

21.10 REPORT STUDY DEPUTIES WOMEN ACTING AS DEACONESSES / ORGANISED FORMS OF DEACONAL WORK OF SERVICE (Art 258)

A. **Decision:** The Report of the Study Deputies that result from decisions of Synod 2006 is no longer on the table of this Synod as a result of the revoking of the decision (see Report at 21.13 in Acta 2009).

B. REPORT

1. Formal aspects

1.1 *Commission*

“3. “Study Deputies are appointed to advise the next Synod according to Scriptural grounds on the question of whether women may act in the office of deacon and/or other organised forms of diaconal work of service or not. All relevant material must be taken into account, including that on the table of Synod 2006 as well as the text of the Report of Synod 1988. This Report must indicate clear grounds if it wishes to change any Synodal decision by means of its recommendations, so that a fixed and binding decision can be made by Synod on this matter” (Acta 2006, art 20.1:N. 415)

Summarised the commission includes the following:

1.1.1 Synod 2009 must be **advised** by strength of Scriptural grounds

- (i) on whether women may act as deacons or not
- (ii) and/or whether women may perform other organised forms of duty in diaconal service or not.

1.1.2 Above mentioned must occur while taking **into account**

- (i) all relevant material,
- (ii) including documentation on the table of Synod 2006 and
- (iii) the text of Report Synod 1988 (Acta 1988:507 – Part 2: Women in the particular offices).

1.1.3 The advice (1.1.1) must **occur in such a way**

- (i) that clear grounds are indicated for any Synodal decision(s) to be changed by the recommendations to Synod 2009 so that a fixed and binding decision can be made.

1.2 *Method and Process*

The following relevant material was made available to be studied :

1.2.1 Report / decision / unpublished Appendix Synod 1988 with regard to women in the particular offices.

1.2.2 Synod 2000

1.2.2.1 Report 1 – Deputy: Women in the Office (art 73, 185, 186) – p3.

1.2.2.2 Committee’s Report – p18.

1.2.2.3 Report 2 – Deputy: Women in the Office – p30.

1.2.2.4 Committee’s Report – p36.

1.2.2.5 Point of Description Particular Synod Western-Transvaal on women in the church (Art 74, 206, 230) – p37.

1.2.2.6 Committee’s Report – p38.

1.2.3 Synod 2003

1.2.3.1 Petition of Protest WC Vergeer and JJ Janse van Rensburg against decisions Synod 1988 – women in the particular offices (Art 8, 43.4, 234) – p45

1.2.3.2 Committee’s Report p51.

1.2.3.3 Report Deputies Doctrinal Matters: Women in the church (Art 43.1, 235) – p58.

1.2.3.4 Committee’s Report – p97.

1.2.3.5 Minority Report with regard to parts of the Report concerning women’s position in the church (Art 43.3, 235) – p101.

- 1.2.3.6 Report Deputies Doctrinal Matters alternative Report in part – women in the church (Art 43.2, 235) – p102.
- 1.2.4 Synod 2006
 - 1.2.4.1 Petition of Protest Reformed Church Wonderboompoort concerning decision Synod 2003 on women in the church (Art 11, 46) – p116.
 - 1.2.4.2 Petition of Protest Reformed Church George concerning decision Synod 2003 on eligibility of women as deacons (Art 11, 44) –p120.
 - 1.2.4.3 Petition of Protest from AH Stavast, AH Klopper and RL Vorster concerning decision Synod 2003 on women in the office (Art 11, 57) – p124.
 - 1.2.4.4 Petition of Protest Classis Soutpansberg concerning decision Synod 2003 with regard to allowing women in the office of deacon (Art 11, 56) – p131.
 - 1.2.4.5 Petition of Protest Particular Synod Bosveld against decisions National Synod 2003 – women in the office (Art 11, 55) – p138.
 - 1.2.4.6 Petition of Protest Reformed Church Aranos concerning decision Synod 2003 with regard to women in the particular offices (Art 11, 45) – p149.
 - 1.2.4.7 Petition of Protest Reformed Church Aranos concerning decision Synod 2003 with regard to women in the particular office of deacon – content (Art 11, 45) – p150.
 - 1.2.4.8 Petition of Protest Classis Pretoria Moot concerning eligibility of women to the office of deacon (Art 11, 58) – p161.
 - 1.2.4.9 Petition of Protest GJC Jordaan and MJ du Plessis against decisions Synod 2003 concerning women in the office of deacon (Actions 2003:593, Art 21.11) (Art 11, 60) – p174.
 - 1.2.4.10 Petition of Protest Particular Synod Bosveld against decisions National Synod 2003 concerning women in the office of deacon (Art 11, 61) – p178.
 - 1.2.4.11 Relevant parts in 2006 Minority and Majority Report concerning women in the particular offices.
 - 1.2.4.12 C-reports, not discussed, from a variety of committees resulting from documentation (petitions of protest/ points of description) against decision 2003 concerning women and the office of deacon, as contained in the Agenda of 2006 for possible decision making.
- 1.2.5 Comment from Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (Vrijgemaakt) to the GKSA as a result of the decision of GKSA in 2003 concerning the office of deacon.
- 1.2.6 Study Document Christelike Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
- 1.3 *Three “points for discussion” have been studied in view of relevant material*
 - 1.3.1 Women may act in the service of deacon.
 - 1.3.2 Women may act in separate deaconal service.
 - 1.3.3 Women may not act in the service of deacon.
- 1.4 *The following extensive applicable thematic studies have been conducted:*
 - 1.4.1 Well-founded Hermeneutic model.
 - 1.4.2 Particular services: a Scripture-bound and Church-Orderly perspective.
 - 1.4.3 Applicable revelation-historical lines contained in the Scripture.
- 1.5 *Format of report*
 - 1.5.1 Relevant points of departure (points 2 and 3) are provided at the beginning of the Report.
 - 1.5.2 The integrated results of the study by the Deputies (specifically about relevant parts from Scripture) are presented, as applicable, in their similarities and differences according to interpretation.
 - 1.5.3 The Report concludes with recommendations for decision making by the Synod.

2. Relevant point of departure: church polity aspects related to the particular services¹

2.1. *The words “service” and “office”*

In an effort to define the words “service” and “office” it would be necessary to consider the basis of the concepts in the New Testament, with reference to the word *diakonia*. In the New Testament the word *diakonia* refers in particular to work and tasks that are being performed according to orders issued by someone else. This Greek word features in different fields of meaning in the New Testament (Louw & Nida, 1988b:59), *i.e.* service to, serving with or towards, attending to, provision of, table duties and contributions. However, it is clear that the meaning of the word “office” (“amp” in Afr) correlates well with the concept of “serving with/serving towards” (“bediening” in Afr – related to the ‘role’ / ‘position of service’). **[NB. In translation the following few lines, indicated - - [...] - -, will not reflect the original Afrikaans text word by word because the comparison drawn between the two Afrikaans words “amp”(office) and “bediening” (serving with/towards) cannot be expressed in the same way in English; not verbally so, but in basic meaning, yes] - -** [The concept “serving with or towards/attending to” (“bediening”) would imply specified activities related to a specific position from which to do so, and also that the one who renders the serving must have that with which to serve (serving with) and must have a certain goal or end result in mind (serving towards), also from a certain position in progress towards the goal or end result. In both cases (serving with as well as serving towards) the one that renders the service must be equipped/positioned to do so.] - - In this sense the concept “office” (“amp”) can in meaning be brought into relation with the concept “serving with or serving towards, attending to” (“bediening”) but it does not follow that the two concepts can be regarded as synonyms or should be used interchangeably, especially in Afrikaans where the word “amp” (office) may easily be linked to a position of status. If regarded in their field of meaning in the context of the New Testament both concepts (“service”/“office”) denote a modest, humble and dedicated manner of providing service, of being of service, especially as related to the church and to Jesus Christ as the only Head of church. All Christian work, however, can be described by using the word “service” and for this reason the word “office” is further qualified as “particular service” to distinguish it from the service rendered by all believers in general. Note that the word “service” may as well refer to a specific service/duty/task as assigned to a deacon, an elder or a minister. In this report the concept “particular service” is preferred to the concept “office”.

2.2 *The origin of particular services*

The origin of the particular services is to be found in God himself, and not in human beings. God the Father sent his Son into this world. When baptised, Jesus Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the actual Office-Bearer in the church. He holds a threefold service as highest Prophet and Minister, only High Priest and eternal King.² Christ, however, also makes use of people’s services in fulfilling his work of service. He no longer makes use of the particular services of the Old Testament, for in and through Him they are altogether complete. He gives new particular services that simultaneously have continuing and discontinuing lines with regard to Old Testament services of prophets, priests and kings. In the first place He appoints apostles, directly to begin with³ and later on the substitute-apostle (Mathias) indirectly through the other apostles, the congregation and the lot.⁴ At a later stage He calls Paul as apostle.⁵ Within the congregations, that Christ gave origin to by means of the apostles’ work of service, the Holy Spirit provides a variety of gifts to be used by the believers in fulfilling

¹ In this section reference is made to the book commissioned by the GTV namely “Gender-related issues in church, *i.e.* male and female in the particular services. Auhors: Breed; Douw G; Van Rensburg Fika J; Jordaan Gert JC (2008) Potchefstroom Teologiese Publikasies. (esp pp11-30).

² Matt 22:8, 10; Rom 15:8; 1 Cor 16:25; Heb 3:1 & 8:5 & 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25 & 5:4; HC Lord’s Day 12.

³ Mark 3:14; Luke 6:12-16.

⁴ Acts 1:16-25.

⁵ Gal 1:15-16.

God's will. These gifts include different skills and competencies provided by the Holy Spirit and by means of which the Holy Spirit equips them to render specific services to build up and expand the church.⁶

By means of these gifts, services were and are rendered in different ways:

- (i) Usually believers would use such gifts or talents spontaneously (own initiative) and incidentally as opportunities would arise. This way of performing services for the church by any of the members of congregations was called "the office of the believer".⁷
- (ii) Sometimes the gifts were also utilised in more organised services that lasted for a longer period of time. It would seem that this type of service was mainly related to assistance to the apostles.⁸
- (iii) Some believers are appointed by the Lord by means of the church to use their gifts in one of the established particular services that He has instituted in churches.⁹ In the New Testament church such particular services included those of shepherd and minister, elderly and deacon.¹⁰

2.3 *Distinction between general and particular service*

All believers share in the anointment of Christ (HC, Sun 12) and as such are called to serve in a way of being prophet, priest and king. All believers take up position as being in the "office of the believer" (compare BC, 29). According to the New Testament it becomes clear that there is a distinction between somebody who serves in the "office of the believer" and somebody who, for example, serves in the "particular service" of prophet or elderly.¹¹ What does distinguish the particular services from the other forms of doing service in and through the church, is not related to the *particular gifts* that office-bearers may have, nor to the *content of services* performed, also not to the particular service being *more important* than any of the other forms executed by believers, neither to some as having received more of the Spirit than other believers - no, the distinction and uniqueness of the particular services must be sought in this: the *special care* that must be taken. Those who form part of the particular services must take special care that "true religion is preserved, true doctrine is able to take its course, evil men are corrected spiritually and held in check, the poor and all afflicted are helped and comforted according to their need" (BC, Art 30).

2.4 *Authority related to the particular services*

Apart from the fact that Christ is Head over all governments, authorities and powers¹² and the fact that He rules over all of them and they are subjected to Him, He is also Head of the church.¹³ As Head of the Church He possesses all authority and power (ἐξουσιᾶ).¹⁴ The word ἐξουσιᾶ (authority) expresses the sole power and authority that God has in Him and that He conferred upon his Son.¹⁵ Christ does not transfer his power by giving it to any person or any institution.¹⁶ The church has one Head only and that is Jesus Christ.

With regard to the key power important parts from Scripture are Matt 16:18-20 and 18:17. Christ herewith does give the church authority (*potestas*) but not autonomy of authority (*auctoritas*) (own right).¹⁷

⁶ Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12; 1 Pet 4:10-11.

⁷ Luke 10:38; Acts 16:15 & 19:26; 1 Pet 4:10a; Appendix 1988, pt7.2.

⁸ Luke 8:1-3 & 10:1-17; Rom 16:3, 6, 9, 12; 1 Cor 16:15-16; Col 4:7, 10, 11, 14.

⁹ Acts 6:1-6 & 14:23; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11; Philip 1:1; Thess 5:12-13; 1 Tim 3:1-13 & 5:17-20; 2 Tim 2:2; Tit 1:5-9; Heb 19:17; James 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1-4; Rev 4:4.

¹⁰ 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 3:1-12 & 5:17.

¹¹ When Paul (in Philippians 1:1) refers to elders and deacons, it is apparent that he has specific people in mind and not all believers in general.

¹² Col 2:10.

¹³ 1 Cor 11:3; Eph 1:22 & 4:15 & 5:23; Col 1:15 & 2:19.

¹⁴ John 10:18.

¹⁵ Matt 28:18-20.

¹⁶ Rev 3:7.

¹⁷ Calvin (inst 4,8,1; 11,1,4; 10) refers to threefold competence/authority (*potestas*), i.e. *potestas doctrinae* (ability/authority to teach), *potesta jurisdictionis* (ability/authority to rule) and *potestas in legibus ferendis* (ability/authority to make laws).

There are, nevertheless, certain people in the church in the particular services, who have to serve the authority of Christ in a special way. But because Christ is the only Head of the Church, it must be understood that these people do not have authority of their own, but merely such authority as places them in their particular services to serve the authority of Christ. They, therefore, act in serving capacity / authority¹⁸ and at all times remain responsible to the King of the church.¹⁹

In the light of this those who are in the particular services of the church are not in some kind of power position above the rest of the congregation. The people in particular services are *part of the congregation*. As certain parts of a body, for example the muscles, would have a certain function in the body, so these people in the particular services would have certain functions assigned to them, according to the nature of their service. Their functioning occurs within the congregation as part of the congregation. This they do while acknowledging the Head of the body's "Headship", i.e. the κύριος-ship.²⁰ Those who have been appointed by Christ in any of the particular services are like servants²¹ and slaves²²: in this sense they are not supposed to act in own authority or perceived authority, but must render their services only to the authority of their κύριος.

2.5 *Finding with regard to church polity aspects concerning the particular services*

2.5.1 The mentioned church polity aspects as relevant point of departure do not differ in any aspect from church polity aspects mentioned in previous studies of the GKSA in the process of studying the position of women in the particular services.

2.5.2 The mentioned church polity aspects as relevant point of departure do not make provision for any existing Synodal decisions to be changed as a result of this part of the Report. (1.1 of Report)

3. Relevant point of departure : Hermeneutic model²³

3.1 *Introductory remark in the evaluation of exegesis*

When studying the question of women in the particular services, certain presumptions and points of departure surface, as is also the case with other exegetic questions or issues. All exegesis and hermeneuses that are being conducted with regard to women in the particular services are evaluated in the light of such presumptions and points of departure, leading the decision of whether they are **permissible** or not **permissible**. Permissible exegesis and hermeneuses are furthermore evaluated according to the exegetic framework of the grammatico-historical model, leading the decision of whether they are exegetically **valid/ well-founded/ significant or not valid/ well-founded/ significant**.²⁴ It must also be determined whether these are **exegetically convincing**. Exegesis can be more convincing or less convincing. This is possible because of our human limitations and sinful nature. It could then happen that the exegetes whose exegesis are permissible in the light of points of departure and are exegetically valid and convincing, may eventually result in different ways of understanding a certain part from Scripture - even within the same denomination. In such cases this report identifies and indicates areas of possible strong or weak points pertaining to these exegesis or hermeneuses.

¹⁸ Serving of the authority is also exercised in office-bearers-in-consultation-with-one-another as well as under mutual supervision (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 4:14).

¹⁹ Tit 1:7 ["steward"]; Heb 13:17.

²⁰ Eph 4:7-16; 1 Cor 12:28vv

²¹ 1 Tim 4:6.

²² 2 Tim 2:24.

²³ In this section ample use is made of the same book as mentioned in number 1 of these footnotes - especially in this case pp 37-64.

²⁴ Rests on the conviction that God's Word is indeed his revelation of the steadfast, immovable, unchangeable truth about Himself. For this reason the terms chosen were "eksegeties houdbaar/onhoudbaar" (translated as exegetically valid/well-founded/significant or not). With this expression is given to the necessity for weighing exegesis, i.e. weighing it against the exegetic framework of the grammatico-historical model. If the exegesis meets the requirements of the framework it is regarded as being exegetically valid/well-founded/significant.

3.2 *Scripture-related points of departure with regard to Hermeneutic Model*

The Bible is the everlasting and ever-valid Word of God and God himself allowed for his Word to be written down – (the writing was time-directed) - by people and for people through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This presumption includes the following main points:

3.2.1 The Bible is the written Word of God

The confession that the Bible is the written Word of God, indicates that God is both the Subject and the Object of the Bible. God reveals Himself and his will to people by means of the Bible. The fact that God is the Author of the Bible would mean that the different books of the Bible are to be considered, explained and approached in their revelation-historical relatedness. In the process of the “actual writing” of the Bible God made use of people and human activities. God’s revelation in the Bible takes place in the language and context of the people involved as called by God to record his revelation. However, the Bible is and remains the Word of God, and this then in such a way that all the historical and human aspects thereof are allocated their own position. In this sense the Bible is God’s Word in human words (compare, for example, Luke 1: 1-4; Rev 1:1-3).

3.2.2 The Bible is forever and is ever-valid and ever-significant

3.2.2.1 God’s authoritative revelation for all times

The confession that the Bible is ever-valid in the first place means that God has intended for the Bible to make known his revelation to people of all times, wherever they are and regardless of the circumstances; and also that the Bible has authority and contains the will of God. This confession also includes that the Bible is regarded as containing the criteria for the point of view about God, the relationship with Him, the human being’s way of living and the human being in relation to fellow-beings and creation.

3.2.2.2 Self-evidence

The reality that the Bible is eternal and always-valid cannot be proved by means of external evidence. The contents of the Bible, however, cannot but be self-evident and the Bible convinces the reader of the authority when the Holy Spirit brings the Word of God to the human beings through these scriptures. The Holy Spirit makes the believer aware of the authority of these scriptures (John 14:26; John 16:12-15; 1 Cor 2:10-14; 2 Cor 3:14-18).

3.2.2.3 Scope and nature of the Bible

Fundamentally God presents in the Bible revelations pertaining to

- (i) Himself (who He is and what He does: God, Lord, Creator of all things, Keeper/Maintainer and Ruler);
- (ii) the way in which He makes salvation possible (that in Christ sin is conquered as a result of which the relationship between Him and the bearer of his image is restored to be that of Father and child); and
- (iii) the way in which He as Lord and God is being served and honoured (how the redeemed ones must show that they live in a restored relationship with God by everything they do, say and think).

3.2.2.4 Scope of the Bible and societal conventions

The Bible is not in the first place meant to re-create or re-construct (societal) structures, but to change people’s hearts. Hearts that have been changed by the Word exercise an influence on society and therefore certain societal structures and accompanying conventions and practices cannot but follow in being changed and reformed, (e.g. slavery banned). God, therefore, calls on those of converted hearts to reform society. At times such a reformation of society or communities occurs within a short period of time, but sometimes it takes ages.

3.2.2.5 Hermeneutic implications

Within the confession that the Bible is everlasting and ever-valid it still is necessary to make a clear distinction between two things, *i.e.* what is actually written in the Bible and what the reader reads into the Bible (reader’s own understanding and

interpretation). What is revealed in the Bible is fixed and unchanging. However, the reader's understanding must be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis with direct reference to the Bible. Such control measures would, *inter alia*, include the following:

- (i) Scripture-attached Bible researchers do not act as if they were the first ones ever to read the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; no, they consult gifted persons and/or their works in writing, especially as such researchers themselves presumably also sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to evaluate their interpretation.
- (ii) Scripture-attached Bible researchers keep going at their research and studies of the Bible and make all efforts to determine whether another part of the Bible may not perhaps elucidate the part with which they are struggling/about which they want more certainty. In all, they keep on praying and waiting for guidance from the Holy Spirit.
- (iii) Scripture-attached Bible researchers seriously and continuously take principles of Scripture into account as such principles are essential to the purity of interpretation.

3.2.3 The Bible has been inspired by the Holy Spirit

The Bible is the Word of God that He revealed to people according to his decision, and He revealed his Word in human words and it was entered into writing by people in the Scriptures (compare, for example, 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:19-21). Throughout this process God inspired the work of the human writers and in such a way that it is typified as *organic inspiration* by means of which to bring across his revelation to people. This inspiration occurred with inclusion of the writers' own personalities, background and other circumstances and each of them also wrote within his own historical context. Organic inspiration entails that it would be invalid to regard only certain parts of the Bible as being of Godly inspiration.

3.2.4 The Bible originated time-directly, but is not time-bound or time-restricted

In coherence with the organic inspiration of the Bible is the fact that the books of the Bible originated in a time-directed way. When the human writers wrote down the inspired Word they used the language, idiom, literary genres as well as the argumentation style of their time. The Bible has, therefore, been formulated in language and idiom easily understood by the first readers and it addressed them within their own historical situation and the circumstances surrounding their way of living. This by no means places limitations or restrictions on the Bible in the sense of the Bible being time-bound and consequently valuable or applicable to the first readers and their environments only. No, the Word of God reaches out right through the time and circumstances of the first readers to the readers of all times. In the same way as the source languages of the Bible can be translated into languages suitable to other later readers, the time-directedness of the Bible can also be "translated" to reach readers of other and later times and circumstances. The latter "translation" process is known as hermeneusis (to interpret/explain). The processes and activities of hermeneutics (the science of interpreting or explaining the Scriptures) provide for the revelation of God to reach people of today in an unchanged way, the truth remaining as it is, but suitable to be understood in present times and circumstances.

3.3 *Hermeneutic points of departure*

3.3.1 Relevant points of departure for exegesis

3.3.1.1 Grammatico-historical exegesis as approach

Grammatico-historical exegesis is a hermeneutic model within which that which is written in the Bible serves as basis for the exegesis. It includes the grammatical aspects of language, style, idiom and literary genre. Taking into consideration the organic inspiration of the Bible and the consequent time-directedness, endeavours are made to understand that which has been written within that historical context. It also includes consideration of the revelation-historical context as well as historical/ social/ cultural circumstances and surroundings of the author and the first readers.

3.3.1.1.1 Grammatical within the grammatico-historical approach

3.3.1.1.1.1 Text-critical control

Errors of writing detected in the handwritten copies of the Bible have as far as possible and as efficiently as possible been identified and corrected by scientists of text criticism to eliminate such errors from editions published in the present time. By comparing the different editions published the exegete can execute as responsible a choice as possible with regard to the basic text/source text used for the exegesis processes.

3.3.1.1.1.2 Text-related context of the pericope and the book

Thorough consideration must be given to the text-related context of both the pericope and the book in which the pericope appears as these are of importance. In this way the interpreter takes precautionary measures to avoid interpretation of a part of Scripture in an unrelated or wrongly related way.

- (i) Determining the range and extent of a pericope involved, relies mainly on the interpreter's judgement, *i.e.* in establishing an overview of the book involved and its line of thought. The pericope, however, fulfils a specific function within the overall argumentation of the book involved. The explanation of the intra-argumentation of the pericope must put forth the function of this specific paragraph within the argumentation of the book as such.
- (ii) Equally important is that the interpreter pays attention to the position of the book involved as it appears among the total collection of Bible books. On the one hand doing so has important implications for determining the genre of the book and on the other hand it serves the purpose of determining the context surrounding the text-related context (in both revelation-historical and cultural-historical sense).

3.3.1.1.2 Historical within the grammatic-historical approach

3.3.1.1.2.1 Positioning within the Bible

3.3.1.1.2.1.1 The revelation-historical lines

Each part of the Bible fits into the Bible in totality, therefore each revelation of God's, be it in written Word, must be read within the broader revelation-historical coherence of the Word. This means that the revelation-historical lines that run like golden threads right across the Bible must be described and that it must be indicated how the part involved correlates and stands in relation with the rest of the Bible. Broadly viewed, the exegete's interpretation should at least investigate the connectedness between the selected part of Scripture under study and the broad revelation-related lines of God's glory, God's will and the salvation of people. Within these broad revelation-historical lines the exegete must combine and merge the different parts of Scripture with regard to a certain part of Scripture/question/issue/matter into one all-embracing description. For such combining of relevant parts of Scripture (Scripture-with-Scripture-comparison) the Scripture-related point of departure and view concerning the clarity of the Scripture would present with the following implications:

- (a) In Reformed hermeneutics the *axiomatic* (statement accepted as true) is the point of departure and not the *problematic*. For this reason the preferred starting point for any revelation-historical / exegetic investigation is from parts of Scripture that are clear/more clear about the matter under investigation before moving on to parts of Scripture that might be perceived as less clear on the matter at hand. In this way Scripture interprets and explains itself.

3.3.1.1.2.2 **Positioning within historical context** (social, economic, political, religious, etc.)

3.3.1.1.2.2.1 Read the part of Scripture within its cultural-historical context

Each book of the Bible originated within the social and political realities of a specific era. Those described in the Bible were real people who lived within a dynamic society and interacted with it. The pericope/book involved must therefore be explained with *proper awareness of the relevant cultural-historical information supplied by the Bible itself, and in addition relevant information obtained from other ancient sources.*

3.3.1.1.2.2.2 Use a historical approach enriched with information from social sciences

The approach is a balanced cultural-historical approach (also referred to as a socio-historical approach). Such a balanced cultural-historical approach is a historical approach (in comparison to a socio-scientific approach)²⁵, enriched by the questions asked by scientists of social sciences and the results of models used by them.²⁶ This means that the investigation is emical²⁷ and not ethical²⁸ of nature. In this way the interpreter wishes to gather as much information as possible with regard to phenomena and all aspects of the era of the book under study. This the interpreter wishes to accomplish by studying the data and phenomena without a pre-meditated theory or model in mind.²⁹ Even though the cultural-historical context of a book as such is important, limiting the research to that only is not sufficient. Also that which is specifically relevant to the selected pericope must be investigated. In practice this would include the following:

- (i) **Book:** Matters with regard to the cultural-historical context of the complete book would include things like where the place of dwelling of the first readers was situated, the population composition of that area/city, the current religion(s) of the time, philosophies of the time, etc.
- (ii) **Pericope:** For the construction of the cultural-historical context of the pericope involved, it would be necessary to scrutinise the pericope itself in order to determine the social, political and/or religious facets

²⁵ The two approaches refer to the same text-external data: the social and political circumstances at the time of the origin of the book involved. The difference is in the methods by means of which the information is incorporated into the construction of the text-external context of the Bible book/pericope involved. Viewed from a certain angle a purely social-scientific approach and a purely cultural-historical approach form two poles of a continuum. Each one who conducts research on the cultural-historical context of a Bible book, finds himself/herself somewhere along this continuum: either inclined towards the purely social-scientific approach or the purely cultural-historical approach. These two poles can be typified as follows: (1) social-scientific approach according to points of departure applied in the discipline of social sciences, while the cultural-historical approach is historical of nature, (2) social-scientific approach is sociological (sociologically-specific/socio-scientific analysis), while the cultural-historical approach is social (society-general/society-related events). In comparison, pertaining to the construction of the text-external context of a Bible book/pericope, the social-scientific focus is based on theories of the social sciences as a result of their research on present day phenomena, while the cultural-historical focus is on the societal phenomena of the first century.

²⁶ The following limitations apply to the "pure" social-scientific or "pure" cultural-historical methods when constructing the text-external context of a Bible book/pericope: (1) The "pure" cultural-historical method is impaired by the researcher's being in a 'theory-forgotten/theory-neglected' position: thus proceeding in an intuitive-naive manner with regard to sociologically-related information, almost as if it is possible to do research without theoretical basis. Not that no theory at all is being used, no, the intuitive-naive theory is being used, be it undefined and untested and therefore rather difficult to evaluate or control. (2) The "pure" social-scientific method is impaired by the researcher's one-sided view or focus, it being on contemporary theories and models - and by this the information pertaining to the time period of the Bible book involved, moves into a secondary position instead of it being important in the first place, i.e. for the purpose of constructing the text-external context.

²⁷ With an emical approach the emphasis is on the situation at that time. Data and phenomena are described in terms of their functioning within the society of that time. The data and phenomena, so to speak, dictate the investigation.

²⁸ With an ethical approach the purpose is also to study the situation of that time, but then in terms of theories and models that have been developed in modern times and are based on data and phenomena in present time societies. The investigation is dictated by the relevant theory/model.

²⁹ However, the intention is not to argue that the emical approach is not theory-determined. The argument endeavours to indicate that the emical approach does not approach the matter at hand in terms of the sociological model, in this case the matter at hand being data and phenomena pertaining to the text-external context of a Bible book. No approach can actually be altogether free of theory, and it is therefore essential that every exegete should clearly state his/her theories for interpretation. By doing so the effect that such theories may have on the interpretation are measurable and controllable.

applicable to the first readers' way of living. These facets can, so to speak, be implemented as search words for gathering information from which to construct the cultural-historical context.

3.3.1.2 Old Testament and New Testament in relation³⁰

The Old Testament and the New Testament are absolutely equal in that they both are the Word of God. They are, however, not the same - there is a difference and this justifies the question as to the relationship between the two.

3.3.1.2.1 The joining of parallel tension lines in the Person of Jesus Christ

It is Christ who is positioned between the Old Testament and the New Testament and who separates them as well as binds them together. Through the Person of Christ God makes the parallel tension lines meet and in the togetherness and connectedness the completeness of the new dispensation is unfolded in the fullness of time. The fact that the lines come together in Christ also, *inter alia*, mean that the truth revealed in the New Testament corresponds with the truth revealed in the Old Testament, and are therefore not a separate, different truth. The same truth is brought, but only revealed in another and new historical situation. The tension lines³¹ that are present in the Old Testament are integrated by Christ in his Person, especially in and through his death and resurrection. In this way He brings together judgement and mercy; He brings together death and life. He brings a new dispensation, a new covenant, a new testament. Surely we still have the same covenant, word, law, mercy, ruling; the situation, though, has become new in that God has actually in historical sense brought together the tension lines. God has indeed punished to the full and God has indeed shown mercy to the full! God has indeed brought in death and God has indeed brought in new life! God has worked a miracle by uniting these exceptional things in Christ. For such a person who is in Christ the law is fulfilled, the judgement has been passed, the salvation in mercy has become a reality, and life in this dispensation is an ever-growing close relationship with God. The relation between the Old Testament and the New Testament can be properly understood only, and only, when viewed from the perspective of the fulfilment in Christ.

3.3.1.2.2 The Old Testament used³² in the New Testament³³

Parts from the Old Testament are in many instances quoted in the New Testament. This quite frequently happens in especially the first three Gospels, Paul's letters, Hebrews and Revelation. Some parts can with certainty be identified as quotations. Other parts are merely references to parts of the Old Testament and still others are only reflections of parts from the Old Testament. The reason for including the Old Testament in these ways is that the author, inspired by the Holy Spirit, could more effectively manage to convey, establish and confirm the message that he wished to communicate in the new dispensation.

3.3.1.2.3 The Old Testament still to be understood in own right

The intention of the New Testament writer, when using quotations, references and reflections related to the Old Testament, was not always to use these within their original or typical context of the Old Testament. Rather was the intention to indicate and confirm the validity of his argument by strength of truths contained

³⁰ In this section Dr JL Helberg's notes (lectures presented at seminar, 1976) have been used in adapted form, i.e. within the subject Old Testament Hermeneutics (compare Helberg, 1975:1-6).

³¹ Examples of such lines of tension are that God establishes a close relationship with believers in spite of their sins; that He allows the human race the possibility of revival/resurrection from among the dead in spite of the sin of the first human couple; that the "day of the Lord" includes, not only judgement, but also salvation, etc.

³² The word "used" does not imply that the Old Testament serves merely as a utility article to be used by the New Testament and that the relation or unity between the two Testaments is not fully appreciated.

³³ In this section Professor Fika van Rensburg's contribution as written for the 1983 Translation Reference Bible has been used in adapted form. It has been entered into the Glossary as "Aanhaling van die Ou Testament in die Nuwe Testament" ["Quoting the Old Testament in the New Testament"]. (Verwysingsbybel 1998:1597-1598). ["Verwysingsbybel" = Reference Bible]

in the Old Testament. A part from the Old Testament is often assigned a function in the New Testament that had not been detected on first looking at it in the Old Testament. It would therefore be one-sided to explain parts of the Old Testament referred to, according to the way in which they had been used and applied in the New Testament only. The purpose with referring to the Old Testament in the New Testament was probably not in the first place to interpret or explain the parts referred to, but would more likely have been related to serving and supporting the argument that flowed forth in the New Testament context.

3.3.2 Relevant points of departure for hermeneusis

3.3.2.1 Reformed hermeneusis

Reformed hermeneusis is the process in which the result - i.e. what God reveals in the part of Scripture referred to, of the total process of exegesis (grammatico-historical analysis and the synthesis) - is being conveyed to the present day reader and listener.

3.3.2.2 Integration of present context into hermeneusis

The relevant facets of the present context (social, economic, political, religious, etc) must be integrated in such a way that it would lead to a valid contribution to the exegesis. A valid construction of the social and political circumstances of the Bible book involved often makes it possible to determine accurately what type of social or political situation can in present day be elucidated by the exegesis of the pericope involved. The pericope itself therefore prescribes what type of matter is elucidated in the present context.

3.3.2.3 The distinction between indicative and imperative

3.3.2.3.1 No mechanical-grammatical distinction

Language categories and revelation categories do not always correlate. A verb in the imperative mood cannot necessarily be viewed as a revelation imperative (John 2:19). Neither can a grammatical indicative be accepted as a revelation indicative (1 Thess 4:7). There is therefore not a mechanical way to distinguish between the salvation indicative (fact revealed/Biblical fact) and the salvation imperative (command revealed/Biblical command) contained in a part of Scripture. The possibility of confusion with the language distinctions *indicative* and *imperative* makes it preferable to use the terms *facts* (instead of indicative) and *commands* (instead of imperative), as is done in this report.

3.3.2.3.2 Syntactic and stylistic markers

The relation between the Scripture-related fact and the Scripture-related command is of such a nature that the *command* always follows the *fact* in a concluding manner. The exegete can therefore have the advantage of alerting his/her awareness to syntactic and stylistic markers that would present in a concluding function (compare Labuschagne, 1981:29-31 and the table of De Klerk & Van Rensburg, 2005:36). This is, however, not representative of a hard and fast or fixed model, and it would therefore be necessary to look at other aids as well to assist in exegesis and the distinction between Biblical fact and Biblical command.

3.3.2.3.3 Context

The exegete can often arrive at valid context-related conclusions about what is meant as *fact* or as *command* in a given part of Scripture without using formal syntactic or stylistic markers. Historical material, poetic material, prophetic material and letters are not meant to be read in the same way. What also has to be taken into account here are rhetorical context (mind-set), cultural-historical context, revelation-historical context as well as the context of Scripture in totality.

3.3.2.3.3.1 Rhetorical context

The rhetorical context of a part of Scripture can be described on the basis of an analysis of the mind-set (structure of thought) (compare Coetzee, 1988:23 and the analysis of mind/thought build-up on macro level, see De Klerk & Van

Rensburg, 2005:37-49). An important part of such an analysis is indeed to illustrate the coherence of the different structural components as they stand in relation to one another. Should two or more thoughts appear to relate in concluding or causal capacity, the exegete may consider the possibility of a fact-command.

3.3.2.3.3.2 Cultural-historical context

A distinction must be made between commands that are of lasting authority and commands that are only situation-related or otherwise expressed between commands qualified as *normative* and commands qualified as *historical*. To be able to do so the exegete will have to place the text/pericope within its cultural-historical context.³⁴ When determining whether a specific command only forms part of the cultural-historical connotation of the text/pericope or not, the hermeneutic rule is conclusive, namely that Scripture is its own Interpreter. In other words: when the exegete has to decide whether a Biblical command should be viewed as merely cultural-historical presentation, the exegete's decision must in the first place be led by that which Scripture indicates, and not by text-external sources or mere subjective considerations. It appears that the exegete should pay special attention to the basis and verification of each command in that part of Scripture. Commands that are founded in revealed Biblical fact may as a rule be viewed as lasting commands; commands that rest on cultural-historical argumentation, may as a rule be viewed as situation-related commands.

3.3.2.3.3.3 (Revelation-) Historical context

Historical material especially, often lacks the presence of a formal mind-set (structure of thought) by means of which the relation between Biblical fact and Biblical command can be identified. In such cases the relation can at times be detected in reference to the historical situation.³⁵

3.3.2.3.3.4 Context of Scripture in totality

3.3.2.3.3.4.1 Revelation-historical lines of the specific Bible book

In the distinction between *fact* and *command* it would be necessary to take the revelation-historical directedness of the specific Bible book into consideration.³⁶

3.3.2.3.3.4.2 Revelation-historical lines of the Bible in totality

In the exegesis each command ought to be placed within the context of the history of revelation so that a decision can be made, considered in that context, about whether the command is meant to be of lasting nature or not.³⁷

3.3.2.3.3.4.3 Scripture-to-Scripture comparison

Directly in correlation with the broad revelation-historical lines of the Bible is the exegetic process of comparing Scripture to Scripture. Reference to other

³⁴ Be careful not to have the idea that certain commands (those with normative authority) are time-directed while other commands (those with historical authority only) are also time-directed. Commands with historical authority still remain part of the time-directed presentation of the Bible.

³⁵ An example of this occurs in Matt 14:14-21: In the pericope two commands from Jesus presented as grammatical imperatives. Jesus' command (imperative): "Bring them (five loaves and two fish) here to Me.", followed by his command to the multitude to sit down on the grass (14:18,19). Both the commands correspond with the historical situation, not meant for future purposes or with normative value, but nevertheless with historical authority because through this miracle He most certainly revealed a revelation-historical fact of salvation that is not written down, but quite apparent, namely that He can do things which people cannot do, with Him nothing is impossible. He is the Messiah, the Son of God. In this sense the command (unwritten) applies to all times, as good as actually telling/commanding people to believe in Him!

³⁶ Example Matt 14:14-21: The unwritten command in this pericope is that people should believe in Jesus Christ, He is indeed Son of God. This command exists in close relationship to the revelation-historical directedness of the Gospel as recorded by Matthew, namely to tell people to believe in Jesus the Messiah of God.

³⁷ An example of this is the command in Acts 15:28, 29: "for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality." If the line of relation between the revelation of the Old Testament and the revelation of the New Testament is followed, it becomes apparent that the religious rites performed in the Old Testament according to laws of that time, no longer apply because in Christ everything has been fulfilled.

parts of Scripture than the part under study, can assist in giving direction to a distinction between fact and command as pertaining to the part under study.³⁸

3.3.2.4 Distinction between focal point and side-issue

3.3.2.4.1 Syntactic and stylistic markers

Broadly viewed, the main sentence (grammatically) can be taken as point of departure and regarded as the *focal point* of the part of Scripture, followed by *side-issues* contained in clauses/phrases, etc. On the other hand the New Testament contains many examples of the *side-issues* being stated in the main sentence and the *focal point* in clauses, phrases, etc. (Eph 3:14-19).³⁹

3.3.2.4.2 Context

3.3.2.4.2.1 Rhetorical context

Analysis of mind-set (structure of thought) is even more important to determining the distinction between *focal point* and *side-issue* within a certain pericope than it is to determining the distinction between fact and command. An example of this is found in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14).⁴⁰

3.3.2.4.2.2 Cultural-historical context

The cultural-historical context can sometimes assist in deciding about the focal point of a pericope. An example of this has been discussed by De Klerk and Van Rensburg (2005:52-63) with reference to 1 Peter 2:11 to 4:19.⁴¹

3.3.2.4.2.3 (Revelation-) Historical context

The historical context in which a pericope is situated can give a strong indication of where the *focal point* should be looked for in that pericope. An example of this is the burial of Jesus and its accompanying history (Matt 27:57-66).⁴²

3.3.2.4.2.4 Context of Bible in totality

3.3.2.4.2.4.1 Revelation-historical lines of the specific Bible book

This is illustrated by the pericope Luke 6:1-11. If placed within the context of Luke 4 to 6, it becomes apparent that the Evangelist describes a series of events in which it is repeatedly indicated that Jesus is truly the Lord.⁴³ Accordingly it appears that the focal point is emphasised in Luke 6:5 of the pericope. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath as well.

3.3.2.4.2.4.2 Revelation-historical lines of the Bible and Scripture-to-Scripture comparison

In a certain sense each part of Scripture has a specific position in the Biblical revelation in totality, and must be understood within that total range.

³⁸ Example Matt 14:14-21: The conclusion that the unwritten command contained in this pericope is "Believe!", is further elucidated and supported by another part of Scripture, i.e. Mark 6:52 according to which the miracle performed with the loaves and the fish was meant to inspire the people towards better faith.

³⁹ De Klerk (1988:44-45) – analysis of Eph 3:14-21.

⁴⁰ An analysis of the mind-set (structure of thought) of the pericope shows progress from one thing/thought leading to another (as if moving along a diamond-shaped graphical line from one point to another). At the beginning Luke mentions the focal point (18:9) of the parable: Jesus relates the parable with the intention of showing that there are those people who think they are righteous in themselves and who look down on others. Towards the end of the pericope the emphasis is on who then really are the righteous ones. The focal point of the parable is not on the conduct of the Pharisee or the tax collector, but on the fact that God renders us righteous before Him.

⁴¹ The social and political circumstances of the first readers of Peter's letter included a familiarity with being sojourners, strangers, and foreigners living among people who were not of their nationality or customs or beliefs and so on. They were also well aware of injustices that had occurred because of this. They were used to launching a counter-attack and defending themselves by doing the same type of things. For these reasons Peter wants to convince them to behave themselves in a way acceptable to God quite regardless of where they are or the circumstances in which they find themselves. This general command can be found in 1 Peter 2:11-12 and serves as focal point for the entire letter (2:11 to 4:19).

⁴² The focal point of this pericope, historically viewed, is in 27:60: Jesus is buried. Other historical matters are mentioned, forming side-issues, but very important in that they confirm and support the historical fact of the burial of Jesus. These side-issues include reference to the person by whom He was buried (27:57-59), the fact that there were witnesses of his burial (27:61), the fact that the grave was sealed and guarded by the Jews (requested by Pharisees and chief priests) (27:62-65).

⁴³ Jesus is Lord over demons (Luke 4:31-37); Lord over disease (4:38-44); Lord of all creatures (5:1-11); Lord over disease (5:12-26). And now, in 6:1-11, the focal point is once again the Lordship of Jesus – He is Lord of the Sabbath as well.

This, then, would also apply to the focal point of such a part of Scripture. An example of a pericope that can barely be understood other than in this broad context of revelation-historical lines of the Bible, is the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matt 1:1-17.⁴⁴

3.3.2.5 Theological synthesis and *donum interpretationus*

With all the information obtained from the exegetic analyses (as discussed above) the exegete must now arrive at the important part of Scripture interpretation and that is the synthesis. Of the exegete is expected to display such careful discretion as would only be made possible by the Holy Spirit and this is what is known as *donum interpretationus* (the gift of interpretation). The gift to interpret as provided by the Spirit does, however, not resemble a kind of “internal light” that is provided in a way round and about Scripture or separate from Scripture - no, the exegete indeed receives it in the process of being deeply absorbed in the Word. The synthesis as well remains subjected to scientific control. The usual scientific route is that the synthesis should carefully account for each subdivided part of Scripture – of the command as well as the fact, of the focal point as well as the side-issue. The synthesis may not displace the meaning, may not shift the meaning away from that which is written there. Rather would it endeavour to penetrate the very heart and core of God’s revelation as contained within that part of Scripture and in the hermeneusis to relay the revelation to circumstances of today. Eventually it arrives at this question: What does God reveal here to us, to me? (Compare Grosheide, 1929:66).

3.3.2.6 Hermeneusis as gift of prophecy

In order to explain what God says “here, today” the synthetic exegesis enters into what is known as the hermeneusis process. This presents the result of the entire process of exegesis by means of which God’s revelation in a particular part of Scripture has been established, and includes the sharing of the result with the reader or listener of today. The hermeneusis process is not dependent on pre-determined hard and fast rules. For the hermeneusis process the gift of prophecy provided by God is indispensable (compare Rom 12:6-7; 1Cor 14:3). It is also important that the exegete should analyse the current social context in the process of hermeneusis. This by no means would imply that the context of the listeners should in any way dominate what God says or should in any way veto the result of the exegesis. For this reason the same scientific control would apply as for theological synthesis: it must be embedded in the results of exegesis and must similarly rely on carefully accounting for each subdivided part of Scripture – the command as well as the fact, the focal point as well as the side-issue.

3.3.2.7 No mechanical rules

It is in all reality not really possible to proceed with the process of exegesis, in its grammatical as well as historical facets and especially also in its processes of synthesis and hermeneusis, without the gift of interpretation provided by the Holy Spirit. Because of this exegesis cannot be practised as a mere mechanical application of hermeneutic rules. Whenever an interpreter of Scripture is busy with interpretation of a part of Scripture he/she cannot but constantly pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit and for insight to continue in sound discretion. This applies to all the facets of determining what God’s lasting command is and the application in present day, of deciding whether the command may be situation-bound only or not, of distinguishing between focal point and side-issues and all aspects pertaining to the process of exegesis.

⁴⁴ In the genealogy of Jesus Christ the line of the covenant is continued, from Abraham up to Jesus Christ. According to revelation-historical considerations it is evident that the birth of Christ is indeed the fulfilling of the promises of the covenant. Matt 1:1 also clearly mentions that Christ is the “Son of David”. By Scripture-to-Scripture comparison the revelation-historical meaning of David is also clear: he is the king from whose descendants the Messiah would be born. Both the line of covenant (Abraham) and the line of kingship (David) are combined in Matt 1:1, which then serves as focal point for the genealogy of Christ.

3.4 *Finding with regard to hermeneutic Model*

- 3.4.1 This hermeneutic model does not in principle (points of departure as well as outcomes) differ from previous hermeneutic models used in the GKSA studies of the Scriptures pertaining to women in the particular services.
- 3.4.2 This hermeneutic model presents a deepening of certain aspects of the hermeneutic process, while other processes and their meaning have been discussed more extensively.
- 3.4.3 This hermeneutic model as relevant point of departure does not hold in that any of the existing Synodal decisions should be changed as a result of this part of the Report (1.1 of Report).

4. Directly relevant parts of Scripture

4.1 *Acts 6:1-7*

4.1.1 First interpretation of Acts 6:1-7

4.1.1.1 Acts 6:1-7 the institution of the service of deacon

Traditionally the heading of chapter 6 is “The Choosing of the Seven”⁴⁵ and it has all along been accepted as the *locus classicus* for the institution of the particular service of deacon in the church of Christ. Den Boer remarked that the word “deacon” as such does not appear within this excerpt from Scripture, but that it can be accepted beyond reasonable doubt that the office of deacon is being referred to.⁴⁶ Van Bruggen views Acts 6 in a slightly different way: He refers to the so-called “direction of view” of Acts 6 that can be gathered from looking at the beginning and ending of this part, namely that the Holy Spirit explains through Luke how a ‘threatening disease’ (tension or differences because of the neglect of women) can be addressed and healed in the body of the congregation.⁴⁷ He therefore states that Luke has not written Acts 6 to fully inform us once and for all about the historical detail with regard to the offices in the churches of those days although his narrative does include information on the topic, but not completely so because the actual topic was something else.⁴⁸

Grosheide understands that Acts 6:1-7 reveals how the original office is being extended in service of the greater task.⁴⁹ He adds that it would be correct to simply read into Acts 6:1-6 the institution of the office of deacon, even though the word deacon is not mentioned here.⁵⁰

In his discussion of Acts 6:1-6 Calvin starts with the words (as previously translated): “Luke declare there upon what occasion, and to what end, and also with what rite, deacons were first made.” Later on he writes in explanation of verse 6 “Laying on of hands was a solemn sign of consecration under the law. To this end do the apostles now lay hands upon the deacons that they may know that they are offered to God”. Calvin appeared to have no uncertainty about Acts 1:1-6 being the institution of the service of deacons.

In conclusion it can be remarked that many of the acknowledged interpreters appear to regard Acts 6:1-7 as the institution of the service of deacon. Some do, however, feel inclined to differ, e.g. Dr J van Bruggen who prefers to make of it an unrepeatable event and Professor JC Coetzee who understands this as a proto-office from which later offices would develop.

It is not easy to reconcile the latter (a proto-office from which later offices would develop) with Grosheide’s description of this “office” being an extension of the original office. This is further supported by contextual words/phrases contained in Acts 6:1-7, e.g. the words of *The Twelve* in verse 2 “It is not desirable that we

⁴⁵ NIV.

⁴⁶ Den Boer C: Man en vrouw in bijbelse perspectief, p152 [men and women in biblical perspective].

⁴⁷ Van Bruggen J: Ambten in de Apostolische Kerk, p56 [offices in the apostolic churches].

⁴⁸ Van Bruggen J: Ambten in de Apostolische Kerk, p56 [offices in the apostolic churches].

⁴⁹ Grosheide FW: Handelingen, p94 [Acts].

⁵⁰ Grosheide FW: Handelingen, p95 [Acts].

should leave the word of God and serve tables”, and in verse 4 “but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word”. From these words it becomes clear that *The Twelve* had already been acting in certain offices of continual prayer, serving the tables and spreading the word. Added to this and in support of it, are the words in Acts 2:42 “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”. These words rule out the possibility of a proto-type that would lead to later offices and instead points to offices that had already existed and that actually gave origin to the service being referred to in Acts 6:1-7.

4.1.1.2 The task / service of these deacons according to Acts 6:1-7

Acts 6 indicates that these deacons should take care of serving tables (services of charity – Den Boer, Grosheide, Calvin; fellowship of the holy ones – Van Bruggen) – stated as such in verses 2 and 3. Charity service and management of the fellowship of holy ones do not take up opposing positions. When taking into account the words of The Twelve in verse 4, namely that they would keep up prayer and ministry of the word, it would leave the deacons of Acts 6 with the tasks attached to community/fellowship service and breaking of bread (also Acts 2:42). This interpretation of Acts 6:1-7 leaves room for the possibility that this service further developed in the church of the New Testament and that it did not exclude other services (Stephen and Philip).

4.1.1.3 How do these deacons of Acts 6:1-7 come into service?

In verse 3 it is stated that they have been “appointed” to this service. The Greek word used here is καταστήσομεν (Futurum Active Indicative) of καθιστάνω/ καθιϙστημι meaning “to assign to someone a position of authority over others – to put in charge of, to appoint, to designate”.⁵¹ This word makes it clear that authority is attached to the office of deacon as mentioned in Acts 6. It stands to reason then that the implementation of this service would be accompanied by the mentioned authority and would therefore be the serving of authority. Brown also indicates the meaning of the word in Acts 6:3 as “appoint especially to an office or position.”⁵² Kittel also explains the word with reference to Acts 6:3, by stating “to set in an elevated position, in an office”.⁵³ The service of deacon therefore encompasses, as according to the interpretation of καθιϙστημι an authoritative function that includes that the authority of Jesus Christ is being served through them in this service. In verse 6 they “laid hands on them”, and this is an action that certainly speaks of confirmation. Grosheide expresses it by saying that the laying on of hands then follows as a sign of placing in the position of an office.⁵⁴ Earle points out the following: “The apostles prayed and laid their hands on them. This suggests an official ordination of these men to their special ministry. The pattern had already been set by the Jews.”⁵⁵ In his comment on the book of Acts, Calvin remarks on Acts 6:6 by stating: “Laying on of hands was a solemn sign of consecration under the law. To this end do the apostles now lay their hands upon the deacons that they may know that they are offered to God.”

4.1.1.4 Conclusion on first way of interpretation of Acts 6:1-7

4.1.1.4.1 Acts 6:1-7 can be regarded as the institution of the service of deacon, with the inclusion of further development of the service in the church as it proceeded from here onwards. It does in no way appear to be representative of a proto-type of the service of deacon.

4.1.1.4.2 According to Acts 6:1-7 deacons are appointed in a function of authority (καθιϙστημι).

⁵¹ Louw JP & Nida EA: Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 37.104, vol 1, p484.

⁵² Brown C: Dictionary of New Testament, vol 1, pp471-472.

⁵³ Kittel G: Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol 3, p444.

⁵⁴ Grosheide FW: Handelingen, p95 [Acts].

⁵⁵ Earle R: Beacon Bible Commentary, vol 7, p326.

4.1.1.4.3 According to Acts 6:1-7 deacons have been confirmed in their service officially (laying on of hands).

4.1.1.4.4 Even though hands were laid upon men only in Acts 6:1-7, this fact alone and in itself does not convey any decision / certainty on the possibility of women in the service of deacon.

4.1.2 Second interpretation of Acts 6:1-7

4.1.2.1 Acts 6:1-7 the institution of a particular service from which the service of deacon could have developed

In the Reformed tradition the origin of the service of deacon is traced back to the election of the seven men as related in Acts 6, and as reflected in the ordination formulary of deacons. From the beginning of the previous century this assumption has started being surrounded by doubts and questionings (Coetzee, 1967:44). Coetzee (1967:45) points out the following exegesis-related problems with regard to the opinion that Acts 6 describes the institution of the service of deacon:

- (i) The term 'deacon' was not used for them. They were called 'the Seven', in analogy, but also to distinguish them from 'the Twelve'.
- (ii) The election of the Seven occurred during an emergency situation as attention had to be given to the poor who had been overlooked, but their election was certainly not situated in that urgent administrative task only. What was of importance was that the congregation expressed dissatisfaction with the state of affairs, and in so doing exhibited a wrong attitude. The men who were chosen had to see to it that good order would be maintained within the congregation and that it would be managed well. Their task therefore also included the pastoral care that was necessary (also compare Versteeg, 1959:20).
- (iii) One part of their task was indicated as 'serving the tables'. Coetzee (1967:47-48) stated that this task also included the administering of the Lord's Supper (breaking of the bread) because the charity meals were not separate meals but meals that included the celebration of the Lord's Supper.
- (iv) Only once again any reference was made to the Seven in the NT (Acts 21:8). Five of the seven were not mentioned again in the Bible. The two (Stephen and Philip) who were mentioned again were mentioned in connection with their activities, such as spreading the Gospel, performing wonders, preaching as apostles would (Versteeg, 1959:21). The Seven were, therefore, not separated from ministry of the Word.

Coetzee (1967:49) concluded that the task of the Seven was a kind of proto-office from which the office of deacon developed. The task of the Seven included that they supervise or take care of

- (i) the widows;
- (ii) the material fellowship of the believers;
- (iii) the unity of the community life of the believers;
- (iv) the celebration of the Lord's supper; and
- (v) ministry of the Word and possibly the administering of baptism.

Gerritsen (1953:58) also concludes that Acts 6 does not reflect the institution of the service of deacon, because the seven do not feature again in the book Acts. Mention is repeatedly made of the elders in the congregation of Jerusalem (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18).

The background for the election of the Seven should therefore rather be sought in the tradition of the council of elders or the council of the synagogue that also consisted of seven men (Versteeg, 1959:20). The Seven probably was a second service that originated from the service of the apostles, people also later known as elders and from among whom the service of elderly and deacon might probably have developed.

According to this way of interpretation it sometimes also is argued that Acts 6 did not demand the institution of the service of deacons, but made clear the principle

that the congregation would have to get structures in place in order to prevent the fellowship and progress of the Gospel from being damaged or hampered in any way.

4.1.2.2 Conclusion on second way of interpretation of Acts 6:1-7

4.1.2.2.1 Acts 6:1-7 cannot be regarded as the institution of the service of deacon, but certain elements of the task of the seven men mentioned here, might later have developed to become that which is regarded as the service of deacon.

4.1.2.2.2 In the light of the fact that Acts 6:1-7 does not relate the institution of deacons it offers no conclusive decision on the service of deacon, and likewise also not on the inclusion of women in this service.

4.1.3 Table of conclusions (4.1.1.4 and 4.1.2.2) the two ways of interpretation of Acts 6:1-7

First interpretation	Second interpretation
<p>1. Acts 6:1-7 can be understood as the institution of the service of deacon together with the further development of the service in the church as it occurred from here onwards. This does not in the least give indication of a proto-type of the service of deacon.</p> <p>2. According to Acts 6:1-7 deacons are appointed in a position of authority (καθίστημι).</p> <p>3. According to Acts 6:1-7 deacons were officially confirmed in their service (laying on of hands).</p> <p>4. Even though only men were appointed and confirmed (laying on of hands) in Acts 6:1-7, this alone and in itself does not rule out the possibility of women in the service of deacon.</p>	<p>1. Acts 6:1-7 cannot be understood as the institution of the service of deacon, but certain elements of the tasks of the seven men mentioned here could later on have developed into what can be viewed as the service of the deacon.</p> <p>2. In the light of the fact that Acts 6:1-7 is not the institution of the service of deacon, it offers no conclusive decision on the service of deacon, and likewise also not on the inclusion of women in this service.</p>

4.1.4 Finding with regard to Acts 6:1-7

4.1.4.1 Acts 6 as such does not offer a decisive answer as to women in the service of deacon.

4.2 Romans 16:1-2

4.2.1 The actuality of the interpretation of Rom 16:1-2

Rom 16:1-2 as a rule features as part of argumentations about the possibility of women in the particular services or not. The level of argumentation of those who comment on or write about the relevant revelation of these verses shows quite significant differences.

4.2.2 Phoebe not in official service (one way of interpretation)

Those who argue that Phoebe did not officially act in the service, base their arguments on the word διάκονον / διάκονος saying that it does not necessarily give an indication of the service / office of deacon.

The word διάκονος frequently appears in the New Testament and represents a reasonably wide field of application. The word names Timothy a διάκονος (1 Tim 4:6), the twelve διακόνειν (Acts 6:2), Christ διάκονον (Rom 15:8), the governors/authorities διάκονος (Rom 13:4) without any of these acting as deacons. Neither could any of them possibly have been in the office of deacon. When used elsewhere in the New Testament the word most of the time indicates service done by

servers/servants. The occurrence of the word being directly linked to the service of deacon is less frequent and also clearly detectable and easy to point out.⁵⁶

One of the arguments that come to the fore is that Rom 16:1 is representative of an incidence where direct reference to the service of deacon is being made, as if Phoebe therefore would be in the service of deacon. Argumentation as quoted by Clark, among others, includes the following: "Because the word δίακονος can be translated either 'deacon' or 'servant' it is important to note that Paul did not choose to use the feminine form of the word but rather broke gender to identify Phoebe with the masculine form of the noun. This very strongly suggests that he was not simply calling her a servant ... but was rather using a formal term identifying her as a deacon".⁵⁷ Clark's reaction to this is: "But where in Greek literature does such a feminine form of the word occur? Neither Liddell and Scott nor Arndt and Gingrich list any feminine form. On the contrary, they both cite passages in which the masculine form applies to women".⁵⁸

The above mentioned includes that the usage of the word δίακονος is not and must not *per se* be a technical term simply because it has been used in the masculine form – it is the only form in which it does appear in the New Testament (also in Greek literature – Clark).

According to certain interpreters there is no doubt about the following: "Phoebe served in some very special and significant capacity of service in the church, but she was not a 'deacon' in the official sense of the term".⁵⁹

Den Boer⁶⁰ and Hendriksen⁶¹ state that Rom 16:1-2 does not render conclusive evidence that Phoebe indeed officially acted as deacon. Clark explains it as follows: "If the New Testament contained even a single instance of election and apostolic ordination of women as deacon, the fact would be conclusive. Without an example, however, the argument can never be conclusive. The best that can be done is to refer to Romans 16:1, where Phoebe is called diakonon, and from this infer that the church members had elected her and that the apostles thereupon ordained her. Such an inference is invalid. Note that in Acts 6:1 there was a daily *diakonia* before 'deacons' were elected and ordained. The word originally was not the name of an ordained officer, but designated anyone who served the needs of others."⁶²

In a Report of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken [*Reformed Churches of the Netherlands*] the following remark is being made: "In view of the uncertainty with respect to the status and the content of Phoebe's work it must be concluded that there is insufficient evidence to determine the relationship between deaconess in Romans 16:1 and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8ff."⁶³

4.2.3 Conclusion with regard to Rom 16:1-2

- 4.2.3.1 To use the word δίακονον / δίακονος is not purely and simply an indication of reference to the service/office of deacon in the full and official sense of the word.
- 4.2.3.2 To use the word δίακονον / δίακονος in reference to people does not mean that they were necessarily deacons.
- 4.2.3.3 To use the masculine form δίακονον / δίακονος when women are being referred to is not necessarily an indication they were in the service/office of deacon.
- 4.2.3.4 Romans 16:1-2 does not contain a statement beyond doubt that Phoebe had been in the service/office of deacon. However, it certainly does convey the message that her work of service in the church was of an exceptional and important nature, highly estimated and much appreciated.

⁵⁶ Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12, 13.

⁵⁷ Clark GH: "The ordination of women" in JW Robbins "The church effeminate", p228.

⁵⁸ Clark GH: "The ordination of women" in JW Robbins "The church effeminate", p228.

⁵⁹ Knight (?) GW: The role relationship of men and women – New Testament teaching, p39.

⁶⁰ Den Boer C: Man en vrouw in bijbelse perspectief, p 85 [men and women in biblical perspective].

⁶¹ Hendriksen W: New Testament Commentary Romans, p500-501.

⁶² Clark GH: "The ordination of women" in JW Robbins "The church effeminate", p227 /6.

⁶³ Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland: Final Report by committee on women in office, p46.

4.2.3.5 Romans 16:1-2 cannot serve the purpose of evidence that women should be elected/appointed in the service or office of deacon, as Phoebe's exact position is not confirmed beyond doubt.

4.2.4 Finding with regard to Rom 16:1-2

Information on Phoebe via Rom 16:1-2 is not adequate enough for taking for granted or coming to a conclusive decision that women should indeed be ordained as deacons.

4.3 1 Timothy 3:1-16

In the study on women in the office of deacon the debate with regard to 1 Tim 3 emphasises 1 Tim 3:11. The reference here to women has, according to some, three ways of interpretation:⁶⁴

- (i) Women who render service in diaconal field.
- (ii) Wives of deacons
- (iii) Female deacons

4.3.1 First interpretation: Women who render service in diaconal field

One of the interpretations is that 3:11 refers to women in a separate category of service apart from the supervisors and deacons mentioned in the pericope.⁶⁵ Such women have not been ordained in the particular service, but render service in the field of diaconal service.

Argumentation for the interpretation	Argumentation against interpretation
<p>1. The position of $\square\sigma\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma$ 3:11: This word, in 3:8, possibly indicates here in 3:11 a new category in the cadre of church-related service. This is probably confirmed by the parallel between 3:8 ($\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\acute{\omicron}\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \square\sigma\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma \sigma\epsilon\mu\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$) and 3:11 ($\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\square\kappa\alpha\varsigma \square\sigma\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma \sigma\epsilon\mu\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$), both without an article.</p> <p>2. The fact that the reference to "women" is embedded in (3:11) the part on "deacons" (3:8-12): This could be a possible indication that the service of these women is situated in the field of diaconal services.</p> <p>3. The fact that 3:11 places requirements on the women that to a certain extent correspond with requirements that have to be met by deacons, but that differ in important aspects: Note especially that the requirement of a probation period before service as such commences (3:10), is excluded from those mentioned for women. This differentiation in requirements could possibly relate to differentiation in services.</p> <p>4. The further embodiment of this (non-particular) service of women in the early church history: There is evidence that the women rendered services on diaconal level without being ordained thereto like</p>	<p>1. The fact that clear indications of such separate (non-particular) service can be found nowhere else in the Bible.⁶⁷ The pericope Rom 16:1 (Phoebe) and 1 Tim 5:9-14 (the service of the widows) could possibly be understood as supporting to this point of view.</p> <p>2. The fact that 3:11 is according to this not only embedded in 3:8-12 but in fact also interrupts the discussion of requirements for male deacons (3:8-10,12).</p> <p>3. The parallel between 3:8($\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\acute{\omicron}\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \square\sigma\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma \sigma\epsilon\mu\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$) and 3:11 ($\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\square\kappa\alpha\varsigma \square\sigma\acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma \sigma\epsilon\mu\upsilon\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$) need not necessarily indicate a new category of service, but may also contain specific requirements for women that are part of the existing diaconal service.</p>

⁶⁴ Women's position in church: Appendix to Report, Supplementary Agenda, National Synod 1988, p50.

⁶⁵ De Boer EA: Zij aan Zij p112 [Side by Side].

the supervisors, deacons and elders. They were regarded as “deaconesses”. ⁶⁶	
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4.3.2 Second interpretation: Wives of deacons

A second way of interpretation is that the words γυναῖκας ἰσαύτως in 3:11 should be understood as if ἀπὸ τῶν has been written after γυναῖκας. This would mean that the meaning here is the “wives of deacons”.

Argumentation for interpretation	Argumentation against interpretation
1. The fact that 3:11 is embedded in the part that discusses deacons (3:8-12). Paul might have deemed it necessary to include specific requirements for deacons’ wives in Ephesus.	1. The fact that the pronoun ἀπὸ τῶν (of them) has not been added after γυναῖκας: If it had been about deacons’ wives in 3:11 one would have expected the pronoun ἀπὸ τῶν to follow the word women. 2. The position of ἰσαύτως in 3:11: This word, as indicated in 3:8, possibly also here in 3:11 refers to a new category within the cadre of church-related work of service. This is furthermore confirmed through the parallel between 3:8 (διακόνους ἰσαύτως σεμνοῦς) and 3:11 (γυναῖκας ἰσαύτως σεμνάς), in each case without an article. 3. The fact that no qualifications are offered for deacons’ wives as well: In the absence of the latter it can be assumed that 3.11 probably does not intend to discuss the wives of deacons. ⁶⁸

4.3.3 Third interpretation: Women in the service of deacon

A third way of interpretation is that 3:11 refers to female deacons.

⁶⁷ According to this interpretation the point of departure is invalid if it holds that women can only become part of the particular services if examples of her in that capacity can be found in the Bible. Expressed differently: the only valid conclusion that can be made from the fact that Paul mentions men only when he discusses requirements for elders (3:1-7), is that there had probably only been men in such a service among the Ephesians. To conclude from this that he indeed gives the instruction that women are not allowed to serve as elders, would mean an inadequate exegesis, unless such an interpretation can be substantiated from other parts of Scripture.

⁶⁶ Schwertley (1988:6-30) – an extensive overview of the position of women taken from early-Christian writings on the topic. It includes women as performing diaconal services, from the Didache (± 100 after Christ) until the Synod of Chalcedon (451 AD). He points out that nowhere in the writings mention is made of women being officially in the same position of deacon as the men. What is mentioned is that women performed services in the diaconal field of service without being officially ordained, which deacons, elders or supervisors usually would be. They can be regarded as deaconesses. It appears that their services were arranged according to the requirements contained in 1 Tim 5:9ff. Their work therefore differed greatly from the work of the deacons. Unlike deacons, the deaconess had to be at least 60 years of age (Synod Chalcedon 451 AD reduced the age to 40). The deaconess had to be a widow or at least unmarried, with deacons these specifications do not count. She worked under the supervision of a deacon or bishop, her work of charity and assistance was limited to women only, and she was allowed to teach converted females in the faith. In the Oriental Church deaconesses were confirmed (3rd century) but not officially ordained as functioning in one of the offices of church. The Synod of Nicea (325 after Christ) clearly states [Schwertley’s translation: “And we mean by deaconesses such as have assumed the habit, but who, since they have no imposition of hands, are to be numbered only among the laity.”] In his letter to Trajanus (± 113 AD) Plinius refers to two servants (ancillae) who are called deaconesses (ministrae). In the light of Church-historical evidence it would make sense to accept that the ministrae to which Plinius refered could have been an early form of such “deaconesses”.

⁶⁸ There is, however, an alternative point of view about this: the fact that no specifications are offered with regard to elders’ wives, is explained as follows according to this point of view: (1) Requirements for the wives of deacons are listed because they are involved/ should be involved/ could be involved in the work of their husbands’ diaconal services. The nature of diaconal work often makes it necessary for women to work with women to prevent all kinds of suspicions from setting in. That they could quite naturally become part of service on diaconal level also ties in with the broader picture of women as the caretakers, as illustrated in the Bible. (2) No requirements for the elders’ wives are added because women are not allowed to function in church on the typical and particular level of elders that would include (official) teaching and ruling. Wives of elders would not be allowed to be part of their husbands’ work of service as elders.

Argumentation for interpretation	Argumentation against interpretation
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The parallel between 3:8 (διακόνους □σαύτως σεμνούς) and 3:11 (γυνα□κας □σαύτως σεμνάς) may indicate specific requirements applying to women in the existing service of deacon. 2. This way of interpretation eliminates the interruption of the requirements for people who are in the service of deacon (3:8-12). The requirements for female deacons are stated before those in 3:12, because those in 3:12 (must be “the husbands of one wife”) cannot apply to women. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The fact that specified characteristics that apply to deacons (the male persons) are being repeated in this pericope when mention of women is made, as if they would not be included in the first group (deacons). Then there also are characteristics that are mentioned only in connection with the men as deacons while not mentioned as part of the list for the females, as if it would not be necessary for them to meet the requirements exactly as mentioned in the first part in connection with deacons. 2. The fact that the period of probation (3:10) is not included in the list of requirements mentioned for women is not properly accounted for in this way of interpretation. 3. The fact that nowhere else in the Bible clear indications of female deacons can be found.

4.3.4 Finding with regard to 1 Tim 3:11

4.3.4.1 It is highly probable that 1 Tim 3:1-16 refers to three groups, *i.e.* supervisors, deacons and women (δε□... ε□νρι and □σαύτως and absence of article).

4.3.4.2 In itself 1 Tim 3 does not include a conclusive remark on any of the above-mentioned interpretations, but in coherence with other parts of Scripture it does serve as support to different interpretations.

4.3.4.3 It is, however, highly probable that mention is made here of women who rendered important service in the church.⁶⁹

4.4 1 Timothy 5:3-16

In studying 1 Timothy 5:3-16 it would appear that three possible ways of interpretation of this part have surfaced:

- (i) A practical measure/arrangement in taking care of those who are “helpless”.
- (ii) A separate particular service performed by widows only.
- (iii) No particular service, but arrangements with regard to which of the widows have to be taken care of.

4.4.1 First interpretation: A practical measure/arrangement in taking care of those who are “helpless”

Attention is paid to the principle that a congregation must see to it that the necessary structures (or: particular services) are in place to ensure that the congregation can take good care of those who are “helpless”. In this part of Paul’s letter to Timothy (1

⁶⁹ In a report of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken [Christian Reformed Churches] in the Netherlands the following explanation of 1 Tim 3:11 is presented: [Quoted as previously translated] “In 1 Tim 3 Paul writes about qualifications to be met who serve the church [cit]. In verses 2 to 7 he focuses on bishops and elders and in verses 8 to 13 on deacons. In between there is a reference to women. What women does the apostle have in mind? The context makes it clear that he cannot possibly be thinking of all women in the church. Paul’s main focus is elders and deacons. Consequently a consideration of women in general at that point is unlikely. Does he mean the wives of deacons as some translations suggest? This view is open to criticism. In the first place the possessive pronoun ‘their’ does not appear in the original text. Furthermore it would be outside Paul’s train of thought to suddenly switch the attention to the wives of deacons. It is therefore most likely that the women referred to in 1 Tim 3:11 belonged to a third category, apart from the elders and deacons mentioned by Paul. It had to do with a group of women who had been called to a special function in the church. It suggests that there are two categories of deacons: one type of deacon that handles all aspects of diaconal work, including leadership, and another type of deacon who focuses on practical work under the direction of the former.” Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. Final Report by committee on women and office, p46-47.

Tim 5) he is not concerned with such services as might be performed in church by women. He is creating arrangements for a realistic situation that has to be addressed, as widows within the culture of those days could really find themselves in an undesirable position of need. His intention is to prevent this category of “helpless” people from being overlooked. He spells out the principles that apply to the situation.

4.4.1.1 Conclusion with regard to first interpretation

To consider Paul’s list of suggestions with regard to “serving widows” as reason for instituting such particular services in present day times, and that that should be taken as the level where female believers can and may operate in such particular services, is in no way convincing.

4.4.2 Second interpretation: A separate particular service performed by widows only

On the one hand 1 Tim 5:3-16 is regarded as a part in which ways of taking care of widows are considered, and on the other hand as ways in which widows can or may render services in churches. This pericope forms part of a broader entity of prescribed principles and suggestions provided by Paul (5:1 – 6:2), as conveyed to Timothy for the sake of knowing how to cope with different groups in the congregation when acting in his pastoral capacity. Paul indicates that two of the groups in particular deserve to be treated with respect, *i.e.* widows (5:3 “Honour widows who are really widows”) and the elders (5:17 “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour”). The underlying theme for 1 Tim 5:1-16 appears to be that true widows be honoured. Therefore widows ought to

- (i) receive honourable treatment from the congregation (5:3-8) and
- (ii) perform honourable work of service in the congregation (5:9-16).

Hendriksen supports this interpretation of a separate particular service meant for widows only, and is convinced that “there is sufficient evidence to show that in the early church such a body of widows with definite functions actually existed.”⁷⁰

The word καταλεγεσθω in verse 9 is of particular importance to this way of interpretation. The explanation of καταλεγεσθω or also καταλεγω is presented by Louw and Nida as follows: “καταλεγω: to enrol a person as a member of a group – to put one’s name on a list, to enter someone on a list”.⁷¹

The usage of this word in 1 Tim 5 furthermore refers to a special task (more than would be regarded as each believer’s usual duty) performed by widows in the congregation, that was acknowledged by the congregation and that occurred on an organised basis. According to the relatedness of these verses (the care of needy widows - a purely diaconal area, compare Acts 6:1-6), it can be gathered that this particular task is related to diaconal activities, especially with regard to the care of widows (a kind of widow-to-widow task). The requirements set for such widows show strong indications of a supportive and caring role and task.⁷²

According to history of church it becomes apparent that the early churches indeed supported such a separate service by women (1 Tim 3:11), specifically related to the requirements and service of the widows as contained in 1 Tim 5:9-10.

Bouma also underwrites this service by women but addresses its “officiality” by the explanation of καταλεγεσθω. In translation his argumentation includes the following: He writes that καταλεγεσθαι does not have the meaning of specially selected in this case. The word for that would have been ἐκλεψεσθαι καταλεγεσθαι meaning putting together, enrolling, enlisting, e.g soldiers, senators, citizens. Compiling a catalogue An election or a selection of these “church widows” is not at all mentioned here. For the same reason this cannot be understood as acting in a particular office of church as has been assumed by many. Because acting in a certain office would be attached to an election, appointment, ordination and confirmation in an office. No mention of any of these things is made here. Only a wrong translation of the word καταλεγεσθαι could have provided reason for such an assumption. Women in church

⁷⁰ Hendriksen W: New Testament Commentary 1 & 2 Thessalonians; 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, p173.

⁷¹ Louw JP; Nida EA: Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 37.104 vol 1, p394.

⁷² Acta 2003:579, 3.9.2.

can render related services, especially as would apply to other women, without acting in a particular office of church.⁷³

4.4.2.1 Conclusion with regard to second interpretation

4.4.2.1.1 In this part Paul definitely refers to specific widows⁷⁴ who performed spiritual works of service as well as care-related service in the church.

4.4.2.1.2 These widows had to meet certain requirements.

4.4.2.1.3 The word καταλεγεσθω as used in verse 9 makes it clear that they were not elected to this service, but that their names were entered on a list in the congregation if they qualified.

4.4.2.1.4 The word καθιστημι as used in Acts 6 would also have been the appropriate word to use in this case, if these women had been chosen for this particular service. Certain translations (*inter alia* OAV – 1933/53) are misleading when it comes to the way the phrase “to be chosen” is being used.

4.4.3 Third interpretation: No particular service, but arrangements with regard to which of the widows have to be taken care of

Unlike the previous interpretations this third interpretation does not assume the possibility of two facets (to be served or to serve) of widows in the congregation, but concentrates only on widows as being in need of care. In this case the list of requirements would serve the purpose of identifying those widows who would really qualify (on a permanent basis) for the mentioned care.

Based on thought-structure⁷⁵ the following would come to the fore:

(Paul’s command in 5:3 that widows should be honoured is a theme that runs through the unity of thought present in the pericope. This can be gathered by looking at the following:

- (i) Following the command in 5:3 Paul immediately explains in 5:4 that a widow who has children that can look after her, does not count among those who are widows in the true sense of the word. He also concludes with the same idea in 5:16.
- (ii) Three times in this pericope does he contrast widows who really are widows with those widows who are not really widows, *i.e.* in 5:4-5a those who have children and those who have really been left behind alone; in 5:5b-6 those who place their hope in God and constantly pray and keep on asking, and those who live in pleasure and are as good as dead while they are still alive. In 5:9-15 Paul compares widows who lived an orderly and proper life (elderly ones probably) to those who may have lived a sinful life (probably among the ranks of the younger ones).
- (iii) To the core of this part (5:7-8) Paul commands Timothy “And these things command, that they may be blameless.” What “these things” should be and

⁷³ Bouma C: Kommentaar op het NT - De brieven van het apostel Paulus aan Timotheus en Titus, p.179 [Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus].

⁷⁴ It is also argued that these women’s service was a regular service:

1. There are differences between the particular services that serve the authority of Christ, other organised services, spontaneous ad-hoc services, - all by using the gifts and talents provided by the Lord.
2. Some women’s service was of an organised and regular/fixed nature. Phoebe is called a “servant of the church” (Rom 16:1-2). She enjoyed formal acknowledgement in the congregation, an indication of more than the usual work of service rendered by believers. Also the more technical expression (diakonon ousant) indicates that the service was regular and of a specific format. In 1 Tim 5:9 it is also shown that the service embraced more than the usual work of believers. The mention of record keeping /listing also shows that these women’s work of service was organised and controlled.

There is, however, still a distinction between these women and deacons.

1. Rom 16:1-2: In the NT the word diakonos indicates someone in service as a deacon only on rare occasions and then also only when used together with the term used for elder (Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8, 12). The word prostatis is also a term that is not used to indicate service-in-authority. 1Tim 3: The fact that fewer requirements are listed for female (if so assumed) than for male deacons is an indication of a difference in duties. The work of the deacons (male) appears to be more extensive than the facets in which the females performed tasks or duties or service.
2. 1 Tim 5: The fact that the widows are being discussed here separately and not together with the other particular offices in 1 Tim 3, may be an indication that the apostle intends to separate their services from the other particular services.

⁷⁵ Breed DG; J van Rensburg F; Jordaan GJC: Manlik en vroulik in die kerk, p173 [Male and female in the church].

exactly whom the command is meant for, can be gathered from 5:8: they are a widow's next of kin and should be instructed to look after the widow. It would be rather strange if Paul would combine a description of widows who should be honoured and who qualify for care with a description of widows who performed certain congregation-related duties and took on such responsibilities.

4.4.3.1 Conclusion with regard to third interpretation

There's not a single trace of responsibilities assigned to certain women can be found in Paul's descriptions contained in 1 Tim 5:3-16. Paul merely states requirements that have to be met by the women described. It would be rather difficult to extract from the requirements certain responsibilities to be accounted for by the widows under description, as if they had been attached to certain church-related offices.

4.4.4 Comparative applications of different interpretations

Interpretation 1	Interpretation 2	Interpretation 3
A congregation must see to it that the necessary structures are in place (or particular services) to ensure that good care is taken of the "helpless ones", the widows described in 1 Timothy 5. Gender does not feature as an important aspect of such services.	1 Tim 5:9-10 shows that women of good and sound testimony must be appointed to perform work of charity within a congregation. Such women are not officially appointed as deacons (particular service of deacon) but do work on diaconal level.	Paul refers in 1Tim 5:9 when discussing the widows that should be listed, to widows that should be cared for by the congregation on a permanent basis.

4.4.5 Finding

- 4.4.5.1 The three different ways of interpretation are hermeneutically permissible and exegetically tenable.
- 4.4.5.2 No unanimity can be gained from the different interpretations' exegetic power to convince.
- 4.4.5.3 Exegetically there is a strong possibility that reference is here being made to women who performed specific services of charity-related nature in the churches.

5. Indirectly relevant parts of Scripture

5.1 *1 Corinthians 11:4 and 14:34*

5.1.1 First interpretation of 1 Cor 14:32-34 that women cannot serve in the particular services

The first interpretation of 1Cor 14:34 includes two ways of understanding. The first possibility has it that women, according to this part of Scripture, are not allowed to pray or prophesy during congregational gatherings. The second possibility is that she is not allowed to venture judgements in connection with prophecies during congregational gatherings.

5.1.1.1 First possibility: not to pray or prophesy during worship services

According to this possibility 1 Cor 14:34 refers to conduct during congregational gatherings. In the course of such occasions women, as a result of their being submissive to their husbands, are not allowed to speak, but should remain silent. This would mean that women are not allowed to act as leaders of the congregation during congregational gatherings, for example by praying or by prophesying.⁷⁶ This explanation is widely accepted in Reformed circles, and it means that female members of church may not lead during church services of worship by way of praying or preaching

⁷⁶ Grosheide K.V. p176.

5.1.1.2 Second possibility: not allowed to judge prophecies

According to 1 Cor 14:29 it becomes clear that all prophecies, whether official or non-official, were judged in the congregation to test whether they were true to the sound doctrine of the apostles or not. From an analysis of the thought-structure of 1 Cor 14⁷⁷ it is apparent that the so-called “silence-commandment” contained in 1 Cor 14:34-35, should not be read in isolation because it is so closely related to judgement of prophecies: during congregational gatherings women should not be part of the judging of prophecies. When it comes to this activity they must remain silent.

- (i) Why must they remain silent? Because during services of worship women must be the model of virtue in their submissiveness (34c: “they are to be submissive.....”), especially as the judgement of prophecies is a typical task of ruling (32: “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.”).
- (ii) Why must they be submissive? Not because of some custom of the community or other temporary circumstances, but because “as the law also says” (34d). “The law” as mentioned here as well as in many other places in the New Testament, refers to the written word of the Lord. Paul emphasises a principle of Scripture, namely that a woman’s conduct should be such that it does not interfere with her husband’s headship (compare 1 Cor 11:3-10). Submissiveness of the women in church serves as model of the church that is submissive to her (the church’s) Head, Jesus Christ (compare 1 Cor 11:3-4; Eph 5:21-33).
- (iii) How must women go about it if they have questions about the prophecies or desire to learn more about them? Verse 35b: “let them ask their own husbands at home”.
- (iv) Why may they not do so during the gathering? Verse 35c: “for it is shameful for women to speak in church”.

For the commands in 34b and 35c the same basis is used, but expressed in different words. In 34 the motivation for the command is “as the law also says”. In 35 the motivation is “for it is shameful (αἰσχρὸν) for women to speak in church”. This αἰσχρὸν unlike 11:6, is not only horizontally shameful, but also vertically (“as the law also says”), in other words it is a Scripture-related given.

Even though the circumstances within the congregational gatherings of those days differ from what we have in church today, the pericope nevertheless points out an important principle. God has given to female members of church a definite duty of submissiveness, *i.e.* that she must acknowledge the man’s headship - as a way of illustrating that the church acknowledges the Headship of her (the church’s) bridegroom Jesus Christ (compare 1 Cor 11:3-7; Eph 5:21-33). One particular way in which female members must bring into practice this unique duty, is that they should not participate in supervision of the preaching (a task which is in present day typically part of elders’ service of ruling). To express it in present day terms: women should not be part of a church council.

5.1.2 The second interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:32-36 is that women may serve in the particular services

According to this second point of view the “silence-commandment” of verses 34 and 35 is viewed as one of several regulations of order towards the end of 1 Cor 14: the speaking in tongues (verses 27-28), the prophecies (verses 30-33), the conduct of women during congregational gatherings (verses 34-35). These regulations of order are not directly related, but should each be evaluated on its own. The issue of women talking during gatherings is not about their praying or their prophesying (compare 1 Cor 11:5), and neither is it about their speaking in tongues. It is a type of speech (speaking/talking) that is forbidden and that differs from prophecy⁷⁸ as mentioned in

⁷⁷ Breed DG; J van Rensburg F; Jordaan GJC: Manlik en vroulik in die kerk , pp123-124. [*Male and female in the church*].

⁷⁸ Talking is not really the central issue in adjudicating prophecies. This viewpoint follows the explanation of verse 32 of Grosheide (Comm op het NT), Bruce (New Century Bible) and others, rather than Calvin’s or Floor’s or Horseley’s (and

verses 24-25 (in 1 Cor 11:5 women who prayed and prophesied are in any case clearly and directly mentioned).

What kind of talking/speaking then is being forbidden in these verses? The answer to this questions should be sought in the close relations between 14:34 and 14:35: verse 35a (“ ... if they want to learn something”) is a summary of the problem underlying the “talking” of the women during congregational gatherings. The problem originated when women in the congregational gatherings started asking questions about uncertainties experienced by them. Within the community life/society of those days such independent conduct coming from women was regarded as a minimisation of their husbands’ headship. In 35b the solution to the problem is offered: “let them ask their own husbands at home”.

The Scripture-related principle that applies here is that a woman’s behaviour in public should include nothing that would damage her acknowledgement of her husband’s headship – (34c-d: “they are to be submissive as the law also says”).

To ask questions during congregational gatherings would mean a violation of these principles would mean insufficient respect for her husband’s headship. In this sense the “silence-commandment” forbids the talking of women.

This pericope does therefore not forbid women to function as deacons. It indicates that she should function in such a way during congregational gatherings that she does not challenge or damage her husband’s headship.

5.1.3 Relevant conclusions

5.1.3.1 Both ways of interpretation take it that women of the congregation of the Corinthians prophesied, prayed and spoke in tongues during congregational meetings. The silence-commandment (14:34-35) does therefore not mean total silence, but silence in a qualified manner, the $\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\nu$ (14:34) pertaining to a singled-out part of the “talking”.

5.1.3.2 According to the first interpretation the prohibition on $\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\nu$ (14:34) points to the prohibition on prophecies. The command that women remain silent during congregational gatherings would therefore mean that they were not allowed to judge prophecies. As the judging of prophecies is related to the elders’ guarding over the sound ministering of doctrine, a position typical of the ruling service, it would mean that women, according to 1 Cor 14:34, may not function in the particular service of ruling (as elders).

5.1.3.3 According to the second interpretation $\lambda\lambda\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\epsilon\nu$ (14:34) points to the fact that women asked questions during congregational gatherings and by doing so affected their husbands’ headship adversely. This pericope offers no conclusive decision on the question of whether women are allowed to function in the particular services or not. What can be gathered is that women’s conduct should not be such that it threatens the men’s headship over them or render it questionable in any way, and the same would apply to their way of functioning in the particular services if this should happen to be relevant.

5.1.4 Finding

5.1.4.1 The two different ways of interpretation are hermeneutically permissible and exegetically tenable.

5.1.4.2 No unanimity can be gained from the different interpretations’ exegetic power to convince.

5.2 *1 Timothy 2:12*

It is apparent that according to this letter it is expected of women to be submissive in acknowledgement of their husbands’ headship.⁷⁹ And that the woman’s

others). Grosheide and others are of the opinion that verse 32 should be understood as an indication that prophecies do not occur beyond control, but within the control of the prophet by whom they are spoken. Each prophet can therefore wait for his turn (verse 30). Certain translations of the Bible (1983) correspond with this meaning. (1 Cor 14:32 – “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.”)

⁷⁹ As has already been explained and motivated in two of Paul’s previous letters, i.e. 1 Cor 11 and Eph 5.

submissiveness is motivated by strength of the order of creation (1 Tim 2:13)⁸⁰ and the fall (1 Tim 2:14). There are, however, two ways of interpretation that differ with regard to the question of whether 1 Tim 2:8-15 deals with information on the behaviour of the man and the woman when they attend gatherings together or whether it applies to their behaviour within their marriage. According to the first interpretation 1 Tim 2:8-15 states the foundation on which to base the conclusion that female members of the church should not function in the services of teaching and/or ruling. According to the second interpretation the possibility of such grounds for a decision of this kind is ruled out, leaving female members with the possibility of being suitable for such services.

An important issue that needs to be defined in this difference of interpretation is the question about “everywhere” (2:8) and where or what “everywhere” refers to. Is this about the men’s prayers in the gatherings or is it about their personal prayers? The answer to this question will in turn have an effect on an accompanying question: Is this (as related in 2:9-15) about the conduct of the women during services of worship or in their marriage?

5.2.1 First interpretation of 1 Tim 2:12 that women may not be included in the particular service

In 1 Timothy Paul shares pastoral advice with Timothy who has position as a leader in church among the Ephesians. He gives information on how the church as the “house of God” (3:15) should function. In 1 Tim 2 Paul points out that the congregation should be a congregation of prayer. In 2:1-7 he indicates that the congregation’s prayers should be to the well-being of all the community, especially that their prayers should eventually lead to everybody hearing the gospel so that all people may come to “the knowledge of the truth” (2:4).

In 2:8-15 he gives an indication of how the congregation’s conduct “everywhere” must be orderly. The “everywhere” is qualified in verse 8 as all places where praying occurs. This would include every occasion of prayer and worship (Douma) and thus all the gatherings of the congregation. In today’s terms: all services of worship. The verse (2:8) starts off with instructions to the men and their behaviour during gatherings and continues with the women’s conduct (2:9-15). Proper behaviour is required of both men and women on such occasions.

The proper behaviour is, however, not limited to the gatherings only, especially as such behaviour includes good deeds (2:10). Believers’ good deeds are after all noticed in the course of daily life. Verse 2:15 confirms that, even though the discussion of behaviour in the pericope starts with what things should be like during gatherings, the discussion of good behaviour extends beyond the congregational gatherings to believers’ way of living in general. The way believers behave themselves wherever they are should correspond with their behaviour in church.⁸¹

There is a remarkable similarity between behaviour-related discussions in 1 Tim 2:11-12 and 1 Cor 14:34-35, *i.e.* with regard to women’s conduct during congregational gatherings as well as in congregational life.

- (i) In both parts God states, via the apostle Paul, what order He desires during congregational gatherings around his Word and in prayer.
- (ii) In both parts women are reminded to behave in a quiet manner and to allow for themselves to receive teaching instead of speak out. In both cases the command is motivated by reference to the Old Testament and not by demands of community customs, nor by the apostle’s personal preferences.
- (iii) In 1 Tim 2 the revelation-historical line is followed through back to creation: “*For Adam was formed first then Eve*”. The conduct of women is as a result determined by the specific creational order given by God in the beginning, the

⁸⁰ As in 1 Cor 11.

⁸¹ This general behaviour would, it stands to reason, also include behaviour in marriage. However, to understand 2:8 as if it would (basically) refer to responsibilities within marriage would be to ignore (according to this interpretation) the explicit prayer-context of the verse. It should most probably be understood as referring to any place/occasion of prayer and worship, as is also accepted by the majority of exegetes.

(sequential-)order of creation that, according to 1 Cor 11, serves as basis for the man's headship over the woman. In congregational gatherings and congregational life women must behave quietly and receptive to teaching to be in line with the (sequential-) order of creation, and by doing so will reflect the church as honouring its Head, Jesus Christ, while quietly listening to his words.

- (iv) 1 Tim 2:14 draws the revelation-historical line through to the Fall: “*And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*” Within the context the point is not really who has to be accused as the guilty party, but by whom the lead was taken. Adam who as head was supposed to take the lead, left everything to Eve and followed her in committing transgression. Both committed sin and both were guilty. The point is: both man and woman must honour the place or position allocated to them by God. Paul applies this point to the silence-commandment for women.

5.2.1.1 Relevant conclusions

In accordance with the specific position allocated to them in distinction from men, women ought to refrain from entering into a position that would allow for them to take the lead in a congregation.⁸² In this way women would comply with the submissiveness commandment as founded in the creation and fall of the human being.

5.2.2 Second interpretation of 1 Tim 2:12 that women may function in the particular service

According to this point of view Paul issues instructions (in 1 Tim 2:8-15) about the way believing men and women should behave themselves within their marriage and as married couple in the congregation or church, *i.e.* within God's household (3:15) and this so that those who do not believe may come to the knowledge of the truth (2:4; also compare 3:15c). In the context of the destruction of values, also those which applied to marriage, that followed in the wake of doctrines of deception (4:3), Paul now first tells the men how they should behave in marriage (“holy hands” is a pre-condition for prayer) (2:8). Paul then continues by instructing women how they should behave in marriage (2:9-11). These instructions he based on the history of creation and fall (2:13-15).

5.2.2.1 “everywhere” (ἐν παντί τόπῳ - 2:8)

The phrase ἐν παντί τόπῳ can be translated as “everywhere”. In some translations τόπῳ is understood as “place of meeting”. With regard to 2:11 some translations add an insertion according to the same semantic field, indicating that in 2:11a it is written: Γυνὼ ἐν σιχαίῳ μανθανέτω (meaning that a woman should in silence allow for herself to be taught). If this phrase is presented as “a woman must let herself be taught in the service of worship” it would have as a result that all of the pericope 2:8-15 would be understood as instructions applying to the service of worship. In spite of the fact that this way of interpretation is widely accepted, there is no reason, according to the pericope itself, to believe that the instructions are meant specifically and exclusively for behaviour related to the service of worship.

Τοπῳῖν the phrase ἐν παντί τόπῳ can also be understood as “in every respect”. Louw & Nida⁸³ show that the word may also be used in the semantic field “to do” and then meaning *a position that would include activity and responsibility*, with

⁸² The perfect leadership belongs to our Lord, Jesus Christ. For the sake of the church He acts as Perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2), as Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). His guidance as leader includes the following: as a shepherd would guard his sheep, protecting them against dangers (Ps 23:4), love and care (Ps 23:1), showing the right direction (Ps 23:3), so the Lord protects his church (Isaiah 40:11), looks after his church with loving care (Ps 77:21; Isaiah 40:11; Rev 7:17), leads it in the right direction (Isaiah 48:17; Rom 2:4; Rev 7:17). He leads (cares for, protects, indicates the right direction) his church through his Spirit (John 16:13; Rom 8:15) and He leads through his Word (Ps 25:5; 43:3; 2 Thes 13, 14). In all these the Lord also uses people as instruments (Ps 77:21). In the New Testament He appoints servants to guard over his church (1 Peter 5:2), to care of it (John 21:17; Acts 20:28), to protect it (John 21:16; Acts 20:29-31), to equip it as body of Christ with sound doctrine (2 Tim 3:10 – 4:5; Eph 4:12; 2 Tim 3:17) and to guide and direct it on the road to salvation (1 Cor 11:1,2; Titus 2:11-16). To live up to such a way of leading does not merely mean to indicate direction to the congregation (1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 3:16, 17) but also to be an example to the congregation (1 Tim 4:12). For this reason a proper leader should be more than merely a proper leader at church, it would mean to be a proper leader at home as well (compare 1 Tim 3:4, 12).

⁸³ 1988a, 513.

reference to Acts 1:25.⁸⁴ The result would be that the pericope from 2:8 on is not necessarily about the service of worship. Due to this the instructions that follow in 1 Timothy can be understood as instructions that are not related to the service of worship, but are related to behaviour within marriage.

5.2.2.2 The command to the men in 2:8

In 2:8 Paul indicates that the men's hands must be "holy" for prayer. The men must see to it that the hands which they lift up in prayer are not stained or dirty because of anger and disputes/"wrath and doubting". These refer to such activities and emotions within the marriage. Against doctrines of deception that treated marriage with contempt (4:3) Paul presents the correct behaviour of men within the marriage. Men as part of "the house of God" (3:15) must treat their wives in such a way that they may lead a life "in all godliness and reverence" (2:2) and may use their lives to bring people to "the knowledge of the truth"(2:4). In this way the men will contribute towards making the congregation "the pillar and ground of the truth" (3:15, all against the doctrines of deception that caused the marriage to suffer damage (4:3).

5.2.2.3 The command to the women in 2:9-12

In 1 Tim 2:9-12 Paul in the first place issues commands in connection with adornment, making themselves look pretty (2:9-10); secondly he pays attention to learning, teaching and authority (2:11-12). These commands pertain to their behaviour in marriage.

(i) Learning

"Let a woman learn in silence with all submission" (2:11). Their attitude must display inner calmness (ὄν ὄσυχί 2:11-12).⁸⁵ According to 2:12, in which mention is made of the relationship between men and women, it becomes clear that it is expected of women to be submissive to men. As Paul is here dealing with the marriage, this has to do with women being submissive to their own husbands, as in Eph 5.

(ii) teaching and exercising authority

It is important to understand the word διδάσκειν correctly, as used in the command "I do not permit the woman to διδάσκειν (2:12). In context this word appears to refer to "prescribe". Women may, according to 2:12, not prescribe to men (their own husbands). Apart from this command Paul also forbids the woman to exercise authority over her husband (ἀθέντε 2:12). The exercising of authority is qualified - it is clear from 2:12 that she is forbidden to exercise authority by prescribing to him.

(iii) double-foundedness of the commands to women

The commands to the women are founded in the Old Testament.

(1) In the first place Paul refers to the sequence of creation of the human being (2:13). Paul emphasises that Adam had been formed first and then Eve followed. This sequence in 2:13 indicates that women should learn from their husbands in a submissive manner and with innermost calmness (2:11) and that they should not prescribe to their husbands and in this way exercise authority over them (2:12). It appears that Paul derives from the sequence of creation that husbands have been allocated a certain position by God and that this position should be acknowledged by their wives. This corresponds with the idea of headship as presented in 1 Cor 11; also compare 1 Cor 14 and Ephesians 5.

(2) In the second place Paul refers to the fact that not Adam, but Eve had been deceived (2:14). Paul's line of argumentation is that Eve had taken the lead and had therefore disregarded her husband's headship. She

⁸⁴ Compare also Koster, 1975:205-206.

⁸⁵ Compare also Louw & Nida, 1988a, p327.

therefore did not display the submissiveness mentioned in 2:11; on the contrary, she did what Paul forbids women of faith to do (2:12). In 2:15 Paul states that Eve, after she had been deceived, landed up in a state of transgression and that all women consequently are part of the state (compare third person plural in 2:15). It is remarkable that women can be saved (2:15) : “Nevertheless, she will be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control”. It would appear that Paul here has the doctrine of deception surrounding marriage in mind (compare 4:3). Women will illustrate that they cherish the truth if they reject the false doctrines and respect their marriages

5.2.2.4 Relevant conclusions

In 1 Tim 2:8-15 the headship of the man is emphasised as well as the accompanying demand that is placed on the woman because of it, namely that she has to be submissive. The same can be found in other parts of Scripture. Although this part is not about particular services as such, it certainly indicates that women may in no way - even if she does function in a particular service – minimise their husbands’ headship or fail to acknowledge it.

5.2.3 Finding

The two different ways of interpretation are hermeneutically permissible and exegetically tenable.

No unanimity can be gained from the different interpretations’ exegetic power to convince.

5.3 Galatians 3:26 – 29

The main theme of the letter is presented in Gal 2:15-21: the believer is made righteous by faith and not because of subjection to the law. If Paul, by mentioning the “Jew and the Greek” (3:28), intends to refer to those who had been circumcised and those who had not been, it would fit in well with the main theme of the letter. Paul opposes the false teachers who demanded that the believers be circumcised. Paul would then understandably have emphasised that the circumcision is not relevant to the justification and salvation of the human being, because coming to righteousness is made possible by Jesus Christ only.

It is, however, not clear in which way Paul’s reference to “neither slave nor free” and “neither male nor female” (3:28) would tie in with the purpose of the letter. The letter does not reflect that the false teachers in any way spoke about the relationship between slave and freeman or men and women. It is, however, noteworthy that Paul points out that “all” believers are God’s children (3:26). Although translations may differ in the positioning of the word “all” in the sentence, it remains a word emphasised and it leaves no doubt whatsoever that it means no person is singled out, everybody is included. The fact remains (Arichea & Nida, 1975:83; Ridderbos, 1976:147). In the next verse (3:27) the fact is again emphasised by the statement “for as many of you as” have been baptised in Christ, have put on Christ. Not a single one of those baptised in Christ has been left out - each one of them has put on Christ. The emphasis continues when Paul confirms in 3:28 that all are one in Christ.

A question that emerges is why Paul would so definitely emphasise in 3:26 that *all* have been included while in 3:1 to 5:1 he is mainly discussing that coming to righteousness happens through faith only. When taking into consideration that Paul is up in arms against the false doctrine that is being spread by some, the emphasis gains in significance - he wants to emphasise that salvation or being included as Abraham’s descendants (covenant) is in no way linked to circumcision or to upholding those laws of the Jews as the false teachers would have it. According to them qualifying as part of the Jewish Christendom would require circumcision. When viewing 3:1 to 5:1 in the light of this fact it becomes evident that Paul intends to make quite clear, in a non-dogmatic manner, that salvation is possible only through faith.

5.3.1 Finding

5.3.1.1 Gal 3:26-29 is not about women in the particular service.

5.3.1.2 It does shed light on the fact that all believers, women included, are in Christ part of the promises of the covenant with Abraham, which could have implications related to women in the particular service according to a certain way of interpretation.

5.4 *Ephesians 5:21-33*

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit Paul is pointing out to believers how they should go about leading their daily lives. In 5:21 he begins with guidelines for Christians in different relationships of authority. He starts off with a general principle that applies to all relationships of authority (5:21),⁸⁶ and then he moves on to guidelines of conduct for three specific relationships:

- (i) The relationship of husband and wife in marriage (5:22-33)
- (ii) The relationship between parents and children (6:1-4)
- (iii) The relationship between masters and slaves/servants (6:5-9)

5.4.1 The general principle for all relationships of authority (5:21)

The overarching principle for relationships of authority is contained in this: *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ* (NIV). The expression *out of reverence for Christ* indicates that Christ's relationship with us and ours with Him would form the basic and determining factor in our relationships of authority. Both the authority-bearer and the authority-subject are called upon to shape their relationships around Christ in a way that would emphasise Christ's authority over the church. Not only what Christ desires, but also Christ's own way of doing would serve as model or example. Paul applies this basic principle to all three the mentioned relationships of authority. For the purpose of the present argument the relationship between man and wife will be singled out here for discussion.

5.4.1.1 Command to women not to be viewed in isolation

As is always the case when both parties in a relationship receive a certain command or assignment in a relationship (e.g. parents and children or masters and slaves) what is demanded of the wife (5:22-23) cannot be viewed in isolation, but will include what is demanded of the other party, the husband, as well. God demands of the wife "*..as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything*" (5:24 NIV). If this should be viewed in isolation it would mean that the wife should in an absolute sense be submissive to the headship of her husband. But as soon as the command to the husband is viewed alongside this, the perspective changes and the command to the wife can be better understood. Of the husband is demanded: "*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*" (5:25 NIV). This is therefore not a case of the one being submissive (wives) and the other being the ruler (husband). Rather is it a case of husband and wife - out of reverence for Christ - being submissive one to the other. Such submissiveness is differentiated and specified in the consecutive verses.

5.4.1.2 Exclusive command to husband and wife

On the surface it might seem that the wife only has to submit and the husband only has to love (5:22-25). This, however, is not the case. In 5:21 it is written that both parties should be submissive. It is also written in the Bible that both parties are included in the sharing of love (1 John 4:7).⁸⁷ To be *submissive* and to *love* apply to all believers. In marriage these two commands enter into a close specification, a more detailed level. The wife must specifically be submissive. So all believers must be in their relationships, but in marriage the wife's task in particular is to be submissive. On the other hand the command to the husband is specifically to love. So all believers must do in their relationships, but in marriage the husband's

⁸⁶ There are also two other possible functions that 5:21 may have: (1) The verse can be understood as the introductory verse of only the pericope on relationship in marriage, so that the command of mutual submission may apply to the husband-wife relationship only (5:21-33). (2) The verse can be understood as a conclusion to the preceding pericope (5:6-21), so that the command of mutual submission may only apply to believers in general in their relationships, and not specifically to the relationship within marriage or between slaves and masters or between parents and children.

⁸⁷ 1 John 4:7: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."

specific task is to love, and then in such a way that his headship mirrors Christ's headship. All believers must love one another in a self-sacrificing way, but in marriage it is the husband's particular task to love. To be submissive and to love are accordingly – in Christ – commands that apply to both wives and husbands, and in marriage the wife especially submissive and the husband especially loving.

5.4.1.3 The relationship in marriage an image of the relationship between us and God

Paul states that a deep mystery is embraced in the relationship between husband and wife in marriage, and he applies this to the relationship between Christ and the church.⁸⁸ This fact strongly appeals to each couple. Each husband has been called to make visible his self-sacrificing love as Christ's self-sacrificing love for the church is visible. This would then in both cases apply to the headship/Headship as well. Each wife has been called to act in submissiveness and obedience to her husband to reflect what the church stands for in reverence to Christ.

5.4.2 Finding

5.4.2.1 It is not possible to derive from Eph 5:21-33 whether women may act as deacons or not.

5.4.2.2 Eph 5:21-33 gives a valuable description of how Christ's Headship over the church determines how husband and wife should treat each other.

5.4.2.2.1 The roles, that of the husband and that of the wife, are not interchangeable.

5.4.2.2.2 The wife's obedience to her husband is paralleled to the church's obedience to Christ. The husband's headship over his wife is paralleled to Christ' Headship over the church.

6. Synthesis

6.1 *Aspects related to Church Polity*

The following conclusions may especially be relevant to the study of gender with regard to service as deacon:

6.1.1 With the particular services humble work of service is important and not mastership in church (compare 2.1).

6.1.2 The particular services find their origin in God and not in the human being. The nature and functioning of such services are determined by God (compare 2.2).

6.1.3 The particular service, in distinction from the services rendered by all believers, encompasses a specific assignment or command, a specific and lasting duty, a person who meets certain requirements, a calling by the Lord, open and visible acceptance of service and ordination/ confirmation, and the congregation's obedient submission to the guidance provided (compare 2.3).

6.1.4 The deacons' service is to take care of mutual assistance and fellowship in the congregation, and to do so by initiating, coordinating and managing it, and to equip people to this end (compare 2.4).

6.1.5 Christ is the only Head of the church. People therefore have in themselves no authority. People in the particular services are serving the authority of Christ. They act in serving authority and in this they are responsible to the King of the church (compare 2.4).

6.1.6 The Lord has only authorised the church with the key power. Particular services are therefore only about authorisation and competence (*potestas*) and not about autonomy of authority (*auctoritas*) (compare 2.4)

6.1.7 Not all gifts from God lead to particular service in church. Gifts of mercy and particular service do therefore not necessarily go together (compare 2.2).

6.2 *Hermeneutic model*

6.2.1 The same hermeneutic model as that being used in previous studies of the GKSA has been used and further refined in this report.

6.3 *Scripture-related perspectives on women and their service in church*

6.3.1 Generally relevant lines of Scripture

⁸⁸ Eph 5:32: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

- 6.3.1.1 According to Gen 1 God created the human being. God made people to be male and female and after his image. In Gen 2 differentiation is revealed according to which the man takes the lead and the woman acts as supporter who belongs there. According to one way of interpretation these gender-related stipulations apply to husband and wife, *i.e.* to a situation marriage only and cannot be applied to general situations (men and women) in society. Other interpretations have it that the stipulations also include church-related situations.
- 6.3.1.2 With the Fall (into sin) the woman transgressed first and the man abandoned his headship by following the woman's lead into transgression. The consequences of the fall include that the man's leadership shows signs of lust of power, and the woman, instead of displaying submissiveness, shows signs of a desire to rule over the man.
- 6.3.1.3 God reveals that He, apart from the service of all believers, also gives the church particular services, and that He calls people thereto.
- 6.3.1.4 Nobody has of nature on in himself or herself the capacity that makes him/her suitable for particular service (also not because of his/her gender).
- 6.3.1.5 At the right time the Holy Spirit provides the church with the right gifts.
- 6.3.1.6 The Holy Spirit distributes gifts among men and women according to his will.
- 6.3.1.7 The Holy Spirit provides gifts that are necessary for particular service. Not everybody who receives these gifts has been called by God to use them exactly in the particular services.
- 6.3.1.8 The Scriptural principles for the relationship between husband and wife bear relevance to the question of gender in the particular services. According to the one way of interpretation God reveals that women are not called to the particular services, but that their gifts should be used in other ways. According to the other interpretation God reveals that gender is of no significance in the calling to the particular services.

6.4 *Headship as particular Scriptural line in the New Testament*

6.4.1 Christ's Headship as point of departure

The study of Scripture made it clear that Christ's Headship continues along a particular line of revelation in the New Testament on the whole, and that it in many aspects is linked to the particular services of believers in church (compare 5.1 and 5.4; also compare BC, Art 31). The particular services should be set and made to function in such a way that at no point there will be doubts about Christ's position as the only Head of his church. The man-woman relationship should represent Christ's Headship in a special way.

6.4.2 Headship in marriage

One of the clearest revelations of and about Christ's Headship is to be found in Ephesians 5:21-33. In Ephesians 5 it is taught that the relationship between husband and wife in context of marriage should be a visible illustration of the relationship between Christ and his church (compare 5.4). "For the husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church:" (Eph 5:23), and "as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands" (Eph 5:24).

According to Eph 5:31 it is apparent that the man's headship over the wife had already at creation been given by God. The fact that the husband "will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife" (Gen 2:24), shows that the man is leading the way to forming his own new household, a household headed by him according to Ephesians 5:23 (compare 6.3.1.1). The headship of the husband is therefore a God-given reality. In marriage he has to take the lead. Genesis 2:18 mentions the woman: "I will make a helper comparable to him" (NKJ). That the woman will act as helper is even so a God-given reality. She is the one to assist, support and complement her husband physically, spiritually and emotionally and who must submit to his leadership (Eph 5:22).

The fact that the husband is the head and that the wife is a helper suitable for him, does not render any of the two as either superior or inferior. Both husband (the man)

and wife (the woman) are God's children in Christ and equally so. As such, both are heirs to the gift of life, to the promises of the covenant (Gal 3:28; 1 Peter 3:7). The husband remains head and the wife remains helper, the two positions are not interchangeable. This is by no means an indication of predomination by the husband or slave like submission on the part of the wife. Even from creation on the husband's headship and leadership includes loving care (compare 5.3). Ephesians 5:25 emphasises the component of love by reminding husbands to love their wives even as Christ loved the church by sacrificing himself.

The fall (into sin) cut directly into the husband-wife relationship. As a result of sin husbands' headship shows an inclination towards rulership/dictatorship and wives' submission turns into a yearning for taking over the husband's position as leader (compare 6.3.1.2).

6.4.3 Headship during congregational gatherings

In 1 Corinthians 11:3-15 another dimension of headship is revealed: "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, the head of Christ is God". The relationship between God and Christ as Mediator should be reflected in the relationship between husband and wife (compare 5.1), *i.e.* Christ as Mediator and head of the new human being in the congregational gatherings. A woman whose conduct interferes with her husband's/men's authority in congregational gatherings would therefore interfere with God's authority (compare 5.1). Similarly a man whose conduct interferes with self-sacrificing love towards his wife would dishonour his Head, Jesus Christ. However, if the opposite happens and the woman abides with what is expected of her, good order would follow in the congregational gatherings, so much so that even the angels will rejoice (compare 5.1); and if the man abides with what is expected of him, there would be good order in congregational gatherings.

In which way should a woman during congregational gatherings prove that she acknowledges her husband's/men's headship?

In reply to this question the Bible is understood or interpreted in different ways: Interpretation 1 has it that reference is made to the relationship between all men and women in general. Interpretation 2 concludes that reference is made to the relationship between husband and wife in marriage. Below the two interpretations are presented in two parallel columns.

Interpretation 1	Interpretation 2
<p>In marriage husbands and wives are assigned with the task to mirror Christ's relationship with the church and vice versa, <i>i.e.</i> Christ's Headship over the church and the church's willingness to serve Christ as Head (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3; 1 Peter 3). In the church this task is extended to every man and every woman: Christ's Headship is embodied in the conduct of every male member and the church's willingness to serve Christ in that of every female member. This extension is confirmed in 1Cor 11:2-15 and 1 Tim 2:8-15 - parts of Scripture that refer to conduct of both each man and each woman during congregational gatherings. As far as women are concerned it means that they are in practice not allowed to teach or</p>	<p>The fact that distinguishing tasks have been assigned to husbands and wives in marriage (e.g. Eph 5; Col 3; 1 Peter 3) cannot without further ado be transferred onto the woman's church-related functioning. The complete implementation of her gifts is not contrary to Ephesians 5 – on condition that her functioning does not disregard her husband's headship.</p> <p>The very fact that the headship of the husband and the submissiveness of the wife should be in accordance with the relationship between Christ as Head of the church as his body, means that there must be room for the woman to use her gifts in every sphere of the church – also with regard to the particular</p>

<p>exercise authority during congregational meetings (1 Tim 2:12), may not supervise the preaching or good order (1 Cor 14:32-35), nor may they in any manner, with regard to men, take the lead (1 Tim 2:12-14).</p> <p>By refraining from such functions, women fulfil the wonderful task of being an example of a church that acknowledges the Headship of Christ. At the same time they also acknowledge that it is the task of men to be an example of Christ who lovingly teaches, cares for and leads his church. Not one of these respective tasks is more important or honourable than the other. By fulfilling such tasks nothing interferes with the important fact that all believers, men as well as women, are equally children of God in Christ (Gal 3:28), neither with the fact that they (men and women) are heirs to eternal life (1 Peter 3:7). Furthermore such specified functioning of women in the church does not deprive them of the opportunity to use what gifts of God have been bestowed on them in general service of the believer (e.g. Rom 16:1,2; Acts 16:26; Phil 4:3). The body of Christ is after all not passive, but growing and full of life (Eph 4:11-16). The gifts of women can also be arranged in such a way under leadership of the church council that they deliver service in diaconal field on a fixed basis (1 Tim 5:9-10).</p>	<p>services – together with the acknowledgement of her husband’s headship. This also applies to 1 Cor 11 (the wife/woman’s conduct during congregational gatherings), and 1 Pet 3:7 (women are included as heirs to eternal life). The testimony and statements contained in these parts of Scripture amount to this, that there must be room for women in all spheres of church activities – the particular services included – to use their gifts, still in proper acknowledgement of their husbands’ headship. Also 1 Tim 2:8-15, that contains discussions on the conduct of men and women in general as well as in marriage specifically, indicates that the wife may in no manner – even if functioning in the particular services - interfere with or fail to acknowledge her husband’s headship.</p>
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6.4.4 Practical implications

Interpretation 1	Interpretation 2
<p>With regard to diaconal service and leadership in the congregation⁸⁹, female members, in acknowledgement of male headship, ought not to serve as deacons. Such gifts of charity as female members have received can in orderly fashion be used in the field of diaconal service without them being called or ordained as deacons. By analogy to the widows in 1 Tim 5:9 females</p>	<p>Gender as such cannot be counted as a decisive factor in determining who qualifies as suitable to be elected for the particular service of deacon and who not. Not by Scripture-related information is a prohibition imposed on the possibility of female believers in the particular service of deacon. The condition, however, is that the married woman should not disregard or minimise her</p>

⁸⁹ The formulary for ordination of deacons uses the following terms that typify their service as leadership-related in the congregation: [At the time of writing no English version of the Reformed formulary is available and therefore no direct quotations are ventured.]

- # The deacons are called to see to it that the members of congregation exercise their unity in Christ in actual mutual love. Note that the deacons are not assigned the task of ruling or managing the mutual love, but the task of guiding/leading the congregation towards exercising such love.
- # The deacons must see to it that believers are good to fellow beings. This means that deacons must guide/lead believers towards being good to fellow beings.
- # They must visit the members and inspire them to show love accompanied by deeds.
- # They must equip the congregation to render service.

All these tasks stand in direct relation to guidance or leading in the congregation. For this reason deacons’ awareness is alerted to being proper leaders in the congregation, and the congregation’s awareness is alerted to allowing themselves to be led by the deacons in the community of believers.

<p>can be placed on a list of willing or serving women. These women can then perform deeds of particular charity work within the congregation and under leadership of deaconate.</p>	<p>husband's headship or even place it in doubt or evoke suspicion around the validity of his headship, even as the married man should in all areas steer away from causing his self-sacrificing love for his wife to suffer damage or be less effective.</p>
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7. Concluding remark

According to the findings as presented above it is clear that the Deputies could not arrive at a conclusively significant recommendation. However, for the greater part of the report there is unanimity and agreement, namely about church polity pertaining to particular services (2), the relevant hermeneutic points of departure (3), the exegeses of a variety of relevant parts of Scripture (4 and 5). With regard to some parts of Scripture different ways of interpretation have been presented and have proved to be hermeneutically permissible and exegetically tenable. The agreement for the greater part is also evident from the synthesis (6). There are, however, differences in opinion about the implication of headship of the male as applies to congregational gatherings (6.4.3 and 6.4.4). Also in this case both ways of interpretation have been assessed as hermeneutically permissible and exegetically tenable, excluding the exegetic power to convince, in which case a difference is still detectable. By this is not implied that Scripture is in itself contradictory. The different ways of interpretation are but a sign of our inability to understand Scripture fully in all detail.

Deputies consequently present two sets of recommendations to Synod and they recommend that the choice of recommendation rest with Synod.

7.1 *Interpretation 1*

According to Interpretation 1 Synod decides about the following:

- 7.1.1 That the gifts of charity received by female members of church be implemented in orderly fashion in the diaconal area of service without such females being called or ordained as deacons.
- 7.1.2 By analogy to 1 Tim 5:9 females of such gifts may be listed by church council and deacons as women willing to serve, allowing them to perform deeds of particular charity work in the congregation under leadership of the deaconate.
- 7.1.3 Result of 7.1.1 and 7.1.2
- 7.1.3.1 Synod must provide churches with guidance as to how the question of females already functioning as deacons should be approached and addressed.

7.2 *Interpretation 2*

According to Interpretation 2 Synod decides about the following:

- 7.2.1 In congregations where it can occur in peace and contribute towards progress, members of church may be called and ordained as deacons regardless of gender, but on condition that they meet all other requirements.
- 7.2.2 **Result of 7.2.1**
- 7.2.2.1 The formulary for ordination must be adapted to include both genders.
- 7.2.2.2 Synod must consider to which extent art 38 of the CO is affected by this interpretation.