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### **PURSUING JUSTICE: WOMEN IN MINISTRY**

The term Leadership can be defined as a process of social and spiritual influence, being able to inspire and maximize the efforts of others within an organization towards the achievement of a goal anchors on vision and mission statement. Is leadership in the Church solely dedicated to the male gender? Women in leadership in the Church is one of the most controversial topics in Christianity. With the emergence of human and civil rights, more attention is drawn to women's position and function in the Body of Christ. The leadership in the Church has attributed so much privilege to the male in the past than the female. This work focuses on the beliefs concerning women in ministry. To what degree, if any, should women operate in the Church? What does the Bible say about it? In the Old Testament, and what does it command in the New Testament? Certain scriptures forbid women to teach or exercise authority over men. Was this ban temporary or permanent? Was it all-inclusive, or was it case-specific? This paper focuses on women in ministry from the egalitarian and complementarian perspectives.

Egalitarian contributors such as Linda L. Belleville and Craig S. Keener will advocate that woman should not be denied the privilege to leadership in ministry. This view contradicts Complementarians like Thomas R. Schreiner and Craig L. Blomberg, who believe such gifts or offices should be for men only. The debate is fueled further by New Testament scriptures, to which only two or perhaps three passages, according to Belleville, are addressed explicitly: "

1 Corinthians 14:34-35, where women are commanded to be silent in the church; 1 Timothy 2:11-15, where women (according to the TNIV) are not permitted to teach or to have authority over a man; and 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, where the male and female relationship is defined in terms of kephale (commonly translated "head)."

Women in the Church have progressively exhibited leadership abilities and occupy roles and positions traditionally attributed to and held by men. The focus of leadership in the Church has gone beyond focusing primarily on gender perceptions. There is a growing interest in leadership grooming and allocation based on performance, not gender. When the word church is heard most of the time, the first image that comes to our perception is the "building." However, the Church is not restricted to the physical structures that accommodate meetings. (Keener, p.103) Belleville pinpoints the roles of women in the primitive Church. There is a persistent demand for leadership growth of the Church and to meet the felt needs of reached and unreached people and various leadership positions.

(Keener, p.289-297) states that women have an important place in the Church's leadership, and therefore, equal opportunity should be given to both genders. The weakness of the female gender originated from the garden of Eden when the devil disguised himself and interacted with her, and the forbidden fruit was consumed, and she introduced the forbidden fruit to her husband. Paul's letters stand at the center of the dispute over women's role in church ministry, with each side of the dispute championing texts from the Apostle.

How do we understand the text in 1 Corinthians 14 where Paul instructs women to be silent, or the 1 Timothy 2 passage where women are forbidden to teach or exercise authority over men? Are these texts addressing a specific cultural situation, or should they be treated as universal prohibitions? Craig Keener delved deeply into the world of Paul and wrestled with

these complex texts in his book *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul*. Keener looked at the arguments for both sides of the question: 'are women allowed to be in ministry?' and the approaches various theologians and church traditions have taken throughout the centuries. He gave insights into the culture when Paul wrote his letters and of the way, false teachers were targeting women. He notes the importance of considering the actual situation of Paul's letters. Paul did not prohibit women from teaching the Bible. (Keener p.233)

From inception the egocentric of the man tailored several positions in the leadership of the Church to accommodate only male gender such as pastors (priests), bishops, and the pope, with bishops being classified as bishops, archbishops, or cardinals, depending on their appointments and level of responsibility. With a retrospective view, the primitive functioned utterly different from the modern and post-mortem. The focus was targeted on spiritual edification than leadership position, and leadership position appointment was carried out with much emphasis on spirituality and not gender. The early Church also had apostles, laying the foundation of the Church. Part of their task was to appoint elders in each new Church as it was founded. For example, on the first missionary journey, "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church (in Asia Minor) and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust". Sometimes, these appointments were made via an apostle's representative; for example, Paul charged Titus to appoint elders in the churches in Crete. Each Church had its elders, and, after the time of the apostles, that is as far up as the hierarchy going. The local Church was meant to be autonomous, with the right of self-government and freedom from the hierarchy.

Women were fully involved in the Old Testament and New Testament leadership. Women were prophetesses – Deborah was a prophetess and judge. Women were among Jesus' disciples, Women proclaimed Jesus' identity in John 4:1–42, 11:27. Women remained as faithful witnesses of the crucifixion and resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

In the book Act of Apostles, the presence of women ascending and having leadership positions cannot be overlooked Lydia was the first convert and house church leader in Philippi, Priscilla taught Apollos, the four daughters of Philip were prophetesses – and they were also co-workers of Paul, Euodia, and Syntyche, Priscilla (co-worker and house church leader)<sup>2</sup>, Junia was outstanding among the apostles<sup>3</sup>, Phoebe was a deacon of the Church at Cenchreae– Chloe and Nympha were house church leaders ( Belleville, p36; Keener, p 200-210; Schreinter, p. 272 )

However, most of the time, women are considered weak vessels. Therefore, the male gender occupies some key leadership positions. Considering the biblical, historical, and practical concerns surrounding women generally and the women in the Church and the priesthood, Schreinter highlights the position of women in church leadership, women in the faith community, and women in the ordained ministry. Disregarding the attribute of women in the leadership of the Church is doubting the tremendous investment God has deposited in women. There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ.:

Complementarian and Egalitarian's conversations has been quite enlightening. However, Craig Keener, as an egalitarian discuss, why Women ought to preach to, teach and hold offices of leadership in the Church. Keener makes a case for women in ministry by looking at the historical context of the letters that seemingly condemn women.

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1 Matthew 27:55–56, 28:1–10; Mark 15:40–41; John 20:10–18 NIV

2 Romans 16:3–5; 1 Corinthians 16:19 NIV

3 Romans 16:7 NIV

Complementarian and egalitarianism hold different views on the leadership of women in ministry. Belleville attacks the prohibition of women and leadership in today's churches; mainline denominations have embraced gender equality, evangelical churches, by and large, have not.

Belleville argues that the issue is simply a matter of institutions failing to recognize the context in which scriptures banned women from leadership. Egalitarians do well to point out the women who served in leadership roles throughout both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

What do we do with the two texts that many take to prohibit women from ministry, and they prohibit far more? First Corinthians 14:34 -35 women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, so yeah, and the same is true in 1Timothy2:11-12. A woman should learn in quietness complete submission. However, in any case, he says she must be silent. In our Church, do we allow women to participate in congregational singing? Let us figure out the situation Paul is addressing and take that into account. He can only be referring to a particular kind of silence, 1Corinthians chapter 14, One approach is to say that Paul could not have written both kinds of texts. 1Corinthians 14:34 -35 was an interpolation. In other views, some say that Paul is prohibiting them from praying publicly in tongues or prophesying, but earlier in the letter, he allows women to pray and prophecy, so it is probably not wrong.

In addition, Hollinger highlights that:

*Paul in the 1 Corinthians text seems to limit women's gifts and roles within the church, he also recognizes their involvement in public ministry with his commendation of women prophesying (i.e., preaching) and praying with their heads covered. Moreover, the New Testament recognizes other women in ministry*

*such as Priscilla, part of the husband-wife church-planting team (note, she is mentioned first), and Julia, “prominent among the apostles” (Rom. 16:7). Therefore, the two texts that would seem to limit women’s roles in ministry were particular in their address and not universal.*<sup>4</sup>

Another possibility or another factor is that Paul is dealing with culture. Women normally did not speak in public before other women's husbands. That was the tradition. Paul says it is shameful for a woman to speak in public and uses language that includes culturally shameful things.

1Timothy 2:11 -12 is the only text in the Bible that prohibits women explicitly from teaching the Bible. However, let us take the most general possibility that the text here prohibits women, even from teaching the Bible. If Paul is doing that in the most general way, this is the only passage in the Bible that prohibits them from teaching the Bible. Is it a coincidence? Nevertheless, this is also in the one set of letters where we specifically know that false teachers were targeting women. 2 Timothy 3: 6 Paul speaks of false teachers.

People often respond with this statement “***Adam was formed first and then Eve***”., Adam did not see if that was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. Let us see what happens to her first. We can take this as either a local application or a universal principle. If it is a universal principle, then Eve stands for all women. Eve was deceived. Therefore, women are deceived, and therefore women should not teach. Paul does not always use Eve as a symbol for women.

The emphasis of the male gender in Church leadership mainly comes from the view of women as weaker vessels. (Bloomberg, p.132) How could the Church reach the climax without involving the women in the Church's leadership? Complementarian's views refute the

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<sup>4</sup> Hollinger, Dennis P.. Choosing the Good (p. 161). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

involvement of women in leadership. In attempting to address this controversial question about the position of women in the leadership of the Church, it is crucial to know the mind of the creator. Manufacturers spend much time protecting their brand by always guiding every consumer with a manual listing the dos and don'ts and the warranty. Likewise, God is our maker, and He made us with a definite purpose. The book of Genesis highlights the purpose of humanity.<sup>5</sup>

Belleville stressed that leadership in the Church should not be based only on the male gender. God made men and women. In Christian theology, the term Body of Christ has two separate meanings. First, the term refers to Jesus's words over the bread at the Last Supper: "This is my body" in Luke 22:19-19. Second, it was used by the Apostle Paul in 1Corinthians 12:12-14 and Ephesians 4:1-16 to refer to the Christian Church. The first-century culture denounced women.

However, women announced Jesus's resurrection. Stories abound in the Gospels of Jesus' willingness to deviate from cultural conventions and that He valued women. Jesus elevated women. When one reads the Gospel stories of Jesus and women considering the first-century patriarchal context, Jesus' acts toward women are seen as culturally subversive responses of personal redemption and social change. Jesus opposed gender constructions of the first-century world. We remember the actions of Jesus toward women and watched the work of church leaders. Lydia and Phoebe intentionally distanced themselves from the role of women in the Pastoral Epistles.

The Church needs leaders who know how to enhance the self-worth of others. Any leader occupying the Church should be genuinely interested in people. The Church needs leaders who can energize people. The Church exists for the people, not just to provide a career ladder for

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<sup>5</sup> Gen 1: 27-28 NIV

professional ministers. The future Church will not be a launchpad for building a clergy career but will be a place where a community of faith comes alive. When given opportunities to lead, women leaders can be very successful. Women leaders bring added value to the Church by introducing new leadership styles that provide stability for the local Church in unstable times.

According to Eric Law, an Episcopal priest and international consultant on multicultural leadership. Justice means equal distribution of power and privilege among all people. Law explains that to do justice, it is essential for us to recognize that there is a difference between the ways that people from the dominant culture and others perceive power. Justice is an issue in all societies, and it is a central theme in Christian ethics. In defining justice, he categorized in three main group.1- Meritorious Justice, 2- Egalitarian Justice and 3- Need Justice.

Brenda Salter McNeil in the Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0: Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice, emphasizes on the important to recognize that the implementation of these things will take several years. It does not happen overnight.<sup>6</sup>

However, from a Christian vantage point, spiritual and moral values guide our intended outcomes, and they are not easily measured by those same metrics. Pursuing justice is truly a journey, not a destination. It is a process that leads to personal, spiritual, social, and systemic transformation. We need to understand the dynamics of the journey and to focus on a few key skills that will help us stay the course and resist derailment.

According to Brenda Salter another skill that is essential in pursuing justice is the ability to engage in inductive learning. This is the process of uncovering meaning through observation, interpretation, and application as we interact with new information and circumstances. As we

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6 Brenda Salter McNeil *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0: Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* Hardcover – 2020

observe, ask questions, and struggle with others in community to understand what things really mean, we begin to discover truth for ourselves.

Our collective calling is to make the Kingdom of God visible on earth. Every time we bridge racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic divides, we become prophetic witnesses to the reality of the Kingdom of God. In small and big ways, we give people glimpses of what the future vision looks like. This is our mission. And we must never lose hope knowing that God has the power to bring the Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Hollinger points out that doing justice does not render one righteous in New Testament terms. Overall, justice is rooted in God's justice made possible through the righteousness of Christ. Ponder points out the significance of James Chapter 2, where faith without works is dead, and as it pertains to the necessity of personal righteousness and what might be called social justice. We may add that it is possible for unrighteous people to take just actions because of common grace, although they may remain unjustified and of course history is full of many non-believers who have stood for justice sometimes even when Christians have failed to do so. With a purely Christian approach, we have to work in the world. We have to recognize that that in terms of struggling for justice, dealing with injustice may require this self-assertion or resistance and even coercion. Sometimes we can't use gospel methods when we're dealing. With fallen man, unrepentant man, and ungodliness and so we also want to realize that we may never attain a perfect justice, because that is beyond this world, but we should expect to find a suitable relative justice.

However, Justice calls for policies and procedures that ensure races and ethnic groups equal access to jobs, education, and power in society. Justice is sensitive to past wrongs and seeks to overcome them, addressing issues of institutional racism. (Hollinger p. 224).

The globalization of management brings to the forefront the need to examine the relationship between sex roles, and constant evaluation of both genders will draw a balance in leadership between men and women in the leadership of the Church. Women's leadership in the Church is not a modern, political phenomenon attributed to the twentieth-century feminist movement. Women were there in the first hours of the birth of the early Church. These early hours of both the Jesus movement and then later the Pauline mission witnessed the presence of women leaders. In most cultures, women are considered second-class citizens anyway and could not possess the necessary leadership skills, thus saying the common tradition. Women, therefore, cannot be leaders.

Are women inferior leaders? In other words, when women are given leadership roles, they rise to the occasion. Women can be public leaders and outstanding ones. Women have leadership traits that the contemporary marketplace demands. Today, there are evidences of women effectively leading churches across the globe. Denominations worldwide have consecrated women bishops, overseers, pastors, and deaconesses. Christian universities have employed women to teach Christian doctrine. There is pressure to conform to the egalitarian or complementarian views. We do not have to be extreme when it comes to women in ministry. Women should be able to hold leadership positions in the Church. God's calling into ministry is not connected to gender. Throughout the Old and New Testament, God empowered men and women to fulfill divine assignments. The Great Commission Mandate does not appoint or refers to any specific gender.

In conclusion, Christians and all peoples will continue to debate what justice should look like in society and how it should be affected. What Christians cannot evade is the biblical mandate to “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24).

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