading is highly disputed in more than one way, and certainly nothing can be proven from this single debated text. A number of other texts have been cited for women who were active in the work of the church, but none call a woman an apostle or elder. The burden of proof is not on those who find silence in this area but on those who need to build a case for women holding these offices or functions.

Conclusion

Following the biblical hermeneutic clearly outlined in the MBSD, this paper has shown that there is a clear principle of headship taught in 1 Cor 11:3 that was established by God based on the pattern set within the Trinity by the headship of the Father in relationship to Christ, which is an eternal headship grounded in differences in function rather than in essence. Christ has a headship in relation to man (11:3) and to the church (12:27; Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18), in which man represents the spiritual authority and Christlike demeanor of the church (1 Tim 2:12). Man has a headship in relation to woman, not just a headship in relation to his own wife but a spiritual headship in the church that women do not share. Submission to each of those headship roles is called for, and Christ becomes the model for both men and women in that submissive spirit. Refusal to submit dishonors the head, not just the man but also Christ and God the Father, from whom derives all properly constituted and delegated authority (Rom 13:1).

There are practices taught in 1 Cor 11 that symbolically indicate honor or dishonor to the head. These are an application of the principle, and the church needs to decide how it should make application of the principle in the life of the church today. At minimum, one should expect the church to carry on Paul's appeal to believing women to adopt a spirit of humble submission to the headship principle which will be manifest in appropriate dress and decorum as suggested in 1 Tim 2, and an appeal to believing men to exemplify the self-sacrificing love of Christ for His body, the church, including the women of the church, especially their wives, as in Eph 5. Thus men can present themselves in the presence of God, lifting up holy hands before Him (1 Tim 2:8), and women can present themselves in God's presence with the modesty and self-control that is appropriate for women who profess godliness, with good works (vv. 9-10).

Spiritual headship and teaching authority seems to be vested in the roles of apostle and

elder in the NT. These roles would not seem to be appropriate for women to seek under the principle of submission to male headship. The issue is not egalitarianism. The issue is observing the proper roles that God has established differently for men and for women. A larger biblical study would show that these roles are differentiated by the plan and purpose of God, and God has indicated that confusing these roles and crossing the boundaries between them is not acceptable to Him, even to the clothing worn (Deut 22:5) and the appropriateness of the length of the hair (1 Cor 11:14-15), as well as the nonreciprocal headship of the man over the woman.

A church that claims to stand on the Bible and the Bible only cannot afford to decide its beliefs and practices based on factors that are not clearly taught in Scripture. Many beliefs and practices have been introduced into the Christian churches based on other factors, such as reason, tradition, philosophy, social conventions, the teachings of science, political pressures, syncretism with other religions, and so forth. Political correctness and issues of what is considered to be a demand for social justice are major factors driving many churches today. What will be the basis for the decisions of the SDA Church in the twenty-first century? Ellen White writes,

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.

Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will. . . .

God has given us His word that we may become acquainted with its teachings and know for ourselves what He requires of us. When the lawyer came to Jesus with the inquiry, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” the Saviour referred him to the Scriptures, saying: “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” Ignorance will not excuse young or old, nor release them from the punishment due for the transgression of God's law; because there is in their hands a faithful presentation of that law and of its principles

and claims. It is not enough to have good intentions; it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right or what the minister tells him is right. His soul's salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself. However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and he ought not to guess at anything.

It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God.⁹³

Until now the SDA Church has faithfully adhered to this standard. May God help us to continue to be faithful to this standard of truth, no matter what the rest of the world may do.

⁹³White, *Great Controversy* (1911), 595-598.