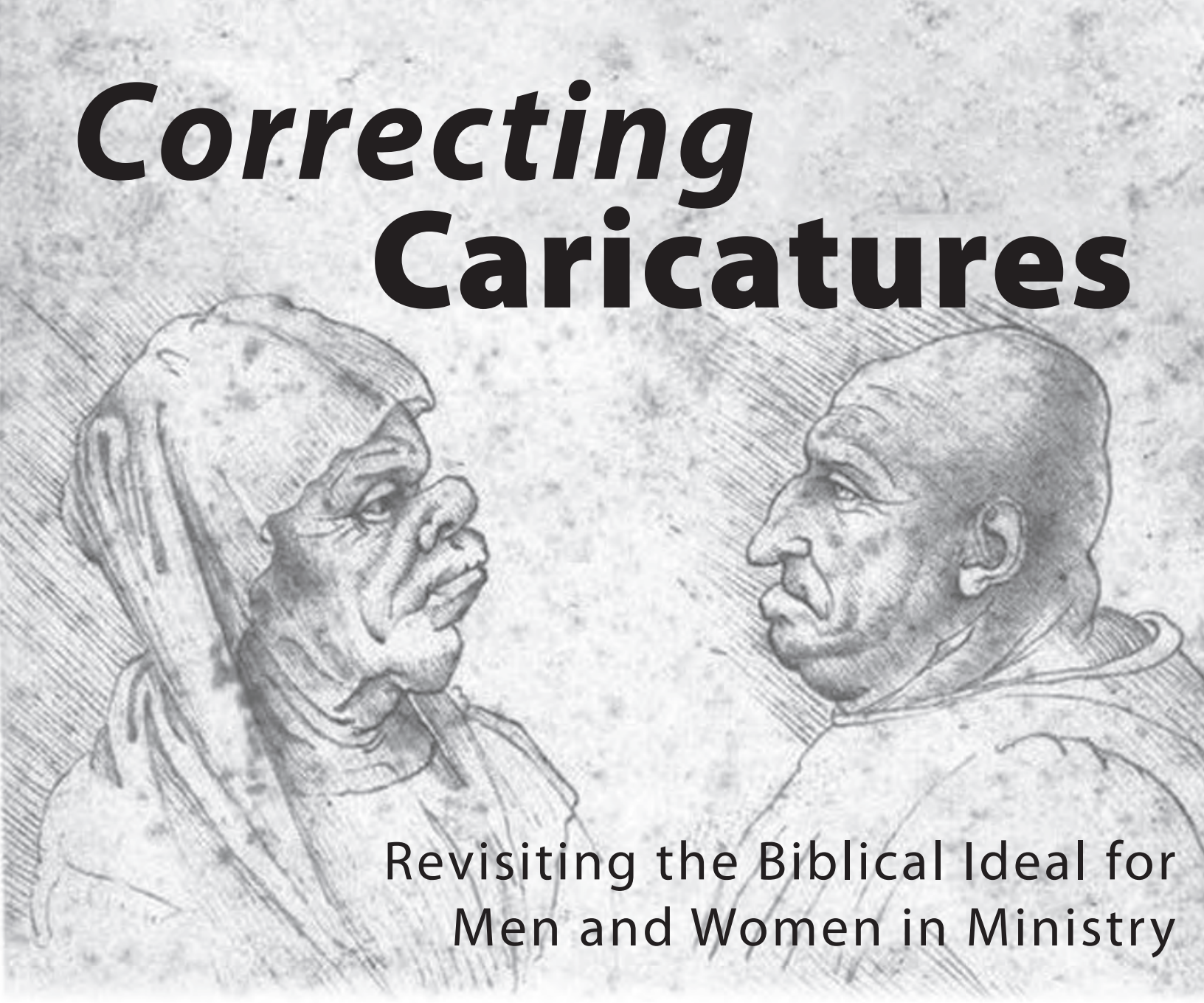
Correcting Caricatures



Revisiting the Biblical Ideal for Men and Women in Ministry

Featuring

Correcting Caricatures: The Biblical Teaching on Women
by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.

Hermeneutics in Pink and Blue
by Christiane Carlson-Thies

Women in the New Testament:
A Middle Eastern Cultural View
by Kenneth E. Bailey

Reconciling Two Worlds
by Carole Eldridge

...and more

CBE International

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On the Cover • Detail of "Five Caricature Heads," by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1490.

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Editor's Reflections

Jesus made a habit of correcting caricatures, as when he went to visit Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Mary sat at Jesus' feet, a position of learning reserved exclusively for men. When her actions were questioned by Martha, Jesus responded that Mary had chosen a better way. Martha, like so many other people Jesus taught, was simply doing her best to uphold the system she believed most honored God. But her picture of God was a caricature. Some features were emphasized at the cost of others, such that while the result may have resembled the God of Scripture to a degree, it was significantly distorted. Like Martha, we sometimes need a nudge to open our eyes to a better way—one that better reflects God's redeeming work.

Most of my childhood was spent on the mission field, in a community of Bible translators. We came from dozens of countries, every continent, and more denominations than I ever cared to count. My family was Evangelical Free, but our friends were Methodist, Mennonite, Episcopalian, Baptist, and many others. The whole community was united behind the common goal of Bible translation, and this meant that everyone knew their Bibles well and had the highest regard for God's Word. When we had questions about the theology of our missionary neighbors, we could not simply write them off as having a low view of Scripture, as we in the evangelical world seem fond of doing. We had to take seriously the fact that those with different views knew and valued God's Word as much as we did.

In my world of linguists and exegetes, there was no escaping the frequent dinner conversations about the many contextual, linguistic, and cultural factors at work in Bible translation and interpretation. I learned at an early age that one cannot simply "translate the Bible," whether between languages, cultures, or time periods. Nor can we simply "read and apply the Bible," with no regard to context. Language, culture, and context are not applied by choice; unless they're brought to our attention, they are virtually invisible to us. Nevertheless, they shape how we act, what we think, and even how we think. While I'm confident such conversations trained me to be possibly the world's least interesting dinner guest (to most people anyway), they also taught me an important lesson—a high view of Scripture must take contextual, linguistic, and cultural analysis seriously.

I vividly remember the day I was first confronted with the question of where, how, and to whom Christian women ought to serve. My innate sense of what seemed biblical collided with my respect for the missionaries around me. I found myself sitting uncomfortably in my pew as my best friend's mom walked up to lead church. We had a system, which I had never questioned: the men took turns leading the service and preaching, while the women played the piano and made announcements about events involving food. My young sensibilities were a bit shaken, but I knew this woman too well to discount her commitment to Scripture. Nor could I ignore the many other women I knew who had taught the Bible to hundreds if not thousands of men and women. Unable to resolve the tension, I did what seemed prudent at the time—I decided not to think about it.

But as I grew older, I encountered many arguments challenging the notion that gender ought to determine how and where Christians serve. I dismissed them as being rooted in secular culture or experience, rather than Scripture. But this became increasingly difficult as I got to know the people behind the arguments. Most were just like my friend's mom, possessing a deep knowledge and high view of Scripture. Their treatment of God's Word met the high standards I'd learned as a child, while my own interpretations fell short. I'd been living like Martha, unwittingly upholding that which hindered the kingdom.

God put people and resources in my life that served to correct the caricatures I had drawn of Scripture. I hope the articles that follow afford you the same opportunity. They offer personal stories from committed believers, coupled with rigorous academic research from renowned scholars. I am confident that as you browse these articles, you will prayerfully dialogue with God and with Scripture. It is my prayer that the result will be, for you as it was for me, a deeper understanding of Scripture and a greater appreciation of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.

TIM KRUEGER is on staff at CBE. He graduated from Bethel University (MN), where he studied history and theology. His upbringing on the mission field instilled in him a lifelong fascination with history, language, and culture. He and his wife, Naomi, live in Saint Paul, MN.

Greetings from CBE International,

Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) is a nonprofit organization of Christian men and women who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and women of all ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings of Scriptures such as Galatians 3:28:

"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (NIV 2011).

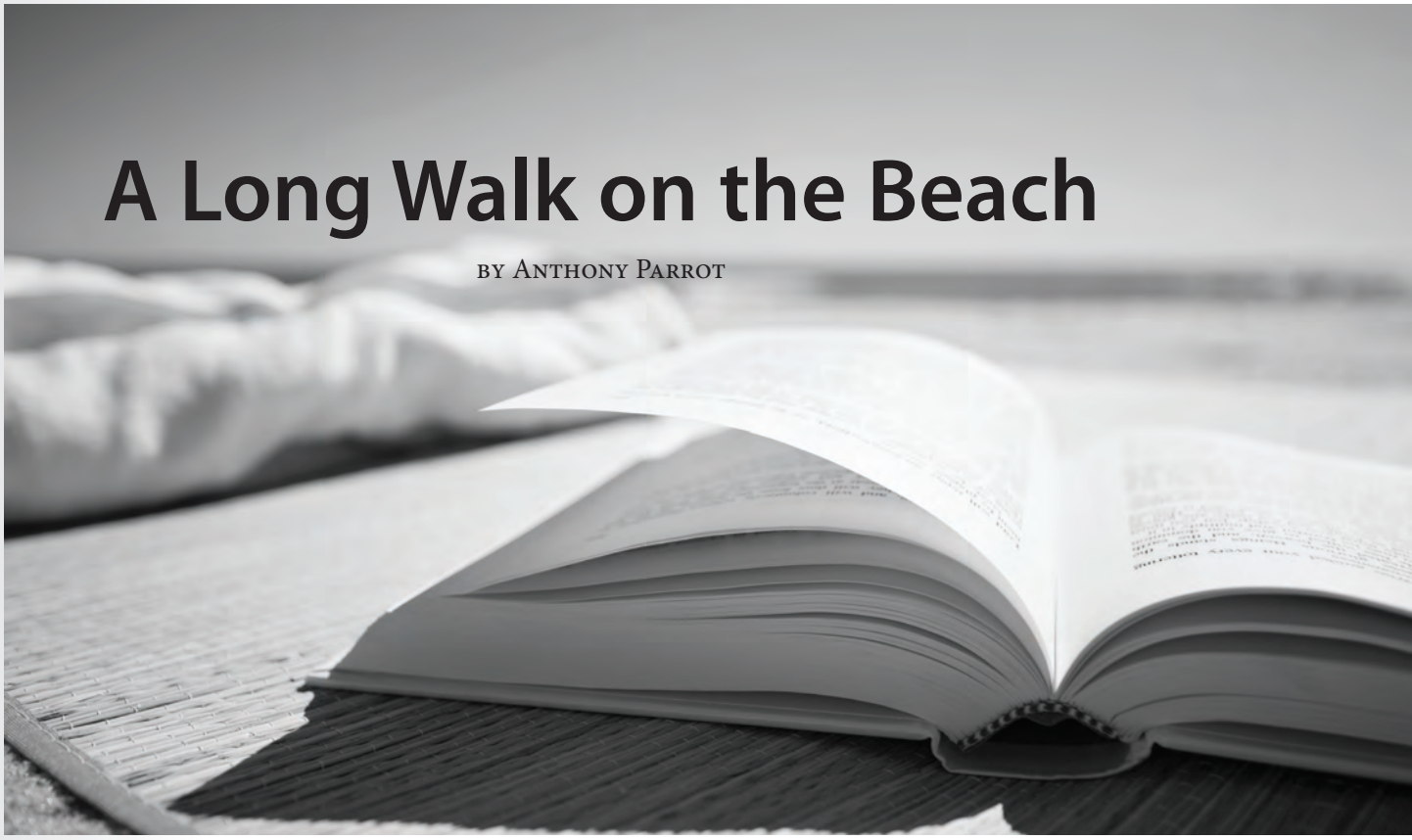
CBE affirms and promotes the biblical truth that all believers—without regard to gender, ethnicity or class—must exercise their God-given gifts with equal authority and equal responsibility in church, home and world.

CBE envisions a future where all believers are freed to exercise their gifts for God's glory and purposes, with the full support of their Christian communities.

We offer this journal as an invitation to revisit the questions surrounding gender and ministry. Not only is this important for the health of the church, but has broad implications for the evangelical witness to a world that desperately needs the gospel.

A Long Walk on the Beach

by Anthony Parrot



Understanding headship in marriage, leadership in the church, and biblical views on gender were at the forefront of my mind. I had questions and I needed answers.

I don't know many college students who, during their spring break trip to Florida, take along and read *Discovering Biblical Equality*. But there I was, just a few years ago, sitting on a beach and devouring the 528-page book. Road trips, beaches, and scholarly essays—I felt like a living example of the *Sesame Street* children's song, "One of these things is not like the other things. . . . "

To me, though, this was just the next step. I was a couple of months away from proposing to my then-girlfriend Emily and only a year away from graduating from college with a biblical studies degree and then moving on to full-time ministry. Understanding headship in marriage, leadership in the church, and biblical views on gender were at the forefront of my mind. I had questions and I needed answers.

Had you asked me about these issues a couple of years before that spring break trip, I would have had no questions to speak of. I was raised in a patriarchal home, had never been taught by so much as a female Sunday school teacher, and had been homeschooled using a fundamentalist Baptist curriculum. I had full confidence in my own understanding of what the Bible said about women and their role in the home and in the church: submit to men.

Admittedly, my parents were fairly balanced. My dad never angrily ruled over my mom or belittled her intellect, abilities, or talents. But, in times of differing opinion, it was always stated, "Dad is the head of the household and his is the judgment that matters above all." I never questioned this position. In Genesis 2, the male was created first. In Ephesians, Paul said something about women submitting to men. My family made sense.

This lack of questioning changed within my first couple months of college. I was in a class called "Exploring the Christian Faith" taught by Dr. Tim Erdel. Our class took on contentious issues: pacifism, predestination, secular art, and—of course—biblical equality.

His first assignment was easy enough: find and discuss each time Scripture used the phrase "head of the household." I went to—what else!—my trusty King James Version exhaustive concordance and couldn't find anything. I then remembered Ephesians 5, but there I found "man is head of the wife." Nothing about the household in general. I finally went to an online concordance. The closest thing I could find was 1 Timothy 5:14, ". . . I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to *manage their homes* . . . " (emphasis my own).

This simple discovery—that the "biblical" phrase "man is the head of the household" wasn't biblical at all—was enough to cause me to question most everything I had assumed I knew about the Bible. In fact, I changed majors from piano performance to biblical studies. God, through Dr. Erdel, had kindled in me a passion for knowing what Scripture actually said and for understanding what it meant for those who read or heard it for the first time.

I didn't put much more thought into biblical equality, however, until sophomore year, when our biblical studies department asked Dr. Linda Belleville to come on staff. To many within the CBE community, she is well known as a contributor to *Discovering Biblical Equality*, Zondervan's *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, and her own *Women Leaders and the Church*. At first, she was yet another challenge to my worldview. My patriarchal beliefs about women had softened some, but I still had many years of fundamentalist Bible training under my belt. And, I have to confess, I let it get to me. I avoided a class taught by Dr. Belleville for two semesters. Somehow, I had convinced myself that by taking one of her classes I was endorsing some twisted view of Scripture.

But, by junior year of college, I had finally been humbled enough to realize I didn't know all there was to know about Scripture. I couldn't help but want to learn from Dr. Belleville; the level of training, expertise, and experience she had to offer was impressive. I enrolled in her Gospels course, and it didn't take long for me to realize that Dr. Belleville was not only a good professor, but she was also better than most! Teaching is usually about conversation, and that is exactly what she offered—discussions on those difficult, messy, and sometimes contentious teachings of Scripture.

I knew that my mind had begun to change on what the Bible said about marriage and gender roles when my older brother had me listen to an MP3 of a sermon on relationships. It followed the typical pattern of quoting Genesis 2 and Ephesians 5, using these passages as texts to prove that it was the husband's responsibility to spiritually, emotionally, and physically provide and care for his wife. When I gave my brother back the MP3 player, I said, "Thanks, but I really don't agree with what this pastor has to say."

Minutes later, I found myself at the dining room table, defending myself against my brother, his wife, and my mom. Bibles flew open, fingers jabbed at people and at verses, and I soon realized that their level of emotional attachment to this debate far outweighed my cognitive ability to argue back. The conversation ended when my brother simply walked away from the table, while shaking his head and saying, "Well, colleges just get more liberal as time goes on. It's a shame that they're teaching these things to you."

I knew I had to do some research on this topic before I ever brought it up again. I went to Dr. Belleville, who pointed me in the direction of the library and to *Discovering Biblical Equality*. A couple of weeks later, I found myself reading it on a beach in Florida.

Even the act of reading this book was enough to arouse suspicion in my friends. Two of my fellow ministry students also on the spring break trip asked me to take a "long walk on the beach" with them. Once we were out of earshot of the rest of the group (which included my then-girlfriend Emily), I was immediately assaulted with questions and concerns about where my theology was going. "We know you care about Emily," they said, "but doesn't that include taking care of her spiritually, of being willing to take responsibility and being the head of the household?"

Later I found out that the girls had also taken Emily aside and asked her the same sort of questions. "What if he doesn't take care of you like he should? What if he makes you responsible for everything in the household?"

When I returned from spring break, I asked Dr. Belleville, "What on earth makes everyone so scared of this topic?"

"Because they don't know any other way to handle it."

I realized that what I was dealing with—with my family and with my peers—was mostly misunderstanding. A misunderstanding of Scripture. A misunderstanding of the people who see male and female as equal before God. I myself had assumed the worst of Dr. Belleville, but instead found a great teacher and friend. My brother had supposed that my college had "gone liberal," when, in fact, it was trying to teach Scripture the way it was meant to be understood.

In a matter of a few years I had completely changed my mind on biblical equality. What's more, I was able to articulate why. I don't know if my friends on the beach ever changed their minds about this topic, but at least they got an intelligent response from me when they asked what was going on.

What changed? First of all, I was given permission to ask questions. Many in the church condemn questions, and I'm afraid it's not because we understand Scripture so well, but rather because we don't understand it well enough. When you're allowed to confess you don't know something, you're simultaneously given the freedom to learn.

Secondly, relationships change minds. Dr. Erdel and Dr. Belleville never rammed a certain perspective down anyone's throat. But by getting to know them and comprehending their love for God and for Scripture, I was able to discover for myself that what they said made sense. It wasn't an attempt to escape the truth of Scripture, but rather an endeavor to live in it.

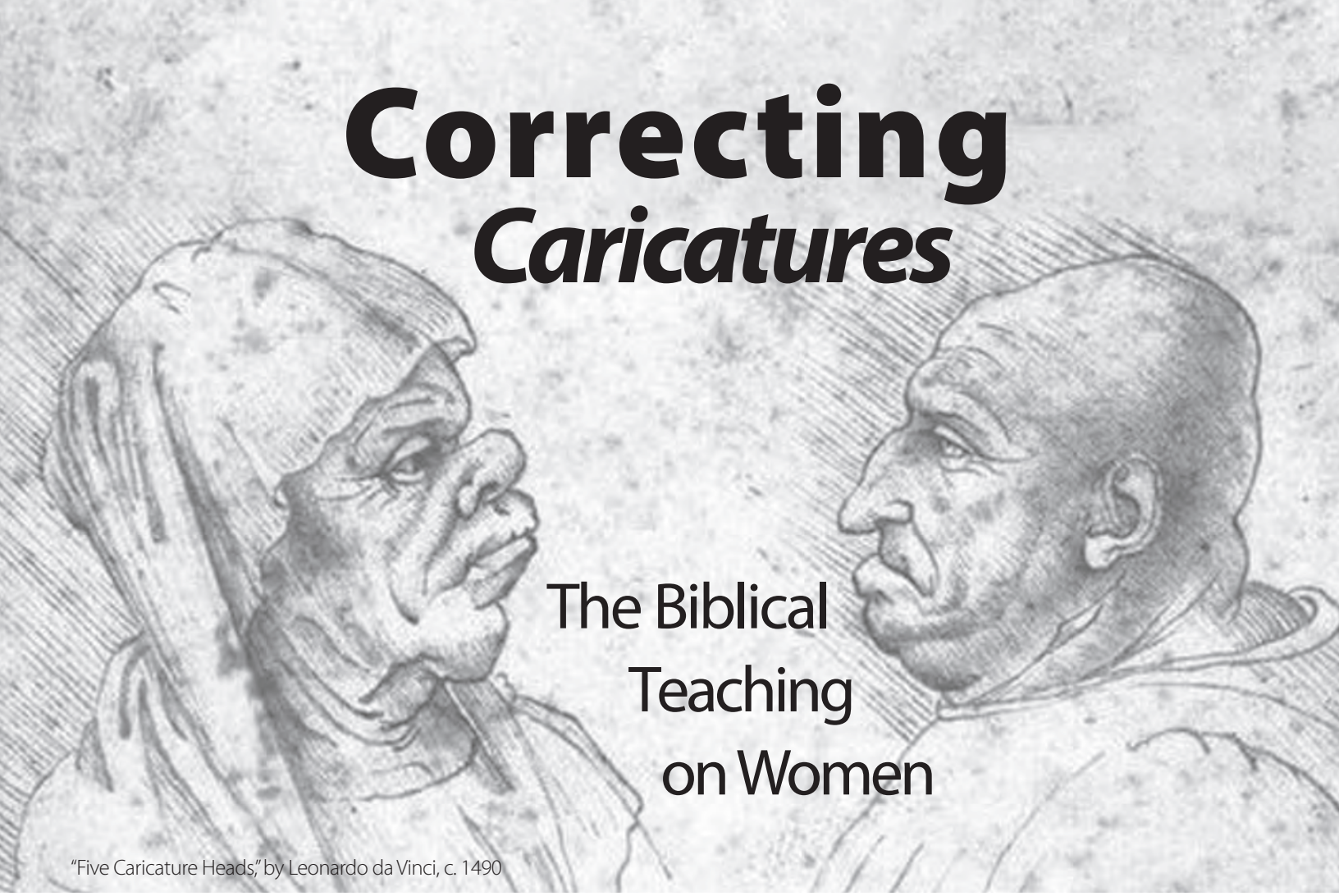
A few months after that spring break trip, Emily and I went hiking and got engaged. *Together* we decided to become one in marriage; *together* we decided to go into full-time ministry; and *together* we submit to our Lord and to each other, eagerly serving God's kingdom. I'm glad I changed my mind.

"A Long Walk on the Beach" was originally published in *Mutuality* Volume 17, Number 4, Winter 2010.

ANTHONY PARROTT is the director of worship for Good News Community Church in Okoboji, Iowa and a graduate of Bethel College, Indiana. Anthony and Emily together enjoy travel, music, and reading. You can usually find Anthony sipping Pepsi, banging out notes on a piano, or tinkering on a computer.

Correcting *Caricatures*

The Biblical Teaching on Women



"Five Caricature Heads," by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1490

By Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.

If we all approach the text of Scripture, each having his or her own framework of understanding (even when we share a view of the Bible that it is inerrant and true in all it affirms and teaches), is there any hope that we can ever reach a "correct" or "objectively valid" interpretation,[1] especially on passages that are so sensitive as those that deal with the place and privilege of women in the body of Christ today? Surely, no one particular set of presuppositions is to be favored in and of itself over any other set of presuppositions as the proper preparation for understanding a text. And no one starts with a *tabula rasa*, a blank mind. So does this mean we are hopelessly deadlocked with no possibility for a resolution?

But evangelicals do argue, nevertheless, that despite the acknowledgement that we all begin with a certain number of presuppositions, this does not demolish the possibility of our reaching a correct interpretation. Our pre-understandings are changeable and, therefore, they can and should be altered by the text of Scripture. Just as one must not involve one's self in a hopeless contradiction by declaring that "absolutely, there are no absolutes," in the same manner, to declare, "Objectively, there are no objective or correct meanings possible for interpreting a passage of Scripture," is to decry exactly what is being affirmed. The way out of this quandary of both the relativist or the perspectivalist conundrum is to identify the presence of those aspects of thought that are self-evident first principles of thought that transcend every perspective, and act the same way for all people, all times, and all cultures.[2] This is not to say that a correct, or an objective, interpretation is always reached in every attempted interpretation. But, for those who accept the God who has created all mortals and given us the gift of language when he gave us the "image of God," it is not a stretch to say that a "correct" and "objective understanding" is possible for subsequent readers of the earlier revelation of God. The God who made the world is the same God who made our minds, thus, a direct connection between my mind and the world is possible. To deny objectivity would be self-defeating, for it would again

reduce itself to a violation of the law of non-contradiction. Accordingly, there is real hope for realizing an objective meaning and deciding between various truth claims and even between differing perspectives and different worldviews.[3]

All of this must serve as a preface to our remarks, for some have grown so weary of this discussion that they have just given up and decided that nothing more can be said that will move any others from their entrenched positions. But an evangelical must not either surrender to the status quo of a multiplicity of competing interpretations or reject simply out of hand honest discussion of the key points of Scripture on these matters. All correct interpretations will stand both the test of challenges as well as the test of time. So, let me review the scriptural teaching on the place and gifts God has given to women. Scripture, after all, is our only final arbiter on all such matters.[4]

1. Genesis 2:18. Woman as possessing "power" or "strength" corresponding to the man.

Adam was regarded by his Creator as incomplete and deficient as he lived at first without the benefit of a proper counterpart. He was without community. God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). So, as Ecclesiastes 4:9–11 expressed it, "Two are better than one. . . . " Accordingly, in order to end man's loneliness, God formed "for Adam [a] suitable helper" (Gen. 2:18)—or at least that is the way most have rendered the Hebrew word *ʿēzer*.

Now, there is nothing pejorative about the translation "helper," for the same word is used for God, but it is also variously translated as "strength," as in "He is your shield and *helper* [*strength*] (*ʿēzer*)" in Deuteronomy 33:29; 33:26.

But R. David Freedman[5] has argued quite convincingly that our Hebrew word *ʿēzer* is a combination of two older Hebrew/Canaanite roots, one, *ʿ-z-r*, meaning "to rescue, to save," and the other, *ġ-z-r*, meaning "to be strong," to use their verbal forms for the moment. The difference between the two is in the first Hebrew letter that is today somewhat silent in pronunciation and coming where the letter "o" comes in the English alphabet. The initial ג, or *ġhayyin*, fell together in the Hebrew alphabet and was represented by the one sign ע, or *ʿayyin*. However, we do know that both letters were originally pronounced separately, for their sounds are preserved in the "g" sound still preserved in English today, as in such place names as Gaza or Gomorrah, both of which are now spelled in Hebrew with the same letter, *ʿayyin*. Ugaritic, a Canaanite tongue, which shares about sixty percent of its vocabulary with Hebrew, did distinguish between the *ġhayyin* and the *ʿayyin* in its alphabet of thirty letters, as it represents the language around 1500 to 1200 B.C. It seems that somewhere around 1500 B.C. the two phonemes merged into one grapheme and, thus, the two roots merged into one. Moreover, the Hebrew word *ʿēzer* appears twenty-one times in the Old Testament, often in parallelism with words denoting "strength" or "power," thereby suggesting that two individual words were still being represented under the common single spelling. Therefore, I believe it is best to translate Genesis 2:18 as "I will make [the woman] a power [or strength] corresponding to the man."

The proof for this rendering seems to be indicated in 1 Corinthians 11:10, where Paul argued, "For this reason, a woman ought to have power [or authority] on her head." Everywhere Paul uses the Greek word *exousia* in 1 Corinthians it means "authority," or "power." Moreover, never is it used in the passive sense, but only in the active sense (1 Cor. 7:37; 8:9; 9:4, 5). But in one of the weirdest twists in translation history, this one word was rendered "a veil, a symbol of authority" on her head!! But, as Katharine C. Bushnell showed in the early years of the twentieth century, the substitution of "veil" for "power" goes all the way back to the Gnostic Alexandrian teacher known as Valentinus, who founded a sect named after himself sometime between A.D. 140 and his death on Cyprus in A.D. 160. His native tongue was Coptic, and, in Coptic, the word for "power" and the word for "veil" bore a close resemblance in sound and in print: *ouershishi,* meaning "power, authority," and *ouershoun*, meaning "veil." Both Clement and Origen also came from Alexandria, Egypt, so they too made the same mistake, possibly off the same Coptic type of manuscripts or influence of Valentinus in that city of Alexandria.

This debacle continues right down to our own day. For example, the NIV insists on saying "the woman ought to have a *sign of authority* on her head" (emphasis ours). Even though the unwarranted word "veil" has dropped out, the expanded "sign of authority" for *exousia* remains!

But let the word stand as it should and the question arises: Where did Paul find that "power" or "authority" was placed on the head of a woman? In Genesis 2:18—that is where!

So, rather than saying a woman is to be a "helper corresponding to the man," instead, the text teaches that the woman has been given "authority," "strength," or "power" that is "equal to [man's]." The full Hebrew expression is *ʿēzer kĕnegdô*. If later Hebrew is of any help here, this second Hebrew word, often translated as "corresponding to him," is used in later Hebrew as meaning "equal to him." Surely, that would assuage Adam's loneliness.

That line of reasoning would also be borne out in Genesis 2:23, where Adam says to Eve, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." This idiomatic expression points to family propinquity, one's own close relative, or, in effect, "my equal."

Finally, woman was never meant to be a "help*mate*," no matter which force is given to this word *ʿēzer*. The Old English "meet" or "suitable to" slipped to a new English word, "mate." But what God had intended was to make her a "power" or "strength," who would in every respect "correspond to" the man, that is, to be "his equal."

2. Genesis 3:16 is not a command for man to rule over the woman, but it is a curse: men [unfortunately] will rule over women.

This text, contrary to popular opinion and repeated incorrect appeal for support to 1 Corinthians 14:34 ("[Women] are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the *law* says"), does not demand that men are to take charge of their women and "rule over them." Rather than viewing this as a normative and prescriptive text found in the Mosaic Law and revealed by God, it is in a *curse* passage that predicts what will happen when women "turn" toward their husbands instead of turning to God. In effect, if God were explaining this in today's plain speech, God might have phrased it thus: "The truth is that, as a result of the fall, do not be surprised, my good lady, if that guy just plain lords it over you." The statement does not have the slightest hint of a command or a mandate for men to assume that they are in charge, nor is it a prescriptive command from God by any means. The Hebrew grammar may not be rendered as "[the man] *must* [or *shall*] rule over you." To demand such a rendering here would be to invite a similar move in verse 18 of this chapter, where "[the ground] *must* produce thorns and thistles for you." Farmers (should this be the accurate way to render this text) would need to stop using weed killer or pulling out such thorns and thistles, for God otherwise demands that they be left in place in the farm, if this too was meant to be normative in God's order of things. But of course that is nonsense—and so is the same logic for verse 16.

Some, of course, will object by saying that Genesis 4:7 has the same construction, where "sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you *must master it*" (NIV, emphasis ours). Both the word for "turning," incorrectly translated, as we will see later on here, as "desire," and the verb "to rule," or "to master," are found here as in Genesis 3:16. Accordingly, it is alleged that the rendering of Genesis 4:7 seems to validate the rendering of Genesis 3:16.

Let us be done once and for all with any idea that women, since the fall, have lusted after men and that is why men must control them as best as they can.

However, a more preferable rendering of the verb in Genesis 4:7 is to understand that a question is being asked here. The Hebrew particle signaling a question is absent in about one-half of the Hebrew questions in the Bible, as it is here. Therefore, we would render the last part of Genesis 4:7, "But you, will you rule (or "master") over it?" (i.e., the sin that is lingering at the door of Cain). That would allow for the verb to be rendered in its normal way, "*will* rule," or "*will* master," rather than "*must* rule."

So, the traditional move to see the "law" referred to in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 as the Mosaic Torah is totally without any basis, for the Genesis passage would need to command and mandate husbands to rule over their wives, which it distinctly does not! As we will see later on, there are plenty of places in the Jewish law of the Talmud and Mishnah where just such a command does occur, but one is pressed to embarrassment to find any such hint, much less an order to do such, in the Law of Moses or, for that matter, anywhere else in the Old Testament.

3. Genesis 3:16. Women did not acquire sexual desires or develop "lust" for men as a result of the fall!

This translation story has to be one of the oddest stories ever told. It is a travesty of errors, in which one man in particular, an Italian Dominican monk named Pagnino, published his version at Lyons in A.D. 1528 with the meaning "lust," and thus occasioned a parade of mimics who have continued to follow his lead to this very day!

The Hebrew word *tĕshûqâ* only appears three times in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 3:16, 4:7; Song of Sol. 7:10). The third century B.C. Greek Septuagint[6] rendered the two Genesis passages as *apostrophe* (meaning "turning away") and the Song of Solomon passage as *epistrohe* (meaning "turning to"). The Samaritan Pentateuch also rendered the two Genesis passages as "turning," as did the Old Latin, the Coptic (Bhairic), and the Ethiopic version of A.D. 500.

Jerome's Latin Vulgate, produced around A.D. 382, under the influence of Jewish rabbis, rendered Genesis 3:16, "Thou shalt be under the power of a husband, and he will rule over thee." And so the history of an error began.

The result was that Pagnino's version appeared in every English version. But the problem with Pagnino, as with those earlier deviations already representatively noted here, was this: they tended to depend on the rabbis for their sense of this infrequently used word in the Bible instead of depending on the Ancient Versions of the Scripture such as the Greek Septuagint, the Syriac Peshitto, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Old Latin, the Coptic Versions, and the Ethiopic. But where the rabbis or the Babylonian Talmud were followed, such as by Aquila's Greek, Symmachus's Greek, Theodotion's Greek, or the Latin Vulgate, preference was given to senses like "lust," "impulse," "alliance," or the like. Bushnell concludes this enormous piece of philological and translation detective work by saying, "Of the 28 known renderings of *teshuqa*, . . . the word is rendered 'turning' 21 times. In the 7 remaining renderings, only 2 seem to agree; all the others disagree."[7] Even the early church fathers give evidence of knowing no other rendering for this Hebrew word than "turning."

Therefore, let us be done once and for all with any idea that women, since the fall, have lusted after men and that is why men must control them as best as they can. This must be a male fantasy at best, or a downright imposition of one's own imagination on the text, because of certain interpretive schools of thought that grew up around a word that had limited usage in the Scriptures.

Eve "turned" from her Lord and instead placed all her dependency on her husband only to find out that he, too, as a fallen sinner, would take advantage of her and rule over her. Thus, instead of the resulting gender hierarchy being the norm that God had prescribed, it turns out that it displays the curse that has fallen on humanity, and on women in particular, because

of the fall described in Genesis 3:1–13.

4. Exodus 38:8; 1 Samuel 2:22, etc. Women served at the tabernacle and ministered as prophetesses in the Old Testament.

"Women who served" at the tabernacle (Exodus 38:8 and 1 Samuel 2:22) offended the Greek translators of the Septuagint, so they rendered the phrase: "women who fast." Bushnell quotes a Professor Margoliouth of Oxford as decrying such an idea with the words, "The idea of women in attendance at the Tabernacle is so odious that it has to be got rid of."[8] And so it was gotten rid of as the Authorized Version of the King James mistranslated it as "assembled" and others substituted "prayed," or "thronged," instead of "served." But there it stood: women served at the Tabernacle!

> Now, the central point of this passage, one indeed that would have been revolutionary for Paul's day, came in 1 Timothy 2:11—"Let a woman . . . learn!" This was a real bombshell for that day!

But if that is too much to understand, what shall we say of a Miriam, a Deborah, or a Huldah? Miriam is called a "prophetess" in Exodus 15:20 as she led the women in singing the song Moses and the Israelites had just sung in Exodus 15:1–19. True, she, along with the Chief High Priest Aaron, was censured for her complaining about Moses marrying a Cushite woman. But, if Aaron too fell under the same judgment, yet he survived in his position through the grace of God, why not allow the same for Miriam?

If women are not to take the lead over men in any circumstance, why did God send Deborah to motivate Barak so he might carry out the plan of God (Judg. 4:6)? And, further, did not God use another woman, Manoah's wife, to tell her husband about the announcement of the child she was to bear (Judg. 13:2–7)? And, if the prophet Jeremiah was already ministering in Jerusalem, or not more than a mile or two north of Jerusalem in Anathoth, why did Hilkiah the priest, along with other dignitaries from the palace, seek out Huldah the prophetess about the meaning of the recently discovered Law of Moses (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chron. 34:22)? Huldah held nothing back as she declared thrice over, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says" (2 Chron. 34:23, 24, 26). Her exposition of a half dozen or more texts from Deuteronomy 29:20, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29 thundered against Judah and her King Josiah!

Nor was God any less displeased with an Abigail (1 Sam. 25), who showed more discernment and wisdom than her foolish husband Nabal, who almost led that whole household into mortal danger had not Abigail intervened. Not only did King David praise her for preventing him from acting foolishly, but Scripture attests to the rightness of her actions over against those of her husband Nabal by saying that, ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal down and he died.

It was not Scripture (not even the Old Testament) that placed women in an inferior position, but a rabbinic set of traditions that had been infused later on more with pagan roots than with its own Tanak that introduced these deviant views of women.

5. 1 Timothy 2:8–15. Women are encouraged to lead in public prayers and to teach, but only after they have been taught.

It is none other than our Lord who encourages women to lead in public prayers, presumably at the time of the assembling of the worshipping community in 1 Timothy 2:9. Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, had just told the men that "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer" (v. 8), but he warned men to beware of leading outwardly in prayer while inwardly harboring hostility over some dispute or hidden anger. This is a problem men still need to handle.

From there Paul went on to draw a strong comparison. He began verse 9 with the Greek word *hōsautōs*, meaning "in like manner," or "similarly." The NIV and other versions tend to drop out or to soften this linking word (NIV, "I also want . . ."—just "also"?). The apostle wants the women to do something similar to what he had just instructed the men to do, viz., to pray in public. I say "in public," because it is prayer with a "lifting up of holy hands" or outstretched as is common when publicly blessing God's people. Thus, the Greek word for "in like manner" repeats the whole previous sentence, except the warning is different: men have trouble in overly internalizing anger and disputes while trying to pray effectively in public, whereas women have trouble sometimes not realizing God meant them to be beautiful and attractive to men, but not in this situation! Women must dress modestly while offering prayers in public. There is no concern here for what women may look like when they offer their own private prayers in their closet at home surely. Accordingly, the apostle wants women to participate with men in the public service of the church by offering prayers. There can be no debate over this point unless someone knows how we can get rid of *hōsautōs* in this text.

A. J. Gordon, one of the founders of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, quipped (after noting our passage here and 1 Corinthians 11:5 ["Every woman who prays or prophesies]): "It is quite incredible, on the contrary, that the apostle should give himself the trouble to prune a custom, which he desired to uproot, or that he should spend his breath condemning a forbidden method of doing a forbidden thing."[9] Exactly so! God wanted women to participate in public

services both in prayer and, as we will see, by prophesying; however, they were to be careful of their dress so as not to draw attention to themselves.

Now, the central point of this passage, one indeed that would have been revolutionary for Paul's day, came in 1 Timothy 2:11—"Let a woman . . . learn!" This was a real bombshell for that day! Why would anyone ask women to do something like that? The Hebrews did not let their women learn publically, nor did the Greeks, Romans, or the pagans. Why should the Christians start such a strange custom since it had never been heard of or done by anyone before this? But Paul is insistent: it is the only imperative in the passage. It is this verb, *manthanō*, "let [the women] learn," which would have drawn everyone's attention and potential ire when this was first written. Unfortunately, we do not have a third person imperative form in English, so our "let [them] learn" sounds as if it is mere permission, but do not mistake the apostle's intention here. He now orders all Christians to teach women the gospel in all its magnificence.

Yes, some respond, but, however she learns, she must do so "in silence," and "in full submission" [apparently, argue some, to her husband!]. On the contrary, the "subjection" is to her God or alternatively to her teacher, as encouraged in 1 Corinthians 16:16 or Hebrews 13:17. Likewise, it is not total "silence" that is required of the female learner any more than the same "silence" is required of men when they work or eat their lunches (2 Thess. 3:12). In both cases the Greek word *hēsuchia* is better rendered as "quietness" or, even better, "a quiet spirit." Thus, it is not an absolute silence that is required here of women any more than of men. But even with this word about the demeanor and attitudes of the female learner noted here, it would not commend itself to Jewish teaching of that time, for the Jewish attitude was: "Let the law be burned rather than committed to a woman" (*y. Soṭah* 3:4, 19[a]); "He who teaches his daughter the law is as though he taught her sin" (*m. Soṭah* 3:4). So taught the Talmud.

Fine, may agree some objectors, but why is it that Paul goes on to say in 1 Timothy 2:12 that he does "not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man . . . "? Had Paul suddenly changed his mind after demanding that women pray in public, prophesy in the body of believers, and be taught?

But, again, we say, if this is an absolute command allowing no exceptions, then why does Paul instruct women to teach other women in Titus 2:4? Should he not also have silenced Priscilla, whose name usually precedes Aquila's in the Greek order of the names in the book of Acts (e.g., Acts 18:26, despite how some of the versions put it the other way around), when Aquila clearly taught as well? And Timothy, whose father was a Gentile, attributed all his learning and teaching to his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). Some insist they taught him before he was seven years old, as they oddly teach that women should not teach boys once they passed their seventh birthday. I have no idea why: They just simply assert it is so!

So what is the answer?

Yes, Paul is saying in this passage that women must not teach or exercise authority over a man, but the reasons he gives are found in the context that follows: verses 13 and 14. Paul expresses his strong preference and his own desires (though he too has the mind of the Lord even in this), for he uses the Greek word *epitrepō,* "I do [not] permit." This form is exactly the same form as Paul used in 1 Corinthians 7:7, "I *wish* that all of you were as I am [unmarried]." But he does not use the imperative form of the verb now as he did when demanding that women be taught. So why does he not wish or permit women "to teach [note there should be no comma here, for the Greek text is without our systems of punctuation] or to control a man"?

The reasons are these: Adam was "shaped/formed/molded/fashioned" first. What will throw everything off track here is to view this first reason as an argument from "the orders of creation," i.e., Adam was created first and then came Eve. If this argument were held consistently, then the animals might be demanding their rights since they got here even before Adam was created! But, Paul did not use the Greek word *ktizō*, "to create," but *plassō*, which is also used, as I believe it is used here, of "the orders of education," not the orders of creation. It is the same root from which we today get our word for "plastic." It refers in Greek to all sorts of formative thinking, teaching, and action in society, life, and both formal and informal teaching. Therefore, Paul's restriction, or wish—however we desire to view it here—is on women only so long as they remain untaught. Presumably (for, how else can we avoid formulating an unnecessary contradiction between Paul's teaching and his practices as taught and permitted elsewhere in Scripture?), as soon as the women were taught, they would be allowed to teach and exercise leadership much as some did in the examples already noted from the Old Testament.

Adam had a head start on Eve in education, for God walked and talked with him in the Garden of Eden until he got lonely. That is how Satan, the snake, was able to trick her. It appeared as if she had planned to hold her peace, but, when "The Serpent" (*hannāḥāš*) subtly suggested that God had set up impossibly narrow rules and then even went on deliberately to distort what God had said, Eve almost involuntarily sprang to defend God as well as the couples' own standing and thus was beguiled and drawn into the vortex of the Evil One's trickery and deception. Why Adam did not intervene, taught as he was, I cannot say! He just let Eve rattle on, which was foolish! So that is what Paul teaches here: Adam himself was not "deceived," but Eve was "thoroughly deceived" (the phrasing uses the same verb, but adds an intensifying preposition attached to the same verb for Eve). The only way you can deceive or trick someone is to do so when they have not been taught. It is this Greek verb, *exapataō*, "to thoroughly deceive," that shifts the word *plassō* from the secondary meaning "to form," as in creation, to the primary meaning usually associated with this verb: "to shape [socially or educationally]." Thus, according to Paul, the two reasons women should not teach are: (1) they have not as yet

had a chance to be taught, and (2) they can all too easily be tricked and deceived when they have not yet been taught. Unfortunately, Adam too sinned, but did so being fully cognizant of what was going on: he just ate! Eve, on the other hand, seemed to be really misled and attacked as if in an ambush, because she had not as yet had all the advantages of walking and talking with God in the garden of Eden or of learning as had Adam.

And then there is the extremely difficult verse of 1 Timothy 2:15, for which some thirty major interpretations exist. But the context is the determiner, so the flow of the argument is this: Do not attempt to put down women just because Eve was really deceived. Remember, God chose a woman through whom the promised child came and not a man! So, men, be careful and kind in your assessments and in your comments about these women that God has given to end our loneliness.

With this understanding of 1 Timothy 2:8–15, we can see now how Paul could also allow women to "pray and prophesy" in 1 Corinthians 11:5 and even be more emphatic in 1 Corinthians 14:31 where "all may prophesy" so that "all may learn" and "all may be encouraged." The same "all" who were learning and being encouraged made up the identity of those who may prophesy—"all." If some wish to cavil over the word "prophesy," it can be noted in 1 Corinthians 14:3 that "everyone who prophesies speaks to mortals for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort." That sounds like a definition of preaching, does it not?

6. 1 Corinthians 14:34–38. The Talmud, not the Old Testament law, taught that women must be silent and only talk at home.

The NIV, along with other translations, errs badly by interpretively giving a capital letter to the word "Law" in verse 34. The problem simply put is this: nowhere in the whole Old Testament does it teach or even imply what is claimed here! No law in the entire Old Testament, much less the Torah, can be cited to teach that a woman "must be in submission" and "remain silent" and, if she wants to know or ask about anything, she "should ask [her own] husband at home." Women spoke freely in public in both testaments.

It was in the Jewish synagogues where women were not allowed to speak. Thus, the "law" referred to here may be the Jewish Oral Law, the same one Jesus referred to in the Sermon on the Mount, when he too corrected, "You have heard it said," which he contrasted with the written word of Scripture. Yes, the Talmud taught that "out of respect to the congregation, a woman should not herself read the law publicly" (*b. Meg.* 23[a]), implying that a woman shamed herself if she spoke formally in a gathering of men.[10]

One scholar has singled out our interpretation of this passage as an example of a hermeneutical "fallacy" in interpretation. But let this scholar just point to the place in God's "law" where any of these concepts are taught or even alluded to and he can retain his labeling of this view as a "fallacy." But failing that, he should recognize the text calls for a repudiation of all alternative views that in some way or another demand that these three teachings are ordained and prescribed by God.

Thus, if Paul is not quoting from Scripture, but rather from a letter of inquiry that was sent to him by the Corinthians, asking if they too should observe such rules of quietude for women in a church which uses rabbinic teaching as its norm,[11] can we show any other places where the same type of quoting from external sources is used by Paul as a basis for a following rebuttal? Yes, in 1 Corinthians 6:12, 8:8, and 10:23 Paul quotes an outside aphorism, "All things are lawful for me." But Paul immediately refutes such a statement as he does in 1 Corinthians 14:36. Paul shouts, "What?" "Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones [masculine plural] it has reached?" I would put this popularly: "You can't really be serious, can you?" sneers Paul. "That you guys are the *only* ones able to get the word of God?"

If that is so, what was Pentecost all

Want more information on 1 Corinthians 14?

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Short and Sweet:

Partners in Marriage and Ministry
by Ronald W. Pierce

"1 Corinthians 14:34-35" by Allison Young

Bring on the Greek:

1 Corinthians
by Alan Johnson

Discovering Biblical Equality
ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, see chapter 9,
by Craig S. Keener

Man and Woman, One in Christ, see chapter 14,
by Philip B. Payne

Good for Group Discussion:

1 Corinthians
by N.T. Wright

"Learning How to Minister from 1 Corinthians 14:26-40"
by David Joel Hamilton

about? Did we not see the "now," even if it was not all of the "not yet" of the prophecy of Joel 2:28–29, where the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all regardless of their age, *gender*, or ethnicity? Brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit came upon women as well as men: the text says so! And what shall we say about Psalm 68:11? There it proclaims: "The Lord gave the word: Great was the company of the [women] preachers!" for the word for "preachers" is a feminine plural form [Note the NASB rendering of this text]. Oh my, as one of my teachers once said, the easiest way to detect that you are dealing with a dead horse is if you prop it up on one end, the other end will fall down! That is what so many are doing with their interpretations of these texts.

7. 1 Corinthians 11:2–16. Women are to exercise authority and veils are not required.

We have already noted the Old Testament background for the women to have strength, power, or authority invested upon themselves in Genesis 2:18. That is, no doubt, what Paul was alluding to in 1 Corinthians 11:10. We also noted how false and thoroughly intrusive was the thought that a "veil as a sign of authority" was forced into the translations of this verse from the days of the Gnostic religions both in Paul's day and in subsequent times. Paul did not, nor should we, allow for any parts of such substitutions for the Word of God that stands written! Away with all impositions of a "veil" or veiled references!

Now, at the heart of this passage in 1 Corinthians 11:1–16 is Paul's desire to stop the practice that had come over from the Synagogue, where men veiled their heads in the worship service. The head covering that was used was called a *talliṭ*, worn by all men during the morning prayers and on Sabbath days and Holy Days. This *talliṭ* was also worn by the *ḥazzan* whenever he prayed in front of the ark, and by the one who was called up to read the scroll of the law at the "reading desk," known as the *almemar*. The *ḥazzan* was the chief leader of the Synagogue. Remarkable, as well, is the fact that the Romans also veiled when they worshipped, so both the Jewish and Roman converts would have been accustomed to such veiling practices as part of the liturgy of the worship service.

From the Jewish perspective, Paul was anxious to make clear that such a veiling of the *talliṭ* was not only a sign of reverence to God, but, unfortunately, it was also a sign of condemnation for the sin and of the guilt of its wearer before the Almighty. But how could such signs be worn when "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus?"[12]

Paul will, thus, forbid men to be veiled. He will permit a woman to be veiled, but it is only by permission, not by obligation that he does so, for his real preference here also is for women likewise to be unveiled before God, men, and angels, especially when women are addressing God in prayer. On the contrary, women should not feel embarrassed about having their heads uncovered, for their hair is given to them as their "glory." In fact, the Church has no prescribed rule or custom about needing a veil.

Men and women are not independent of one another (1 Cor. 11:12), for God made woman "for [*dia* with the accusative] the man," while God now brings all men "through [*dia* with the genitive] the woman." Anyway, "All things are of God," so who gets bragging rights or one-up-manship here?

May Christ's Church take the lead in setting forth a whole new standard for the place and ministry of women even against a confusing background and cacophony of a radical women's movement of our day that has other goals in mind than those posed for us in these Scriptures.

Conclusion

The Scriptures are far from being repressive, hostile, or demeaning to women; instead they constantly elevate women and give them places of honor and credit along with their male counterparts. Even in the matter of both males and females being given a head of hair, they are equal. In 1 Corinthians 11:15, the woman is given her hair *anti* ("in place of"; "instead of") a chapeau, hat, or covering. And, if anyone is unnerved over the whole matter of requiring women to wear some kind of covering, then Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:16, "We have no such practice" that requires women to wear a covering. Note even here, how the translations reverse the whole meaning of the Greek text and say, as the NIV says, "We have *no other* practice" (emphasis ours), which infers this is the only one, and that is that women must wear a covering when they worship. How difficult it is to reverse some habits and traditions, much less some translations!

From insights such as these gained in a lifetime devoted to study of the Bible, I have realized, indeed, that together men and women are "joint heirs of the grace of life" (1 Pet. 3:7, 11), submitting themselves to the Lord and to each other (Eph. 5:21). Each owes to the other love, respect, and an appreciation for the sphere of authority given to each one as part of the gifts of the Spirit. These gifts are never gender-coded in Scripture, but they are meant for the blessing of the whole body of Christ.

May Christ's Church take the lead in setting forth a whole new standard for the place and ministry of women even against a confusing background and cacophony of a radical women's movement of our day that has other goals in mind than those posed for us in these Scriptures. *Sola Scriptura* must be the rallying point once again as it has been time after time in history. May Christ's Church find the rest, comfort, and admonition of Scripture on the teaching of women and their ministries to be God's final word for our day as it has been in the past!

Notes

1. I am indebted for the argument that follows to a marvelous recent work by Thomas Howe, *Objectivity in Biblical Interpretation* (no city listed: Advantage Books, 2004).

2. Thomas Howe, *Objectivity*, 463.

3. Ibid., 465.

4. For examples of my earlier contributions on this topic, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Paul, Women and the Church," *Worldwide Challenge* (Sept. 1976): 9–12; idem "Shared Leadership," *Christianity Today* 30 (Oct. 3, 1986): 12,1.

5. R. David Freedman, "Woman, a Power Equal to Man," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9 (1983): 56–58.

6. Theodotion's rendering is "turning," as Katharine C. Bushnell explains in her *God's Word to Women* (often privately printed since the final edition came in 1923) ¶¶ 128–145. However, Symmachus's Greek rendering followed Aquila's suggestion by rendering it by the Greek word, *hormē*, meaning "impulse." Aquila, noted Bushnell, was a proselyte to Judaism, who followed the Jewish scholars of the second century. The *Talmud*, which is technically not a translation of the Bible, but a listing of traditions, teaches that there were ten curses pronounced over Eve, and in the fifth, sixth, and ninth of these curses, the word, "lust," is used to render the Hebrew word *tĕshûqâ*. Thus, in Origin's *Hexapla* (a six column listing of all the variant readings of Scripture he knew about), Aquila's column rendered the word there "coalition," or "alliance," which Bushnell says is not all that an unnatural sense "since Eve is represented as turning from God to form an alliance with her husband."

7. Bushnell, ¶ 139.

8. Ibid., ¶ 151.

9. Adoniram Judson Gordon, "The Ministry of Women," *Missionary Review of the World* 7, new series (Dec. 1894).

10. See Bushnell, ¶¶ 201–02.

11. Ibid., ¶ 201: "The Apostle Paul is here quoting what the Judaizers in the Corinthian church are teaching—who themselves say women must 'keep silence' because Jewish law thus taught." Her proof is detailed in 203ff.

12. Ibid., ¶ 241: "Where the practice has ceased of veiling in sign of guilt and condemnation before God and His law, this whole teaching, in its literal sense, has no application."

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Hermeneutics in Pink and Blue

An Open Letter to a Pastor Asks: Are Two Versions of Biblical Truth Required in the Church?

Dear Pastor Smith:

The debate within the body of Christ on the topic of women's identity and role has often been cast as a battle between traditionalists ardently defending biblical truth and their critics who would, either by design or by ignorance, loosen the church from its biblical moorings in order to promote a foreign agenda. In truth, for many of us, our unease with the traditional position has nothing to do with being swayed by modern liberation movements; rather, our unease is a response to the weaknesses within the traditional position itself.

In the spirit of 2 Timothy 2:15, I hope the critical comments I offer can become part of a conversation to examine whether, on this topic, our church has correctly handled the Word of Truth.

By Christiane Carlson-Thies

Female subordinationism

There are many excellent books that wrestle in detail with the specific texts that have formed the case against women's full participation in authoritative offices in the church. I won't repeat or even summarize their good work. Instead, I hope to raise the broad question of whether Scripture attaches such an absolute value to gender that femaleness, by itself, must become an automatic disqualifier from authoritative offices—either all offices or only some.

By "female subordinationism" I mean that teaching which holds that women's authority to teach and lead is necessarily limited by one thing only: women's God-ordained subordination to the authority of men.

For some believers, female subordinationism is grounded in a theology that regards all women in all times and in all places as having little or no intrinsic God-given authority. As an example of this position, in John Piper and Wayne Grudem's book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, women are cautioned that even when giving directions to a male stranger lost in their neighborhood, their demeanor must not compromise the stranger's masculinity.[1] Thus, for some, even the hint of a woman having authority over a man in any context is an offense to be fastidiously avoided. They believe that the exercise of creation-wide authority is a constitutive element of manhood alone.

For other believers, the traditional "limiting texts"[2] of Scripture lead to different conclusions. Some will not allow women to hold any leadership within the body of Christ, including in parachurch ministries, but accept that women may teach and lead whenever they are exercising a purely "secular" authority (e.g., at school).

Others believe women may provide leadership to children and other women in any venue, including the church, but

not to men. For still others, the line where women lose their leadership authority is drawn exclusively around the pulpit. Another group makes distinctions based on whether the woman is married or single. There are abundant variations on the theme of exactly how limited God intended women's authority to be.[3]

Regardless of whether the area where women are allowed to lead and teach is defined widely or narrowly, the idea prevails that God has granted an authority to men *because they are males* that God has not granted to women *because they are females*. At its root, therefore, all teaching and practice of female subordination is based on the conviction that God has authorized times and places where gender must trump every other fact about a woman.

Equality of being but difference in function

Advocates of female subordinationism assert that their position cannot be characterized as biblically sanctioned discrimination against women. Functional or role differences, they argue, do not entail an inequality of "being." Just because a general in the army has authority over a private, the argument goes, before the face of God the general and private are equal in being. In the same manner, the argument continues, God in his sovereignty has assigned certain leadership roles to males that he has denied to females. Nevertheless, before the face of God, men and women still remain equal despite these functional distinctions.

But the manner in which a general and a private are distinct in function though equal in being is not at all the same as the manner in which authority differences are claimed to be fixed between male and female.[4] There is nothing in the general's "being" that has necessarily placed him, rather than the private, in the office of general. If there has been no corruption in the process of his promotion, the general will have won his office based on his education, qualifications, years of distinguished service, and so on. By the same token, there is nothing inherent in the "being" of the private that will prevent him from possibly attaining the office of general. In short, between general and private, "being" does not determine their authority differences.

Indeed, one could imagine a scenario in which the same general and the same private belong to a local church in which the general is simply a member, whereas the private is an elder. Within the setting of the local church, the private would be the one with greater authority despite his subordinate military status. In these examples, at no time does "being" determine "authority."

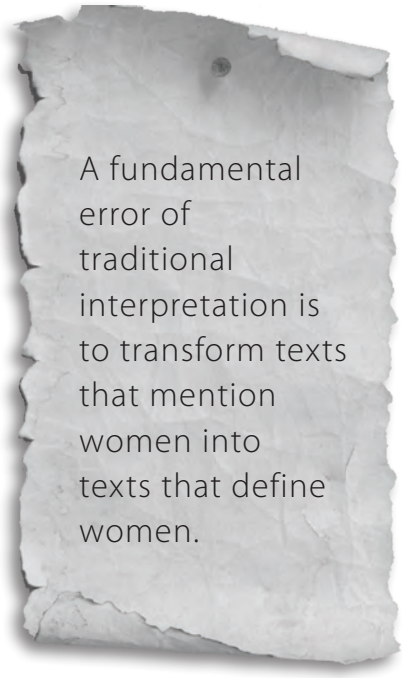
The situation is completely opposite when it comes to how the church traditionally practices and defends the division of authority between male and female. For a faithful, transformed, Christlike, educated, qualified woman, the fact of her being female is, ultimately, the only thing that disqualifies her from exercising offices—all offices or only some. Being is everything. Being is the only thing. Gender triumphs over every other fact.

Hermeneutics in pink and blue

The bedrock of human identity, the source of all human authority, and the evidence of God's original intentions for human life on planet Earth are found in Genesis 1:27–28, which declares,

> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (NIV 1984).

In Genesis 1, God unambiguously blesses both the male and the female with a common identity and a common calling: to represent him as his image-bearers. However, in the course of history, Genesis 1 has come to retain very little of that image-bearing identity and task for women.



Traditionalists typically begin chipping away at a woman's Genesis 1 identity in their interpretation of Genesis 2. By their reasoning, while we may entirely understand a male's identity and calling from Genesis 1, we only begin to discover a woman's identity and calling once we have the further evidence of Genesis 2.

According to Piper and Grudem, humans uniquely find their "identity upward in God and not downward in the animals."[5] But in developing their argument that male rulership over the female is rooted in Creation they draw the following from the fact that God first brought all the animals to Adam before creating the woman in Genesis 2: "Yet in passing through 'helpful' animals to woman, God teaches us that the woman is a man's 'helper' in the sense of a loyal and suitable assistant in the life of the garden."[6]

Despite the fact that the word for helper, *ezer*, is most often used in the Bible to describe God as our helper (and never used to describe animals as our helpers), when Piper and Grudem read Genesis 2 and find the word *helper* applied to the woman, they toss out the sweeping human identity statement of Genesis 1 where woman, just like man, fully bears God's image and is fully called to fruitfulness and rulership. Instead, they banish woman from the man's side and place her alongside the animals. She loses her place among the rulers and must join the ruled. They create two distinct readings of what it means to be an image-bearer: one image-bearer, the male, has authority under God, and one image-bearer, the female, is—just like the animals—under the authority of the male image-bearer.

If Piper and Grudem and other traditionalists used a consistent hermeneutic they would be compelled to take seriously not only the new information provided in Genesis 2 about the woman,

but also the new information provided about the man: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (NIV). Thus, even as they have adjusted the woman's identity, they would have to adjust the man's identity to fit this revelation of his inadequacy as the "not-good-one," indeed, as the "help-less" one.

They aren't, however, consistent. And this illustrates that a fundamental error of traditional interpretation is to transform texts that mention women into texts that define women. Or, more accurately, as texts that redefine women as creatures under authority rather than as image-bearers who have authority alongside the man.

Consider another example, this one from Genesis 3, and how the teaching of the "painful toil" that both the man and the woman would experience following their fall into sin has been worked out historically. Woman's full identity as image-bearer quickly became narrowed to that of "childbearer," and the notion prevailed that suffering in childbearing was a command to be obeyed instead of a distortion to be alleviated. As a consequence, not only did the church resist providing relief for the pains of labor, but today we are still arguing about what contributions, beyond childbearing and homemaking, women are allowed to make to the cultural mandate of Genesis 1.

In contrast, the prediction of man's painful toil in wresting his bread from the earth never led to restricting him in a parallel way. His full identity as image-bearer never became reduced to the vocation of "farmer," nor was there resistance to alleviation of his toil in food production. Despite Genesis 3, it has apparently never occurred to traditionalists to debate whether men have a God-given right to be anything besides farmers. Nor have there been sermons on Genesis 4:22 attempting to argue that when Tubal-Cain forged tools out of bronze and iron to ease man's painful toil, he was opposing God's direct command to the male in Genesis 3.

Same Bible. Same chapter. Same language of toil and sorrow. Opposite application of its teaching to women and men: hermeneutics in pink and blue.

Consider a final example, from 1 Timothy 2. In this chapter, Paul provides various instructions, including telling "men everywhere" to lift up holy hands in prayer. It is here that Paul also says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."

The text addressed to men about what to do with their hands has never been enforced in any church I have ever attended. It certainly has not been used to define a universal "male identity" as "those-whose-hands-are-always-lifted-in prayer." In contrast, the text limiting women's teaching and authority over men has become a central, defining text for the very meaning of womanhood as "those-who-may-not-teach-or-have-authority-over-men."

With our "blue hermeneutic" at work, we blithely regard these instructions to "men everywhere" as applicable to *no man anywhere*, whereas with our "pink hermeneutic" at work, we are utterly confident that 1 Timothy 2 denies leadership authority—whether in a broad or a narrow scope—to *all women everywhere*.[7]

How might this passage speak to the church today if we refused to apply the pink hermeneutic? Perhaps we would find in it nothing more than the necessity to restrict the leadership of deceived women who, like the deceived women of Ephesus, threaten to reprise the deception of Eve and lead men of the church astray with bad theology.[8]

Other texts that are used to define and limit women's identity are those that speak of women's homemaking, their care for children or the elderly in their family. These important texts show us with what serious regard God holds kingdom-building work that might otherwise be dismissed as irrelevant "women's work." Yet, instead of being understood as revealing an important part of what godly women are called to do in the household of faith, the texts are read as showing us *all* of what godly women may ever aspire to do. Again, the "pink hermeneutic" treats such texts as if they constitute the substance of a woman's identity, instead of interpreting such texts in light of Genesis 1 where the woman, just like the man, images God in the fulfillment of her creation-wide fruitfulness and rulership.

Based on these examples from Genesis and 1 Timothy, one can see how the traditional position is built on an insupportable double standard of biblical interpretation. Those texts that refer to women are deemed to apply to all women and used to limit God's calling of women in accordance with the rich cultural mandate of Genesis 1. In the case of men, by contrast, the wide scope of Genesis 1 always trumps any similar texts that might otherwise be used to limit male authority or to establish misguided, gender-wide restrictions.

Truths in pink and blue

How believers define God's intentions for male and female inevitably shapes how we understand the rest of biblical teaching. So the question is this: Does female subordinationism leave Scripture with a unified message, or are two versions of Truth required, one pink and one blue?[9]

As a simple experiment, I would challenge any man committed to the traditional view to read the Bible as if he were subject to the restrictions he believes God has placed upon all women. When read through the filter of gender, teachings that seem very plain when applied to men require significant editing to apply to females. Following are some examples of how truth becomes split into two versions.

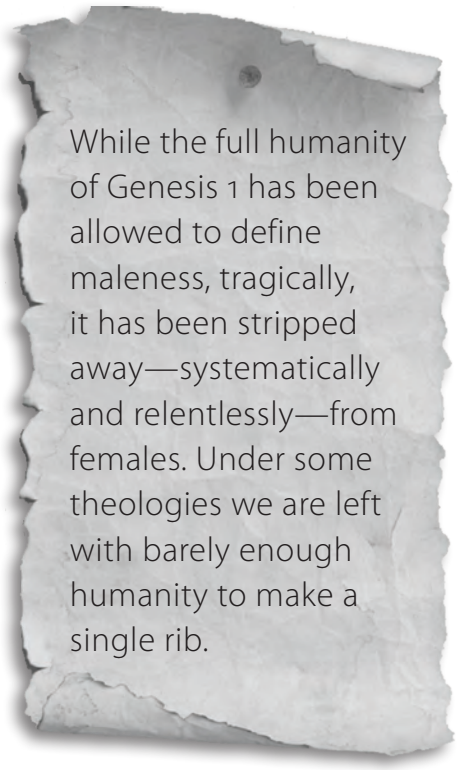
Example 1: *Re-created in Jesus Christ*. What happens to the salvation message when understood from the standpoint of female subordinationism? That we are all "equal at the foot of the cross" is a statement frequently made by traditionalists. But what does that mean beyond the fact that male and female are equal in their sin and need for grace? Scripture declares that as saved persons Christ is in us and the Holy Spirit will teach us all things and guide us into all truth. It declares that our minds will be renewed and we will become new creatures, transformed into Christlikeness. It declares that, as believers, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead comes alive in us.

The promise of salvation is not simply that we escape from the

wrath of God, but that we receive empowerment and transformation for the present life. We are restored to our calling as Genesis 1 image-bearers. Hence, 1 Peter 2:9 defines the renewed identity of believers as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation."

The Bible speaks of all this transformation and empowerment as offered to believers without any qualification by gender. Yet, for traditionalists, while a male's renewal in Christ leads, at least potentially, to offices of authority within the church, renewal for females does not.[10] Again, the issue is not the quantity or type of restriction placed upon the leadership of the re-created woman, but the fact of its being placed upon her because she is a woman and despite her re-creation. This leads to two varieties of salvation: blue for boys, with renewal, empowerment, and authority all hanging together; and pink for girls, with renewal and empowerment severed from authority.

Example 2: *Reigning with Christ*. Scripture promises that in Christ we receive salvation from our sins and reconciliation with God; it promises empowerment for a transformed life, and a kingdom in which those who follow Jesus will eventually rule with him. What happens to this truth under the doctrine of female subordinationism? Is it safe to say that at the end of history, when Christ returns to establish his kingdom, women will be granted a place of authority with Christ on his throne as promised in Revelation 3:21? Or must we expect that, even in glory, only males may attain to that position? Are there also two heavens, one pink and one blue?[11]



Example 3: *Gifts and calling*. (1) The parable of the talents (Luke 19:11ff.). This parable teaches that God is pleased when his people employ the talents he has given to them. Under female subordinationism, the parable requires an implied footnote reminding women that under certain circumstances God would be offended by females who exercise their teaching and leadership talents. Only for a male audience can the parable stand as written.

(2) Gifts in the body of Christ (Rom. 12:4ff.). This text teaches that every believer's talents are gifts of grace given for the upbuilding of the church. Included among the gifts are teaching and leadership. Under a subordinationist reading, women must either assume that teaching and leadership are not granted to their gender, or, as in the above example, that under some circumstances to exercise these gifts is an offense to God. Only for a male audience can the text stand as written.

The bottom line

In the final analysis, the same church that insists upon the equality of male and female "before the face of God" insists that "before the face of man" inequality must be enshrined. Whether female subordinationism is given its narrowest or its broadest definition, a point is eventually reached where gender triumphs and the church tells a woman *she may not lead or teach*. Gender overrides the authority inherent in the woman bearing the image of God. *She may not lead or teach*. Gender overrides the authority inherent in the cultural mandate to be fruitful and have dominion. She may not lead or teach. Gender overrides her authority as re-created in Jesus Christ. She may not lead or teach. Gender overrides the authority of the indwelling Holy Spirit. She may not lead or teach. Gender overrides her transformation into Christlikeness. She may not lead or teach.

Is this what God had in mind when the oneness of Adam became the oneness of male and female? Is this what Paul had in mind when he wrote 1 Timothy 2:12? Are we truly not a single human race in two sexes, but rather two distinct human races?

God surely intended distinctive contributions from his sons and from his daughters. But to draw that distinction, as female subordinationism does, as being between those (male) human beings whose gender grants them authority, under God, throughout God's creation and those (female) human beings whose gender limits their authority either everywhere or only in specific limited places within God's creation, cannot be sustained biblically.

The bedrock of our human identity is given to both males and females in Genesis 1. Nothing that follows in Scripture—neither specific behavioral directives such as 1 Timothy 2, nor regulations concerning existing social orders and structures such as slavery, polygamy, or patriarchy—redefines our original, God-given, human identity. What we received as God's gracious gift at Creation has been mercifully restored to us in Jesus Christ, our second Adam. Fundamental to Genesis 1 is that humanity together as male and female rule under God and over the earth, but neither rules over the other.

While the full humanity of Genesis 1 has been allowed to define maleness, tragically, it has been stripped away—systematically and relentlessly—from females. Under some theologies we are left with barely enough humanity to make a single rib.

Our generation is in special trouble on the issues of male and female and on matters of how to conduct our life together on this planet. On the one hand, we have the corruption of sexuality, marriage, and family under the influence of individualism, sexual licentiousness, the quest for human autonomy, and so many other "isms" that rule the day.

Adding to the confusion, we have a wing of the church that goes along with culture without any desire or ability to redirect it.

And then, not helping, but deepening the confusion, there is the conservative church that claims to be holding to the teachings of Scripture but that is, in truth, only behaving in a reactionary way, unable to bring from its storeroom "new treasures as well as old" (Matt. 13:52) on how to live fully human lives as men and women.

To reject female subordinationism is not the equivalent of embracing contemporary feminism, nor is it a renunciation of the very idea of hierarchical authority structures of any kind. By the same token, to embrace the oneness of man and woman is not to reject our male/female differences. On the contrary, questions about how to reform social structures in church, family, and society so they reflect a truly biblical understanding of human identity, gifts, and calling, cry out for fresh answers. But within our traditionalist-oriented church, new answers can't be given if those questions are never asked. And right now, for us, the most important question remains this: Have we rightly divided the truth?

Notes

1. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 50.

2. 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Corinthians 14, Ephesians 5, 1 Timothy 2, 1 Peter 3.

3. The marriage relationship itself is not under scrutiny in this discussion.

4. A complete and original critique of this position was developed by Rebecca Merrill Groothuis in her excellent book *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997).

5. Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,* 96.

6. Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,* 87.

7. Critics of the traditionalist position have noted that another error is committed here by grounding a supposed universal principle of male leadership in the Fall, rather than in Creation. While Scripture teaches that in Christ God remembers our sins no more, this reading of the text requires that our authority structures forever memorialize Eve's deception.

8. See the superb treatment of this text in "Leading Him Up The Garden Path" by Rebecca Merrill Groothuis in *Priscilla Papers*, vol. 16, no. 2, Spring 2002, 10.

9. For a fuller treatment of how a traditionalist perspective has distorted our reading of the Bible, refer to "God's Order vs. the World's Order: Oneness vs. Hierarchy," tape of a workshop presented by Patti Ricotta at the 2001 international conference of Christians for Biblical Equality.

10. Nothing in this essay is meant to imply that males automatically receive offices of authority just because they are males. However, unlike females, males are never automatically disqualified because of their gender.

11. Some traditionalists do argue for women's eternal subordination. See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 940; and Robert Letham, "The Man-Woman Debate: Theological Comment," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990); 74. I am grateful to R. M. Groothuis for bringing this to my attention.

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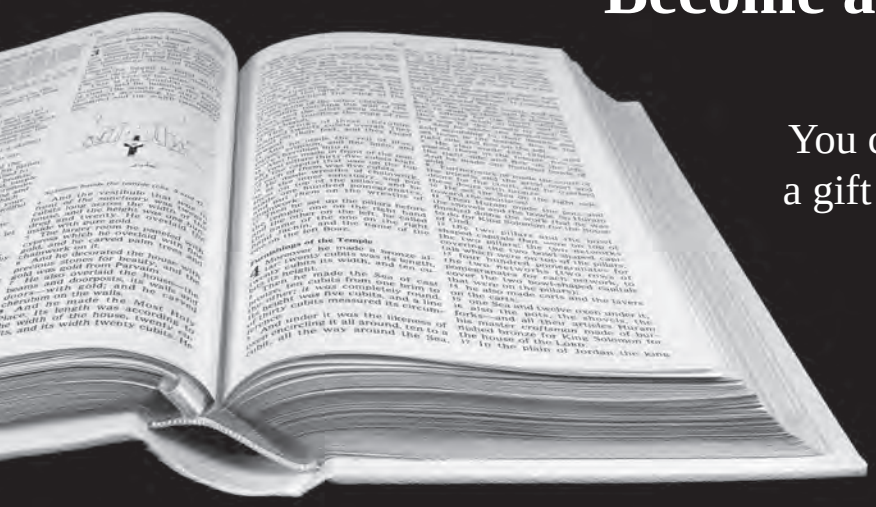

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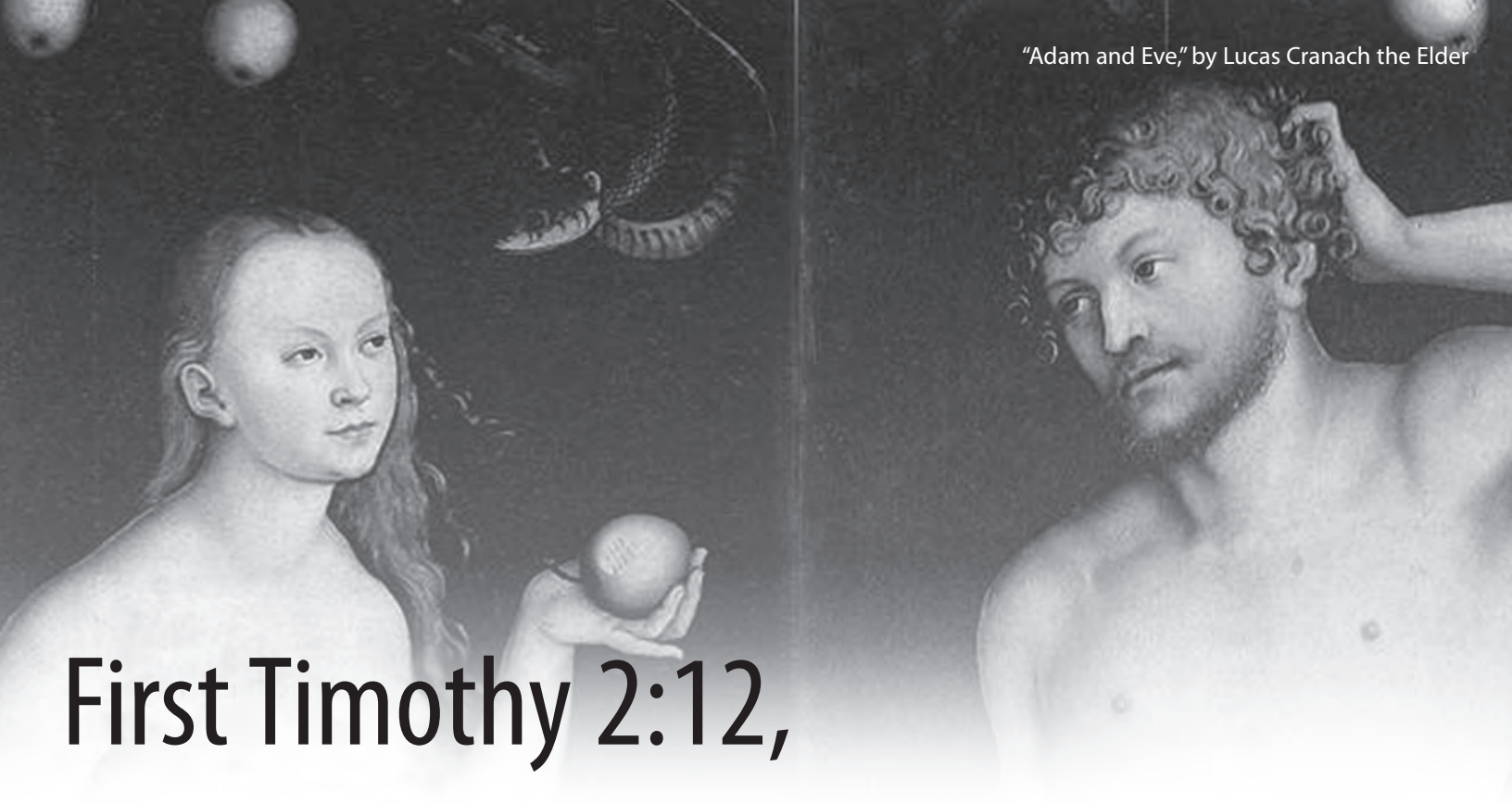

"Adam and Eve," by Lucas Cranach the Elder

First Timothy 2:12, the Ordination of Women, and Paul's Use of Creation Narratives

By John Jefferson Davis

First Timothy 2:11–15, and especially verse 12, has long been a focal point in modern discussions of the ordination of women. Traditional reservations about the ordination of women as pastors and elders have generally made two assumptions in the interpretation of this passage: (1) that the meaning of authentein in verse 12 is clearly known and should be translated simply as "have authority," and (2) that the appeal to the creation narrative naming Adam and Eve in verses 13 and 14 implies a universal, "transcultural" principle that prohibits the exercise of ecclesiastical authority by women over men in all (or some) circumstances.

The purpose of this article is to argue that both of these assumptions are faulty, and that 1 Timothy 2:11–15, rightly understood lexically and contextually, does not teach any universal prohibition of the ordination of women as pastors or elders. The primary focus of this discussion will be the second assumption, regarding the appeal to the Genesis creation account of Adam and Eve.[1] It will be argued that Paul's *contextual* and *church-specific* appeal to creation texts makes it not only possible, but preferable to see the limitation on women's teaching roles in 1 Timothy 2 as a *circumstantial* and not universal prohibition. Before proceeding with this analysis, however, a few observations will be made regarding the meaning of *authentein* in verse 12.

Authentein: "have authority" or "domineer"?

It is well known that *authentein* in verse 12, a *hapax legomenon*[2] in the New Testament, has been the focus of considerable attention among lexicographers and biblical scholars in recent

decades. Those who favor "traditional" understandings of male ecclesiastical leadership have tended to translate this word in the neutral sense of "have authority" or "exercise authority," as, for example, George Knight in a widely cited article of 1984.[3] In 1988, Leland Wilshire, examining 329 occurrences of this word and its cognate *authentēs,* showed that, prior to and contemporary with the first century, *authentein* often had negative overtones such as "domineer" or even "murder" or "perpetrate a crime"; only during the later patristic period did the meaning "to exercise authority" come to predominate.[4]

In a 2004 study, Linda Belleville[5] carefully examined the five occurrences of *authentein* prior to or contemporary with Paul and rendered these texts as follows: (1) the *Scholia* (fifth to first century B.C.) to Aeschylus's tragedy *Eumenides*: "commit acts of violence"; (2) Aristonicus (first century B.C.), "the *author*" (of a message); (3) a letter of Tryphon (first century B.C.), "I *had my way* with him" (*contra* Knight); (4) Philodemus (first century B.C.), "*powerful* lords"; (5) the poet Dorotheus (first and second centuries A.D.) in an astrological text, "Saturn . . . *dominates* Mercury." It is clear, especially in instances 1, 3, 4, and 5 above, that a neutral meaning such as "have authority" is not in view.

Belleville also notes, significantly, that a variety of *premodern* versions of the Bible[6] translate this word not simply as "have authority" or "exercise authority," but with some negative sense, e.g., the Old Latin (second to fourth centuries A.D.): "I permit not a woman to teach, neither to *dominate* (*dominari*) a man"; the Vulgate (fourth to fifth centuries A.D.), "neither to *domineer* over a man"; the Geneva Bible (1560 ed.), "neither to *usurpe* authority over a man"; the Bishops Bible (1589), "neither to *usurpe* authority over a man"; and the King James Bible (1611), "nor *usurp* authority over a man." In none of these cases can the translators be suspected of having a modern, "feminist" bias in translating *authentein* with a negative sense of "domineer" or "usurp authority." These instances show that the "traditional" translation of *authentein* as "exercise authority" is neither uniform nor self-evident in the history of interpretation; if anything, it could be argued that the burden of proof is on the (now) "traditional" view to justify its translation choice.

It should also be observed that Paul, had he the ordinary exercise of ecclesiastical leadership and authority in mind, had at his disposal a number of words that could have served this sense, notably *proistēmi.* This word, occurring eight times in the New Testament and used six times *by Paul* in reference to church leaders (1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; Rom. 12:8), can have the senses of "manage, conduct, rule, direct, be concerned about," and connotes the "normal" and "expected" type of leadership that should be exhibited by those selected to lead. The fact that a highly unusual and ambiguous word is chosen in 2:12 would be consistent with an unusual set of circumstances in the context to which the text is addressed. It will be argued below that these circumstances, as indicated by clear references in the pastoral epistles themselves, involve women who are being deceived by false teachers and, as such, are not suitable for the exercise of teaching or ruling authority in Ephesus.

It should be observed that, in other church contexts, the apostle derives different applications from these same creation texts. For example, in writing to the church in Rome, Adam, not Eve, is singled out as the representative figure who brought guilt and death upon the entire human race.

Paul's use of the creation narratives

The major focus of this article is an examination of Paul's appeal to the Genesis creation narratives, with a view to showing that, in this (1 Tim. 2:11–15) and other passages, the apostle refers to these texts with the local circumstances and the problems of specific churches in view. It is here argued that previous discussions of this passage have not given adequate recognition to the *context-specific* way in which Paul applies the creation texts.

When writing to the church in Ephesus, the apostle states that women are not to teach or have (NIV)/usurp (KJV) authority over men because "Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (vv. 13–14). Paul appeals to the Genesis narratives, describing the human situation both prior to the fall and immediately subsequent to it (Gen. 2:18–25, 3:1–7). It has been argued that, since verse 13, referring to the chronological priority of Adam over Eve in creation, is both a *creation* narrative and *before the fall,* the conclusions drawn from it by the apostle are not simply reflective of cultural circumstances or the sinful human condition, but are normative for all times and places and, consequently, bar the ordination of women to certain offices in all circumstances. Paul's reasoning appeals to a basic order of creation and not merely to a limited cultural context or to the practices of particular churches. For those who accept the authority of canonical Scripture and who take Adam and Eve to be historical individuals, such considerations would appear to be weighty and even insuperable objections to the ordination of women as senior pastors or elders. Even if Adam and Eve were considered not to be historical individuals, but rather archetypal representatives of the first human beings, it could still be argued that the implications that Paul draws from these accounts are of transcultural validity precisely because they are drawn from *prelapsarian creation* texts.

The foregoing argument, however, fails to take into account the way in which the apostle Paul draws implications from creation texts in ways that are specifically related to his pastoral

and theological concerns for specific churches and congregations. It should be observed that, in other church contexts, the apostle derives different applications from these same creation texts. For example, in writing to the church in Rome, Adam, not Eve, is singled out as the representative figure who brought guilt and death upon the entire human race (Rom. 5:12–21); Eve is not so much as mentioned. Adam is singled out as the representative head of the fallen human race, just as Christ is presented as the second Adam, the "one who was to come" (v. 14). The focus on Adam is consistent with Paul's purpose in setting forth his gospel as a gospel for the entire human race, for Jew and Gentile alike. As he had previously stated in 3:9, "*Jews and Gentiles alike* are all under sin"; the righteous standards of the law hold "*the whole world* accountable to God" (3:19, emphasis added). Hence, there is a universal need for the gospel. Later, in the epistle to the Romans, he deals with matters such as eating meat and observing special days (14:5–23) that are of internal concern to a congregation of both Jewish and Gentile converts, but, in the opening chapters (1–3), he is especially concerned with the "global" and universal relevance of the gospel, and consequently reads Genesis 3 in terms of *Adam's* disobedience that led to condemnation for *all* people (5:18).

In writing to the church at Corinth, Paul makes different applications of the creation narratives that are specifically related to the problems of this local assembly. In giving directives about the proper conduct of women in public worship (1 Cor. 11:2–16), Paul, while pointing to the creational grounding (v. 8, "woman [came] from man"; cf. Gen. 2:21–23), qualifies this in the direction of the mutual dependence of men and women (vv. 11–12). Evidently, the apostle expects that the women in Corinth will continue to pray and prophesy in the assembly (11:5), but should do so in an orderly and respectful way that honors the priority of creation—however the latter is to be understood.[7]

In his second epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle addresses the danger of being deceived by false teachers. In 2 Corinthians 11:3, he writes that "I am afraid that just as *Eve* was deceived by the serpent's cunning [Gen. 3:1–6], your minds might be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" by the "super apostles" who are preaching a "different Jesus" (vv. 4–5, emphasis added). The point to be noticed is that Paul draws a parallel here between the deception of Eve and the danger of the entire *Corinthian congregation* (or its [male] leaders) being deceived by false teachers. In this text, the figure of Eve is clearly taken to apply to the entire congregation and not specifically to the women within it, as though they, merely by virtue of their gender, were uniquely susceptible to such deception. This is to be contrasted with the reference to the deception of Eve in 1 Timothy 2:12, when Paul is writing to a church in Ephesus in which he is concerned that some of the younger widows have already "turned away to follow Satan" (1 Tim. 5:15), and is aware of "weak-willed women" in Ephesus who are burdened by sins and have not learned the truth, their homes being infiltrated by false teachers (2 Tim. 3:6–7).

This comparison of 2 Corinthians 11:3 and 1 Timothy 2:12 shows that Paul does not have a "one size fits all" hermeneutic when reading and applying the Genesis narratives of creation and fall: "Eve" can be seen as a figure of *women* in Ephesus or as a figure for *an entire church* in Corinth—because the local circumstances differ, though false teaching is a danger in both settings. Applications are drawn from Genesis in a church-specific and contextually sensitive way.

Another example of Paul's contextually sensitive application of creation texts may be seen in the different ways controversies concerning food are addressed when writing to the congregations in Ephesus and Rome. In 1 Timothy 4:1–5, written to Ephesus, Paul's response to false teachers who are forbidding marriage and enjoining abstinence from certain foods is that "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (v. 4). The principle being invoked is clearly reflective of the teaching found in Genesis 1:31, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." The institution of marriage and all types of food—"kosher" or "non-kosher," meat or vegetables, sacrificed to a pagan idol or not—are, intrinsically in and of themselves "clean," reflecting the goodness of God's creation itself. Paul strongly asserts this principle as over against the false teachers.

Paul does not have a "one size fits all" hermeneutic when reading and applying the Genesis narratives of creation and fall. . . . Applications are drawn from Genesis in a church-specific and contextually sensitive way.

In writing to the Roman congregation, however, on similar issues of permissible foods and observance of special days (Rom. 14), Paul takes a somewhat different pastoral approach because of different circumstances. As with the Ephesian congregation, the apostle alludes to the creational principle of the goodness of all food (14:4, "nothing is unclean in itself," cf. Gen. 1:31), but in the Roman church there are other dynamics to be considered: the practices and scruples of Jewish and Gentile converts whose different religious and cultural backgrounds are creating problems of conscience and troubling the unity of the church. While in principle the Gentile believers in Rome could insist on their "creational right" to eat meat, Paul urges them to forbear in Christian love out of regard for the consciences of their Jewish brethren. In this circumstance, Paul urges that a central redemptive concern for the unity of the church and respect for Christian conscience in secondary matters take precedence over any individual's "creation right" to eat meat. While Paul is not denying the validity of the creational goodness of meat—as previously noted, in Romans 14:4 he had already stated that "no food is unclean in itself"—this principle is not applied to the life of the churches without regard to the particular circumstances

of the congregation in question. In Ephesus, Paul can be more insistent on the "creational right" to eat all foods because the denial of this right is coming from false teachers who are in danger of abandoning the faith and following deceiving spirits (1 Tim. 4:1). Here, the issue of food is implicated with the preservation of the faith itself. In Rome, on the other hand, there is no indication in Romans 14 that either party—Jew or Gentile—is in danger of abandoning the faith, being deceived by demons, or drifting in the direction of heretical doctrine.

Further, the foregoing discussion of food controversies in two churches addressed by Paul suggests that, just as in one circumstance a creational right to eat (1 Tim. 4) does not lead to an unqualified permission to eat in another instance (Rom. 14), so it could also be the case that a creationally endorsed prohibition (1 Tim. 2:12–13) of women exercising ecclesiastical authority does not imply prohibition under different circumstances. In both cases, it is here being argued, Paul applies creation texts in a contextually sensitive manner and in a way that is concerned to preserve the apostle's core values: sound doctrine and the preservation of the apostolic deposit of faith, the unity of the churches, and harmony and good order in the Christian family.

There are no historical or cultural contexts mentioned in Scripture in which homosexuality is portrayed in a positive light. The creational distinctions between male and female . . . which are foundational for the prohibitions against homosexuality have the same implications for all cultural contexts.

On this reading of 1 Timothy 2:11–15, Paul is indeed prohibiting women in Ephesus from exercising ecclesiastical authority and would not support their "ordination," the reason being that false teachers pose a grave threat in Ephesus and women are being misled by false teachers and straying after Satan. Paul sees a parallel between the deception of Eve in Genesis 3 and the deception of women in Ephesus, just as he sees a parallel between the deception of Eve in Genesis and the deception of the *congregation* in Corinth. In different circumstances, where women are sound in the faith and their lives consistent with the apostolic core values of congregational unity and the harmony and good order of the family, the way would be open for their exercise of ecclesiastical leadership. The general, "transcultural" lesson that should be drawn, then, from the Genesis texts, in light of their contextually differentiated uses in 1 Timothy 2 and 2 Corinthians 11, would be that *whenever* and *wherever* either *women or men* are being misled by false teachers, they should not be ordained as church leaders; soundness in the faith is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for service as an elder or deacon (1 Tim. 3:1–13).

The question of homosexual practices

At this point, it seems appropriate to consider a possible objection to the foregoing line of argument. Those holding a "traditional" understanding of 1 Timothy 2:11–15 raise the concern that the same logic that would argue that creationally grounded prohibitions concerning women in the church do not necessarily apply in all contexts could be extended to argue that biblical prohibitions against homosexual practices grounded in creation are not necessarily forbidden in all circumstances either. In short, do arguments for women's ordination inevitably lead to justifications for homosexuality? The question is a serious one and deserves a careful answer, for trends in some mainline American churches give plausibility to such concerns.

The response to this concern, however, is to observe that, in the course of redemptive history and in the breadth of the biblical canon, there is *uniformity* in the biblical rejection of homosexual practices while there is *diversity* in the types of public leadership roles played by women in the Old and New Covenant communities.[8] In the case of homosexual practices, there is one consistent position reflected throughout the Scriptures in both testaments; the biblical assessment of homosexuality is uniformly negative.[9] There are no historical or cultural contexts mentioned in Scripture in which homosexuality is portrayed in a positive light. The creational distinctions between male and female (Gen. 1:27) which are foundational for the prohibitions against homosexuality have the same implications for all cultural contexts.

In the case of women's leadership roles, however, there is significant diversity within the canon itself. In 1 Timothy 2, women's roles are restricted, it is here argued, in light of the local problems of women being misled by false teachers and, plausibly, teaching men in a *domineering* fashion.[10] Elsewhere, one can recall the prominent leadership roles exercised by Deborah the prophet (Judg. 4), Huldah the prophet (2 Kgs. 22), Miriam the sister of Moses (Exod. 15:20–21), Priscilla (Acts 18:26), the four daughters of Philip who were prophets (Acts 21:9), and Phoebe (Rom. 16:1) to be reminded of the ways that women have been used by God at different times in biblical history; there is no hint in the canonical texts that the activities of these women were viewed in a negative light. This diversity—the fact that women's authoritative leadership is sometimes prohibited (1 Tim. 2) and sometimes permitted (Deborah, Judg. 4)—indicates that *circumstantial* factors are in play, not merely "transcultural, creational" norms that are applied without regard to local problems.

Deborah's leadership

The case of Deborah is especially relevant to this discussion of Paul's use of creation texts in relation to leadership roles for women in the covenant community. The biblical text states that Deborah was *judging* Israel at that time (Judg. 4:4). She "held court" under "the palm of Deborah" in the hill country of Ephraim and the Israelites "came to her to have their disputes

decided" (Judg. 4:5); the biblical author clearly understands her to be exercising judicial authority.[11] The verb used to indicate Deborah's activity (*shaphat*) is the same verb used to describe the judicial activity of Moses (Exod. 18:13) and Samuel (1 Sam. 17:6). The judges who were to be appointed in the various tribes and towns according to the law of Moses (Deut. 16:18–20) were to administer justice impartially and were to be respected as serving the "Lord your God" (Deut. 17:12) and representing his authority. As Robin Davis has pointed out in a recent study, the parallels between Moses and Deborah are numerous and striking: both Moses and Deborah functioned as judges (Exod. 18:13, Judg. 4:4); both sat for judgment, and the people came to them (Exod. 18:13, Judg. 4:5); both proclaimed the word of the Lord (Exod. 7:16, Judg. 4:6); both were prophets (Deut. 18:15, Judg. 4:4); both pronounced blessings (Exod. 39:43, Judg. 5:24); both pronounced curses in the name of the Lord (Deut. 27:15, Judg. 5:23); both had military generals (Joshua, Barak); both gave instructions to the people as to how the Lord would defeat the enemies (Exod. 14:14, Judg. 4:6); in both cases, the Lord caused the enemy in chariots to panic and flee (Exod. 14:24, Judg. 4:15); God's victory is told first in prose (Exod. 14, Judg. 4), then in poetry (Exod. 15, Judg. 5); Moses (and Miriam, Exod. 15:1) and Deborah (and Barak, Judg. 5:1) led the people in worshipping God after their great deliverance.[12] In Judges, Deborah appears as a "second Moses" figure whose authority derives from the God of Sinai.

The following translation of 1 Timothy 2:12 is proposed: "I do not permit a woman to teach in a way that domineers over men."

The case of Deborah poses a special dilemma for the "traditional" reading of 1 Timothy 2:12: If it is true that Paul's use of creation texts is intended to prohibit all women in all circumstances from exercising authority over men in the covenant community, then the apostle is *forbidding* what God has in this instance *permitted*—and this would amount to a contradiction within the canon itself.

Various ways of evading this problem are not convincing. Was Deborah usurping authority rather than exercising it legitimately? There is no indication in the book of Judges, the Old Testament as a whole, or the New Testament that God disapproved of Deborah's activities; on the contrary, Deborah is to be understood in light of the programmatic statement in Judges 2:16 that God, in his mercy, "raised up judges who saved them"; her leadership is a notable example of exactly such divinely empowered activity.

Was Deborah not really "ruling" or "judging" Israel at this time, but merely dealing with people privately when they came to her, as one scholar has suggested?[13] This argument is unconvincing for three reasons: (1) it overlooks the usage of the verb *shaphat,* which is also used to describe the activities of Moses (Exod. 18) and Samuel (1 Sam. 17:6), both of whom engaged in *public* and *authoritative* judging; (2) it overlooks the plain reference to Deborah's place of judgment,[14] the *palm tree of Deborah,* a public location, not a private one, such as a home; and (3) it overlooks the plain statement of the text that Deborah was judging *Israel,* a reference to the nation as a whole, not just to various individuals. Deborah's leadership, like that of the other judges, was widely recognized and transcended tribal boundaries.

Was Deborah only God's "second best" because the men of Israel would not lead?[15] This view overlooks the explicit texts such as Judges 5:2 ("When the princes in Israel *take the lead* . . . Praise the Lord!") and 5:9 ("My heart is with Israel's princes, with the *willing* volunteers among the people") where the leaders of Israel are commended, not rebuked, for answering God's call through Deborah.

Nor is it the case that the Deborah texts can be discounted by suggesting that she exercised only "civil" and not "spiritual" authority. This notion of the separation of civil and religious authority makes no sense in the theocratic life of Israel at this time. Such a reading imports into the text modern notions of "separation of church and state" that are foreign to it. Deborah issues commands to Barak in the name of the Lord (Judg. 4:6, "The Lord, the God of Israel commands you"); the kings of Israel were to rule on the basis of the law of Moses (cf. Deut. 17:18, "he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law [law of Moses]"), not according to some secular or merely "civil" law.[16]

The implication of the foregoing observations is that Deborah should be seen as a positive and not negative example of a woman exercising authority in the covenant community. Deborah may be unusual and somewhat exceptional in biblical history, but she is a positive example notwithstanding. Since God himself raised up Deborah as a judge, and that which God chooses to do can not be *intrinsically wrong,* it cannot be intrinsically wrong for a woman to exercise authority over a man in ecclesiastical contexts.

The case of Deborah, seen as a positive example, is then consistent with a recognition of the *circumstantial* nature of the prohibitions in 1 Timothy 2:12; not all women are prohibited by God from exercising authority over men at all times in the church. The reading here presented then removes the appearance of a "contradiction within the canon" and provides hermeneutical space for the recognition of other "Deborahs" who may be called by God to lead from time to time.[17]

Conclusion

In conclusion, then, the following translation of 1 Timothy 2:12 is proposed: "I do not permit a woman to teach in a way that domineers over men." This rendering of the verse is consistent with the following considerations: (1) the unusual—in fact,

singular—usage of *authentein* in the New Testament, suggestive of unusual circumstances, rather than Paul's more usual word *proistēmi* for church leadership; (2) the negative connotations for *authentein* found in four of the five uses of the word in texts prior to or contemporary with Paul; (3) the translations of "domineer" or "usurp authority" found in earlier versions of the Bible, such as the Old Latin, Vulgate, Geneva, Bishops, and King James; (4) the grammatical and syntactical observation that, in the New Testament, pairs of nouns or noun substitutes (e.g., infinitives) connected by a "neither . . . nor" (*de . . . oude*) construction can define a progression of related ideas or define a related purpose or goal;[18] (5) the church-specific way in which Paul cites and applies creation texts, as seen in the comparisons of 1 Timothy 2 and 2 Corinthians 11:3 in matters of deception by false teachers, and 1 Timothy 4:4 and Romans 14 in the matter of permissible foods; and (6) the positive example of Deborah (Judg. 4, 5) in canonical history as a woman raised up by God to exercise leadership and authority—not just over a local assembly, but over the covenant *nation*.

It is also argued that the proposed reading of 1 Timothy 2:12 is consistent with and supportive of what might be termed Paul's "fundamental concerns for faith and order" in the Pastoral Epistles and his ministry generally: (1) the preservation of sound doctrine and the apostolic faith, (2) the unity and good order of the churches, and (3) the solidarity and harmony of Christian families. It is evident that, in the Pastorals, the apostle is concerned with problems that are arising on all three fronts. The problem of false teaching is frequently mentioned (1 Tim. 1:4–7; 4:1–3, 7; 5:15; 6:3–5; 2 Tim. 2:16–18, 25–26; 3:8–9; 4:3–4; Tit. 1:10–11; 3:9–11). Insubordinate men and empty talkers are disturbing the church (Tit. 1:10). In terms of family life, there are problems with women being deceived by false teachers (2 Tim. 3:6); some of the younger widows have already strayed after Satan (1 Tim. 5:15); and some false teachers are even upsetting whole families (Tit. 1:11).

In the face of these problems in the community at Ephesus, Paul stresses the importance of sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3, 10; 4:6, 16; 2 Tim. 1:14; 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1), good order in the church (1 Tim. 3:15; cf. 1 Cor. 14:40, "decently and in order"), and good order in the family (1 Tim. 3:4–5, 12; 5:14; Tit. 1:6). As Paul contemplates the end of his own life's work and the transition to the second generation of Christian leadership, he is naturally concerned to "tighten up the ship" in its faith and order in order that the churches might weather the storms that are to come in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1; cf. 4:3–4).

In light of these local problems, where women are being misled by false teachers and where some women may be teaching in a domineering, abrasive, or alienating fashion that creates conflict and division in the assembly and in marriages, the apostle does not permit such women to be placed in positions of leadership in the church. On the other hand, in other circumstances, where gifted women are sound in the faith and have a way of teaching that is not dividing the assembly or marriage relationships in the church—where the apostle's "fundamental concerns for faith and order" are satisfied—then the way would be clear to recognize the calling of such gifted women and set them apart for leadership in the church.

Arguably, Deborah during the period of the judges could be viewed as an example of such a gifted and called woman whose ministry was consistent with the "fundamental concerns for faith and order": raised up by the Spirit of God; administering the law of Moses with justice, impartiality, and discernment; recognized and accepted by the community, and with no indications in the biblical text that her ministry created domestic difficulties with her husband, Lappidoth. Churches today would be well advised to reconsider the "traditional" readings of 1 Timothy 2:12 that bar women from certain leadership roles in the church. Traditional readings of the text may be in danger, however unintentionally, of quenching the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19), of stifling the service of gifted women, and of depriving the churches of able leadership at a time in redemptive history (Acts 2:17) when the people of God should be expecting more, not fewer, "Deborahs."

Notes

1. For the purposes of this paper, Paul's authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is assumed.

2. A word occurring only once.

3. George Knight III, "Authenteo in Reference to Women in 1 Timothy 2:12," *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 145.

4. Leland Wilshire, "The TLG Computer and Further References to Authenteo in 1 Tim. 2:12," *New Testament Studies* 32 (1988): 120–34. The scholarly literature on this passage is comprehensively surveyed in the article by Craig L. Blomberg, "Neither Hierarchicalist nor Egalitarian," in Stanley E. Porter, ed., *Paul and His Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 312–24. See also the lexical analysis of Scott Baldwin, "A Difficult Word: Authenteo in 1 Tim. 2:12," in Kostenberger, Schreiner, and Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1995), 79–80. The favoring of a neutral meaning, such as "have authority," by Greek church fathers in the fourth and later centuries could be seen as reflective of the church's changed cultural context subsequent to the legalization of Christianity in A.D. 313, permitting Christian worship to move from the private, house-church setting to more public spaces—public spaces in which, in Greek culture, public leadership roles for women were not generally favored. Byzantine social customs favored the veiling and semi-cloistering of women and a narrowing of social roles; men and women in general led segregated lives. Vern L. Bullough, *The Subordinate Sex: A History of Attitudes Toward Women* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 123, 126; Julia O'Faolin and Lauro Martines, eds., *Not in God's Image* (New York, N.Y.: Harper Torchbooks, 1973), 74.

5. Linda Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11–15," in Ronald Pierce and Rebecca Groothuis, eds., *Discovering Biblical Equality* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 205–23, at 214–17.

6. Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority," 209–10.

7. For an extensive review of the recent scholarly literature discussing this difficult passage (1 Cor. 11:2–16), see Blomberg, "Neither Hierarchicalist nor Egalitarian," 295–302.

8. See the insightful discussions of William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001), esp. 135–84 on the interplay between creation, new creation, and cultural elements as they relate to the biblical statements on women and homosexual practices. Webb's nuanced approach is consistent with the argument of this article, but he does not appear to develop my "context-specific use of creation texts" approach in a focused way.

9. For a comprehensive examination of the biblical texts on homosexuality and issues of interpretation, see Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The*

Bible and Homosexual Practice (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2001).

10. Traditional interpreters of 1 Tim. 2:13 ("Adam was formed first, then Eve") see in this an appeal to the order of creation and the principle of primogeniture, or the firstborn being worthy of greater honor. But it should be noted that Paul can also apply the primogeniture principle in context-specific ways. For example, in Rom. 3:1–2 and 9:4–5, he reminds his Gentile readers of the spiritual privileges (law, covenants, temple worship, etc.) of Israel; Israel is God's "firstborn" in the order of redemptive history. Gentiles should not boast over the branches because "you do not support the root, but the root supports you" (11:18), and yet the thrust of the book of Romans as a whole is to argue for the spiritual equality of both Gentiles and Jews before God through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:28–30, cf. Gal. 3:28). The "Adam was formed first" reference in 1 Tim. 2:13 can plausibly be understood as a context-specific response and corrective to a situation in which women were not acting respectfully toward men in the Ephesus congregation and are being rebuked for their (domineering) behavior.

11. Robert Boling comments on this text: "*Judging.* That is, functioning with reference to a recognized office. . . . *Deborah's Palm.* That she had a tree named after her suggests a setting in which she was responsible for Yahwist oracular inquiry . . . the judgment. Heb. *ham-mishpat;* here it stands for her decision in response to a particular inquiry." *Judges: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary,* Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), 95.

12. Robin E. Davis, "Historical and Literary Parallels Between the Moses and Deborah Narratives," unpublished paper, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Jan. 2006, 1–7. Davis cites other parallels in addition to those mentioned above.

13. Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Multnomah Press, 2004), 133.

14. Barnabas Lindars comments, "Deborah had her seat below this tree in the sense that she exercised her function as judge here." *Judges 1–5: A New Translation and Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 183; J. Alberto Soggins, *Judges: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1981), 64: "'Used to sit': where she exercised her office as a judge . . . in the forensic sense of this term."

15. Lindars, *Judges 1–5,* 134.

16. With reference to Deborah, Thomas Schreiner ("The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership," in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2006], 211) recognizes her prominent leadership role, but then points, correctly, to the distinction in the New Testament between the roles of prophets (as in Corinth) and elders: The prophets ostensibly did not have the same type of authority by way of continuing office as did the elders in matters of teaching. This distinction, even if correct, misses the main point with respect to Deborah: She had both "charismatic" authority as a prophet and a recognized office as a judge. The two aspects were combined in her case, demonstrating that God can approve the exercise of authority under both aspects by a duly called and gifted woman.

17. Acts 2:17, "In the last days . . . your sons and daughters shall prophesy," indicates that, in the New Testament age, the age of the outpouring of the Spirit, the church should be expecting more Deborahs, not fewer! What may have been exceptional in the Old Covenant can become usual in the New, fulfilling Moses' hope that, at some time in the future, "all the Lord's people" would be prophets (Num. 11:29).

18. Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority," 218, gives as examples Matt. 6:20, "where thieves neither break in nor steal" (i.e., break in with a view to steal); Acts 17:24, God "neither dwells in temples made with human hands nor is served by human hands" (i.e., dwells in human temples with a view to being served by human hands). The translation proposed here is similar to Belleville's renderings: "I do not permit a woman to teach with a view to dominating a man," or, "I do not permit a woman to teach a man in a dominating way," 219.

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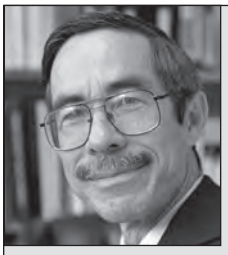

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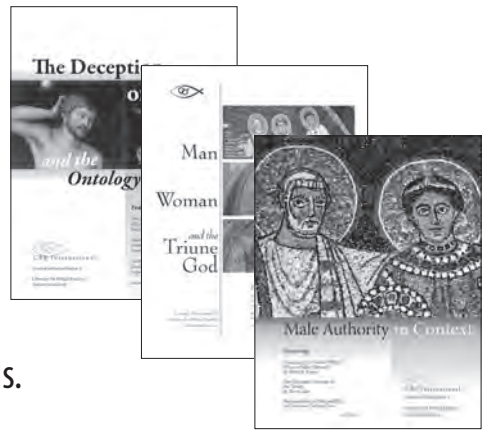

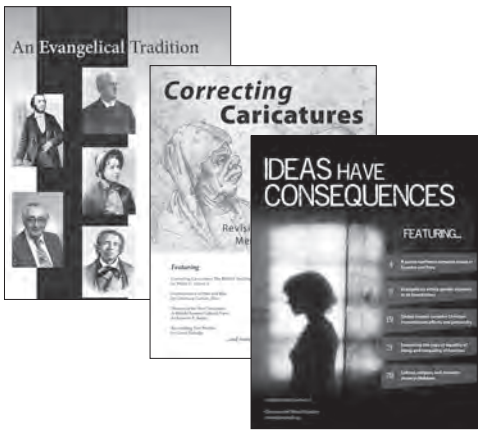

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Women in the New Testament:

A Middle Eastern Cultural View

By Kenneth E. Bailey

Making sense of the New Testament's apparently contradictory attitudes toward women

"Jesus at the House of Martha and Mary," wood engraving by Gustavo Doré, 1865

The broader topic of the place of women in the family, in society and in the Church is now discussed over much of the Christian world across a wide spectrum of opinion. Few topics have held as much promise and pain, hope and despair, change and deep uneasiness about change as this topic and it is clear that the New Testament is critical to it. This essay focuses on the New Testament. Yet regarding the biblical witness there is a strong tendency to see Scripture through the eyes of traditional interpretation of it, or through the eyes of current ideologies. Here a rigorous attempt will be made to allow Scripture itself to control and correct our understanding of it.

As is known, the NT is deeply influenced by its first century Middle Eastern cultural setting. Trying to discern the fabric of cultural assumptions that underlie the NT has been my life-long focus in NT studies. As a supplement to other historical concerns, this lens will be utilized as we examine our topic.

We will first expose what appear to be two opposing attitudes in the New Testament towards women in the church. We will then see if these two 'opposites' can be reconciled. The problem is simply this: one set of NT texts appears to say 'yes' to women while a second set appears to say 'no'. We turn first to the positives.

Positive attitudes

In the NT, women occupy a remarkable range of clearly identifiable positions. These include:

Jesus had women disciples

Four texts are significant. First, although occurring only once, the word 'disciple' does appear in the NT as a feminine. In Acts 9:36 Tabitha (Dorcas) is called *mathetria* (disciple). Secondly, in St. Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' family appears and asks to speak with him. Jesus replies,

> 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' And stretching out his hand *towards his disciples,* he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother' (Matt. 12:46–50).

In our Middle Eastern cultural context, a speaker who gestures to a crowd of *men* can say, 'Here are my brother, and uncle and cousin'. He *cannot* say, 'Here are my brother, and sister, and mother'. The text

specifically affirms that Jesus is gesturing to 'his disciples' whom he addresses with male and female terms. This communicates to the reader that the disciples before him were composed of men *and* women.

Thirdly, is the remarkable report in Luke 8:1–3. In this text the reader is told,

> Soon afterward he went through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women . . . who provided for them out of their means.

We note that Jesus is *travelling* through cities and villages with a band of men *and women* who are naturally known to be his disciples. This implies that they were spending night after night in strange villages. Today social customs are more relaxed than they were in the first century (as evidenced from the Mishnah and the Talmudes). Yet in the contemporary Middle East, in traditional society, I know of no place where the social scene presented in the text is possible. Women can travel with a group of men, but must spend their nights with relatives. Three points of amazement appear.

First, the story itself is very surprising for the reasons noted above. Secondly, the women are paying for the movement out of resources under their control. Finally, Luke (a man) admits all of this in writing.

Fourthly, in Luke 10:38 Jesus enters the house of Martha. Luke tells us, 'And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching'. In Acts Paul describes himself as having been 'brought up at the feet of Gamaliel' (Acts 22:3). To 'sit at the feet' of a rabbi meant to become a disciple of a rabbi. So Mary became a disciple of Jesus. Martha, we are told is 'distracted '(not burdened) with much serving. To be distracted one must be distracted from something or by something.

Clearly Martha is distracted *from* the teachings of Jesus by her cooking. In the account, Martha then asks Jesus to send Mary to the kitchen to help her. The point is not the need for someone to peel the potatoes. In our Middle Eastern cultural context, Martha is more naturally understood to be upset over the fact that her 'little sister' is seated with the men and has become a disciple of Rabbi Jesus. It is not difficult to imagine what is going through Martha's mind. She says to herself:

> This is disgraceful! What will happen to us! My sister has joined this band of men. What will the neighbours say? What will the family think? After this who will marry her? This is too much to expect!

Jesus does not reply to her words, but to their meaning. In context his answer communicates the following:

> Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about *many* things. I understand the *entire* list. One thing is needed. What is missing is not one more plate of food, but rather for you to understand that *I* am providing the meal and that your sister has already chosen the good portion. I will not allow you to take it from her. A good student is more important to me than a good meal.

The word 'portion' can mean a portion of food at a meal.[1] Jesus is defending Mary's right to continue her 'theological studies' with Jesus as one of his disciples.

From these four texts it is clear that in the Gospels women were among the disciples of Jesus.

There are women teachers of theology in the NT

Acts 18:24–28 tells of Apollos visit to Ephesus. Apollos is praised for his knowledge of the Scriptures and 'the things concerning Jesus'. But 'he knew only the baptism of John'. The text affirms.

> . . . but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him *they* took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately.

Clearly Priscilla is 'team teaching' the theology with Aquila and the student is no beginner, no fledgling catechumen; rather he is the famous, eloquent preacher of Alexandria. Furthermore, Luke's Gospel was indeed sent/dedicated to Theophilus. But there is little doubt that Luke also intended it to be read by the Church.

Thus when he identifies Mary as the author of the Magnificat he indirectly presents her as a teacher of theology, ethics, and social justice for all his readers! The critical discussion about the composition of the Magnificat is known to me. Yet, irrespective of one's view regarding sources and authorship, Luke *presents* Mary as the singer of this song and thus as a teacher of the readers of his Gospel. These two texts witness to the fact that in the early church women could (Mary) and did (Priscilla) teach theology to men.

The NT affirms the presence of women deacons/ministers in the Early Church

For this topic, two texts must be noted. The first is Rom. 16:1–2, where Paul writes, 'I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae.'

Phoebe is called a *deacon* (*diakonos*) not a *deaconess*. The evidence for the feminine use of this masculine form is slight.[2] Most likely this masculine ending is used because Phoebe was ordained to a clearly defined ministry, that of deacon (*diakonos*). Thus the formal title appears. Another reason is that the Aramaic word is *shammash,* which is used to describe the High Priest officiating in the temple at the day of atonement (*M.*, Yoma 7:5; *B.T.* Yoma 47a). But the feminine *shammasha* means a prostitute.[3] The need for an honorable title would dictate the use of the masculine in a church where a significant number had Aramaic as a part of their linguistic heritage.

In any case, for centuries scholars have observed the official nature of Phoebe's position. Regarding this verse, John Calvin wrote,

> He begins by commending Phoebe . . . first on account of her office, because she exercised a very honorable and holy ministry in the Church.[4]

In the contemporary scene Cranfield concludes,

> We regard it as virtually certain that Phoebe is being described as *a* or possibly *the* 'deacon' of the church in question, and that this occurrence of *diakonos* is to be classified with its occurrences in Philippians 1.1 and 1 Timothy 3.8 and 12.[5]

We would add to this that in 1 Tim. 4:6 *diakonos* is applied to Timothy himself where it is usually translated 'minister.' While recognizing that Romans is written when the church's ministry was in an early and more undefined stage, Dunn feels that, 'servant' is inadequate. He writes,

> *diakonos* together with *ousa* points more to a recognized ministry . . . or position of responsibility within the congregation.[6]

Paul refers to himself and to Apollos as *diakonoi* in 1 Cor 3:5. Furthermore, Phoebe is called a *prostatis* over/to many. This word was applied to the leader of worship in Graeco-Roman temple as well as to a governor, a chieftain and the leader of a democracy.[7] Dunn argues for patron/protector, or leader/ruler.[8] A ninth century Arabic version translated this phrase, *'qa'ima 'ala katherin wa 'alayya'*, in authority over many and over myself as well.[9]

A second text relevant to women deacons is 1 Tim. 3:8–11. Here the qualifications for deacons and for 'the women' appear. The two lists exhibit striking parallels which can be seen as follows:

1 Timothy 3:8–11	
Deacons likewise must be:	The women likewise must be
1. Serious (*semnous*)	1. Serious (*semnas*)
2. Not double tongued (*dilogous*)	2. Not slanderers (*diabolous*)
3. Not addicted to wine	3. Temperate
4. Not greedy for gain	4. —
5. They must hold fast to the mystery of the faith (*ekhontas to musterion tes pisteos*)	5. Faithful in all things (NRSV) (*pistas en pasin*) Better: Believing in all things with a clear conscience (NRSV)

These two lists are obviously intended to be parallel. The critical item for our subject is number five. The deacons must hold onto *the faith*. As seen above, the parallel item for the qualifications of the women is *'pistas en pasin.'* The other six occurrences of this word in 1 Timothy are translated as referring to the *act of believing* in the faith. Here alone it is consistently translated 'faithful in all things,' referring to a character trait. Does not the parallel nature of the two lists make clear that 'believing in all things' is what is intended? These women can best be seen as engaged in activities directly related to the faith in the same way as the men. Deacons in Acts 6 appear in Acts 7 and 8 as *preachers* of the *word* (cf. Stephen and Philip). Regarding 'the women' here in 1 Timothy John Chrysostom wrote,

> Some have thought that this is said of women generally, but it is not so, for why should he introduce anything about women to interfere with his subject. He is speaking to those who hold the rank of Deaconesses.[10]

The NT has women prophets

Eph. 2:20 affirms that the household of God is built on 'the apostles and prophets'. Thus, whoever they were, these early Christian prophets occupied a high place in the NT church. Furthermore, some of these prophets were women. In Acts Paul stays in Caesarea with Philip the evangelist whose daughters prophesied (Acts 21:19).

In 1 Cor. 11:4–5 Paul offers advice to men and women prophets on headcovering *while prophesying*. However one interprets this puzzling text, it is clear that both men and women were praying and prophesying. Praying could refer to private devotions. Prophesying is necessarily a public act.

A woman apostle

Rom. 16:7 reads,

> Greet Andronicus and Jounian, my relatives and my fellow prisoners; they are notable among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

Two people in this text are called 'notable among the apostles.' Our interest focuses on the name Jounian which is the accusative singular of a first declension Greek noun. Unfortunately this particular accusative can be masculine or feminine. The question becomes: What is the nominative of this name Jounian? The first declension allows for two options. It could be Jounia, in which case the person is a woman. This option would mean that Paul was sending greetings to a man and a woman, both apostles, probably a husband and wife like Priscilla and Aquila whom he has just mentioned.

On the other hand, if the nominative form is Jounias, a contraction of Junianus,[11] then the text refers to two men. Which of these options is more probable? Initially we observe that the witness of the Fathers is consistent.

Preaching on this text, Chrysostom said,

> 'Greet Andronicus and Junia . . . who are outstanding among the apostles.' To be an apostle is something great. But to be outstanding among the apostles just think what a wonderful song of praise that is! Indeed, how great the wisdom of this woman must have been, that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle.[12]

Jounian was also read as a feminine by Origen of Alexandria, Jerome, Peter Abelard and others. The Catholic scholar, Bernadette Brooten, quoted above, was unable to find any Latin commentary on Romans that had this name as masculine before the late thirteenth century. The name appears as a feminine (Junia) in the Syriac Peshitta and in all the numerous MSS and published Arabic versions available to me stretching from the ninth to the nineteenth centuries. The male name Junias first appeared in the Middle East in 1860! In the English language the famous Authorized Version reads 'Salute Andronicus and Junia . . . who are of note among the apostles.'

The first noticeable shift from Junia to Junias was apparently made by Faber Stapulensis, writing in Paris in 1512. His work subsequently influenced Luther's commentary on Romans. Luther then incorporated the masculine Junias into his German translation of the Bible which in time influenced other versions. However the theoretical masculine name Junias has never been found in any Latin or Greek text. The name Junia, however, has appeared over two hundred and fifty times.[13] Thus to insist on this being a masculine name is like finding a text with the name Mary in it and arguing that it refers to man! Such an argument is theoretically possible but would surely hinge on finding at least one text where Mary is clearly a male name.

It appears that during the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries a name known by the Church, East and West, to be female gradually became the name of a man in the West. In the Middle East, this shift of gender did not take place until the nineteenth century. The shift in both cases was made without reference to any evidence.

We must now ask, is the title 'apostle' significant? In the NT this title was primarily applied to the twelve. Paul, James, Barnabas and the two people in this text were also called apostles. From the shortness of the list and the prominence of the first three names, it is clear that they were a highly select group. In 1 Cor. the Apostles head the list of church orders (12:29). As noted, the Church is built on them (Eph. 2:20). The title is best understood to have maintained its original meaning, which was an eye-witness to Jesus who had received a direct communication from him.[14] Thus, the title of apostle (as applied to Junia) cannot be seen as a casual reference to an insignificant early Christian witness. With Chrysostom, the Early Fathers, Arabic and Syriac, Christianity, and the Authorized Version translators, we can affirm with full confidence that Junia (feminine) was an apostle.

Women elders

There remains the question of *elders.* The central text is 1 Tim. 5:1–2. Initially, the widely-debated question of the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles can be set aside. The material is often called deutero-Pauline. I prefer the view of E. E. Ellis who argues that the Pastorals present Paul at the end of his life addressing new topics through an amanuensis.[15] With a full awareness of the modern debate and the theological and linguistic issues involved, we will look at the text as Scripture handed down to us as a letter of Paul to Timothy, the pastor of the church in Ephesus. Our conclusions, we trust, are valid for our topic irrespective of a composition date from the sixties or the nineties.

The text under consideration is open to two interpretations. The first is reflected in the time-honored translation of these two verses, which is as follows:

> Do not rebuke an *older man* but exhort him as you would a father; younger men like brothers, *older women* like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity (RSV).

This translation is built on the assumption that chapter five opens a new subject. At the end of chapter four there is specific reference to *the council of elders* who ordained Timothy. This *council* of elders, the *presbuterion*, was composed of the *presbuteroi*, the elders. That much is clear. The problem arises in 5:1–2, where the same word appears twice, first as a masculine singular *(presbutero)* and then as a feminine plural *(presbuteras).* These two words are usually translated as 'older man' and 'older women', as seen above. Support for this translation is found in the fact that 'young men' and 'young women' are mentioned in the text. Thus it is easy to see age references all through the verse. But this is not the only option.

It is also possible to argue as follows. (First, a word of explanation: the science of rhetorical criticism in biblical studies is more than one hundred and fifty years old.[16] But it has only been given serious attention in the last two decades.) One of the frequently used devices, now found to be extensively present in both the OT and the NT, is chiasm, which we prefer to call 'inverted parallelism'. This particular rhetorical device presents a series of ideas, comes to a climax and then repeats the series backwards. The ideas/units that repeat can be individual lines but often appear as paragraphs. This form of rhetoric is common in both Greek and Hebrew literature. It is so extensive in the NT that Johanna Dewey has observed, 'The question has now become, where is it not found?'[17]

In regard to our text, if we observe the larger section in which 5:1–2 appears, the following outline emerges:

1. These instructions (as a minister) 4:6–11
    2. Timothy and the Elders (and the young) 4:12—5:2
        3. Older widows (and the young) 5:3–16
    4. Timothy and the Elders 5:17–20
5. These rules (in regard to ordination) 5:21–22

Numbers 1 and 5 discuss 'instructions as a minister' and 'rules as regards ordination'. They form a pair. Paragraphs 2 and 4 form a second pair and are on the topic of 'Timothy and the Elders'. The widows form paragraph 3 in the centre. The entire passage discusses *ministry.* With this very simple outline in mind, a closer look at each paragraph is necessary. We will examine each of the 'pairs' of paragraphs. Paragraphs 1 and 5 will be examined and compared first. We will then skip briefly to the centre in paragraph 3 and finally observe the thrust of paragraphs 4 and 2 where our text is located.

> The name Junia . . . has appeared over two hundred and fifty times. Thus to insist on this being a masculine name is like finding a text with the name Mary in it and arguing that it refers to man!

1. The outside pair (1 and 5)

The first paragraph (4:6–11) opens with, 'If you put these *instructions* before the brethren you will be a good *diakonos/minister* of Jesus Christ'. This section most naturally ends with the words '*Command* and *teach* these things' (v 11). Paragraph 5 (5:21–22) is clearly parallel to this opening section. It charges Timothy to 'keep these *rules*' (v 21) and to 'not be hasty in the laying on of hands' (v 22). So the topic of '*rules* which relate to *ministry*' is again in focus.

2. The centre (3)

The centre section (5:3–16) opens and closes with references to 'real widows' (vv 3, 5, 16) and their *enrolment* (v 9). In between Paul describes *young widows* who should *not* be enrolled (vv 11–15).

3. The second pair (4 and 2)

We saw how the topic discussed in the opening paragraph reappeared in the fifth paragraph. The critical question is, are paragraphs 2 (4:12—5:2) and 4 (5:17–20) intentionally composed as a pair? I am convinced that they are.

First observe paragraph 4, which is clearly discussing elders who are officials in the ministry of the Church, *not* old men. The material breaks into two sections, vv 17–18 and vv 19–20. The first two verses discuss the 'good elders' who are ruling well, busy at preaching and teaching and should be paid for their efforts. In vv 19–20 Timothy is advised about dealing with 'troublesome elders'.

We turn finally to paragraph 2 (4:12—5:2) where *presbuteroi* are also discussed. The early Greek paragraph divisions *(kefalain)* left 5:1–2 standing alone. The Fathers who made these divisions were honest enough not to relate these verses to what followed. Did they have a hidden agenda when they chose *not* to attach them to the previous paragraph?

Against the *kefalaia,* Archbishop Langton's thirteenth century chapter divisions (now in use), attach these verses to the discussion of widows which follow. But those instructions regarding widows have no mention of the *presbuteroi.* Is it not more appropriate to see 5:1–2 as a part of the previous paragraph which does mention *presbuteroi?* I am convinced that it is. Did Langton share the hidden agenda mentioned above?

We will examine 4:12–5:2 as a unit which focuses on Timothy and the *presbuteroi.*

Once again the *presbuteroi* are of two kinds. Paul first mentions the elders who have ordained Timothy (4:12–16). Granted, these verses focus on Timothy's duties as a leader of worship; but the context is that of Timothy's ordination by elders who are not criticized. He then discusses the *difficult* elders (5:1–2). These are obviously people whom Timothy is sorely tempted to attack. He is told, 'Don't do it'. Treat the *presbutero* like a father, he is advised, and the *presbuteras* (plural) like mothers. Thus the two topics of 'helpful elders' and 'difficult elders' appear in both paragraph 4 (4:17–20) and paragraph 2 (4:12—5:2). In each case the good elders are mentioned first and the difficult elders second. Thus paragraphs 2 and 4 can be seen as parallel discussions of *ministry.* If this is true, then the *presbuteras* in 5:2.are women elders ordained and engaged in ministry in Timothy's congregation. The NRSV places 'or an *elder*, or a *presbyter*' as a marginal note to *presbutero* in 5:1 but curiously not to *presbuteras* in 5:2. In regard to 5:1–2, Leonard Swidler, professor of Catholic Studies at Temple University (USA), writes,

> . . . in [1 Timothy] 5:1–2 the words *presbytero* and *presbyteras* are usually translated as 'an older man' and 'older women', but in this context of discussion of the various 'officers' of the church, a perfectly proper translation—which, if not more likely, is at least possible—would be 'male presbyter' and 'woman presbyters'.[18]

What then can be said about the references to youth in 5:1–2? Aside from 5:1–2 under discussion, twice in the larger passage we have observed references to *youth* in texts that also discuss formal ministries (4:12–16 and 5:9–16). The same phenomenon occurs in 1 Pet. 5:1–5. The two cases in 5:1 and 5:2 fit easily into this pattern.

In summary, the NT has clear cases of women disciples, teachers, prophets and deacons/ministers. We have near certitude in perceiving Junia to be a female apostle. It is possible to see female elders in 1 Tim. 5:2. Thus women appear on nearly all, if not all, levels of leadership in the NT Church.

Negative attitudes

On the negative side are two critical texts. The first of these is 1 Cor. 14:33–36 which tells the women to be silent in church. The second is 1 Tim. 2:11–15 which adds that they must not teach or 'have authority' over men. These two texts seem to affirm the exact opposite of all that we have thus far observed. Faced with both the positives and the negatives, at least five alternatives are available to the reader of the NT.

1. Dismiss the biblical witness as contradictory and thus irrelevant.
2. Take the texts that say 'yes' to women as normative and ignore the others.
3. Focus on 1 Cor. 14 and 1 Tim. 2 and overlook the women disciples, teachers, deacons/ministers, prophets, and woman apostle.
4. Conclude that the NT is at loggerheads with itself and that the Church can only choose one biblical view against the other.
5. Look once more at the negative texts to see if their historical settings allow for more unity in the outlook of NT than we have suspected.

To borrow a phrase, we will proceed to 'have a go' at alternative five. What can be said about 1 Cor. 14:33–36 and 1 Tim. 2:11–15?

I have argued elsewhere that 1 Cor. 11–14 is a single essay.[19] In these chapters Paul's outline is organized using the same inverted parallelism already noted in 1 Tim. The themes are as follows

Women Leaders in the New Testament

Be inspired by the women who served as church leaders.

Phoebe the deacon (Rom. 16:1–2)

Junia the apostle (Rom. 16:7)

Lydia, in Philippi (Acts 16:13–15, 40)

Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11)

Priscilla (1 Cor. 16:19)

Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3)

Nympha (Col. 4:15)

Apphia, in Colosse (Philemon 1:2)

The Elect Lady (2 John 1:1)

1. Disorders in worship:
   a. dress of women/men prophets(11:2–16)
   b. disorders in the Eucharist (11:17–34)
      2. The spiritual gifts (ch. 12)
         3. Love (ch. 13)
      4. The spiritual gifts (14:1–25)
5. Disorders in worship:
   a. prophets all talk at once (14:26–33a)
   b. Women talk in church (14:33b–36)

Disorders in worship open and close this four-chapter section of the epistle. The placing of the two discussions of spiritual gifts creates a second set of parallels. The chapter on love (ch. 13) forms a powerful climax in the centre. Thus, as noted, chapters 11–14 form a single unit. Our interest focuses on the discussions regarding women in Church that open and close this four-chapter unit.

In 11:4–5 the men *and the women* are prophesying. Thus the reader knows that the prophets who interrupt one another in chapter 14 are comprised of *both* men and women. So when the women in 14:34–35 are told to be silent and listen to the prophets, it is clear that *some of these prophets are women.*

Also relevant is the fact that 14:26–36 lists three groups of people who are disturbing worship. These are as follows:

1. The *prophets* are told:
   Don't all talk at once.
   Be silent in the church.
2. The *speakers in tongues* are told:
   If there is no interpreter
   be silent in the church.
3. *Married women* with Christian husbands (who attend) are told:
   Don't ask questions during the worship and don't chat.
   Ask your husbands at home and *be silent* in the church.

Each of these is told to be silent when it disturbs worship. Paul is not issuing a command for perpetual prophetic silence! In like manner, when they disrupt public worship the women are asked to be quiet. In like manner, when they disrupt public worship the women are asked to be quiet. Thus Paul is saying to the women:

'Women, please keep silent in worship and listen to the female and male prophets. Don't interrupt them with questions, and don't talk/chat in church. If you can't understand what is being said, ask your husbands at home. They understand more Greek than you do and will be able to explain things to you.'

The scene is easy to reconstruct. Corinth was a tough immoral town. Transportation workers, porters and metal workers made up a significant portion of the population. It is easy to assume that the inhabitants came from different places and spoke different languages. Their common language was Greek. The men were naturally 'out and about' more than the women and thus were more likely to be at ease in that common language. It follows that in church the women could perhaps not easily follow what was being said and so would begin to ask questions or lose interest and start 'chatting'.

A documented case of this phenomenon is recorded in a sermon of John Chrysostom, preached in the cathedral of Antioch in the latter part of the fourth century. Stenographers recorded Chrysostom as follows:

> Text: And if they (the women) will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home.
>
> Chrysostom: Then indeed the women, from such teaching keep silence; but now there is apt to be great noise among them, much clamour and talking, and nowhere so much as in this place (the cathedral). They may all be seen here talking more than in the market, or at the bath. For, as if they came hither for recreation, they are all engaged in conversing upon unprofitable subjects. Thus all is confusion, and they seem not to understand, that unless they are quiet, they cannot learn anything that is useful. For when our discourse strains against the talking, and no one minds what is said, what good can it do to them?[20]

The women of Corinth were told (when they disrupted worship) to be silent. Paul assumed that the readers remembered the women prophets of 11:5 when he wrote 14:35–36.

If this was the scene in the cathedral of the great city of Antioch in the fourth century, what can we imagine for Corinth in the days of Paul? Corinth was, no doubt, even more disorderly. (The present writer has personally experienced Chrysostom's predicament in isolated middle-eastern village churches!) The women of Corinth were told (when they disrupted worship) to be silent. Paul assumed that the readers remembered the women prophets of 11:5 when he wrote 14:35–36. He then reinforced the unity of this four-chapter essay with a brief summary. It reads as follows:

1. If anyone thinks that he is a *prophet* (ch 11)
   2. or *spiritual* (ch 12)
      3. He should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a *command of the Lord* (ch 13). If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.
   4. So, my brethren, Earnestly desire to *prophesy* and do not forbid *speaking in tongues* (14:1–25).
5. But all things should be done in decency and in order (26–36).

If these four verses are (as we suggest) a summary of the entire essay, then the *command of the Lord* referred to in paragraph 3 is the command to 'love one another', which is definitively explained in ch. 13. If however, 14:34–40 is only read in a linear fashion, then the 'command of the Lord' becomes the command to tell the women to be silent in church, not the love command. If then the link with ch. 11 is forgotten, the women prophets are forgotten. Together

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Bring on the Greek:

Discovering Biblical Equality
ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, see chapter 12 by Linda L. Belleville

Man and Woman, One in Christ
see chapters 16–23, by Philip B. Payne

Good for Group Discussion:

I Suffer Not a Woman
by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Richard Clark Kroeger

1 & 2 Timothy and Titus
by N.T. Wright

these two misunderstandings of the text can and have been shaped by some into a club with which to threaten women into silence in the name of 'the command of the Lord'. More recently they have been used by many to attack the integrity of the Apostle Paul. Paul's intent is simply to solve a problem strikingly similar to Chrysostom's difficulties with the chatting women of Antioch.

Finally then, what is to be done with the *crux interpretum* of 1 Tim. 2:11–15? As discussed above, whether 1 Tim. is history from the sixties or carefully written theological drama from the nineties, the Church was still in existence in Ephesus at the end of the first century and the temple of Artemis was also intact and functioning. I am myself convinced of the earlier date, but the following suggestions can, we trust, help clarify the text as Scripture in either case. What then can be said?

First, the author speaks to Timothy as a young man and calls him 'my son'. Secondly, Timothy is ill with stomach problems and other 'frequent ailments' (4:23). Thirdly, he is apparently under stress and wants to leave because now, for the second time, Paul urges him to stay (1:3). Finally, some form of a gnostic heresy has broken out in the Church. Chapter 4:1–3 offers details. The author warns against those who 'forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods'. For these heretics the body was evil. Obviously someone was pressuring the Church in these directions. Who then was teaching such things?

We can only speculate, but there are a few helpful historical hints. In the early forms of gnosticism known to us, women teachers played prominent roles. Simon Magus is accused by Justin and Eusebius of having had a consort called Helena who was a prostitute from Tyre. She was called *ennois* (divine intelligence). The gnostic document, *The Acts of Paul,* adds a consort called Thekla to Paul. Montanus had Prisca and Maximilla as his female prophetesses. In 2 Timothy 3 the author sharply criticizes men but also mentions 'weak women who are swayed by various impulses and who will listen to anybody'. In 1 Tim. 5:15 the author specifically mentions 'women . . . who have already strayed after Satan'. To this another dimension must be added.

The great temple of Artemis in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The roof was supported by 127 columns that were 65 feet high (roughly seven storeys). The building was 221 feet wide and 425 feet long. Within the temple as an institution, women exercised power on two levels. First, the temple was controlled by a group of virgins and castrated men. The later were called *Magabizes.* Then second, under their control were thousands of female priestess-slaves called *hierodules.* There is specific evidence for priestesses, receptionists, supervisors, drummers, bearers of the sceptre, cleaners, acrobats, flute players and bankers. The economy of the town and province was profoundly linked to the temple as an institution (cf. Acts 19:23–29).

The entire town set aside one month a year for ceremonies, games and festivities connected to the cult.[21] The focus of all of this was Artemis, a female goddess with rows of multiple breasts. Thus the Ephesians lived in a city and district where the huge seven-storey-high temple, a wonder of the world, dominated the skyline. As an institution it was naturally a powerful force in all aspects of their lives. The focus of all this was a goddess whose worship was controlled by virgins who shared leadership with males only if they were castrated.

In such an atmosphere, what kind of female-male relations would have developed? What possibility would any male religious leadership have had or a sense of dignity and self-respect? What kind of female attitudes would have prevailed in such a city? How easy would it have been for the values of the society to have penetrated the Church? Castration being the ultimate violence against the male, would not anti-male sexism in various forms have been inevitable?

No church is ever totally isolated from the sins of its culture. It does not take too much imagination to fill in the spaces between the lines of 1. Tim. and surmise what may have prompted Timothy's desire to leave. It is easy to assume that a group of women had asserted enough power to gain adherents to their heretical views. As noted, avoidance of marriage (and child bearing), along with abstinence from foods, appear to have been a part of the package which was damaging the social and theological foundations of the Church. As 2:12 makes clear (see below), these same women were brutalizing the men in the process.

Timothy was young, sick, depressed and male. He could not manage. Paul, or Paul through an amanuensis, or a student of Paul in Paul's name, was informed that things were going very badly in Ephesus. He wrote this stinging reply hoping to save the Church. With this as a possible scenario,

we must examine the text itself. Each section requires scrutiny.

Paul writes, 'Let a woman learn in quietness with all submissiveness.' He opens with a command 'Let a woman learn. . . .' Judith Hauptmann, in an essay on 'Images of Women in the Talmud', notes Rabbi Eliezer's view that it is better to burn the words of the Torah than to give them to women.[22] By contrast other Talmudic texts make clear that some women *were* exposed to Torah and Talmud. However there is no command that they should learn. That was for the men. The general view was that the woman's task was to keep the house and free the men to study the tradition.[23] At least from the second century AD each male worshipper offered daily thanks to God for not having made him a woman. Greeks expressed similar views.[24] Misogyny was also a part of Roman society. Indeed it was part of the times. Against this background Paul gives a clear directive that a Christian woman must *learn* the faith. He is obviously referring to women who need instruction. He does not say; 'Dismiss them from the classroom' or 'They are not capable of understanding'. Rather he commands, 'Let a woman learn!'

Secondly, we have traditionally translated the full command "Let a woman learn *in silence*'. The Greek can also be translated, 'Let a woman learn in quietness', which is perhaps more appropriate to the tense situation in the church in Ephesus. Angry students forced into silence learn little. But an atmosphere of 'quietness' encourages study and fosters understanding. In regard to this text Chrysostom writes 'He was speaking of quietness. . . .'[25] This legitimate translation option appears in a variety of Arabic versions for a thousand years. In 867 AD Bashir ibn al-Siri translated 'let a woman learn in *tranqility*' (*tata'allim fi sukun*).[26] *Sukun* is a rich Arabic word that means "calm, tranquility, peace'.[27] This word brilliantly picks up on nuances of the total scene in Ephesus to which Paul was writing. As we will see below, these women had become counterproductively aggressive. The author asks them to calm down and to pursue theological instruction in tranquility.

Thirdly, they are to submit, but to what? We are not told. Yet in the context of the extended discussion of 'sound doctrine' with which the epistle opens, the natural assumption is that the author intended them to submit to the orthodox teachings of the Church. Paul has instructed Timothy in 'sound doctrine' (1 Tim. 1:10) and here a wayward part of Timothy's parish is told to accept the authoritative nature of the theological instructions Timothy has received.

Paul continues with:

> I permit no woman to teach,
> or to lord it over the men,
> for she is to be in quietness.

It is possible to hear this text contradicting all the positives heard above. But Priscilla taught Apollos and every reader of Luke 1:46–55 was instructed by Mary. The women prophets of Corinth (1 Cor 11:5) and Caesarea (Acts 21:9) edified the Church. Each section of this verse requires comment. The first line can be understood as follows:

> I permit none of these theologically ignorant women (in Ephesus) to teach, because they have brought their syncretistic religious beliefs with them into the Church.

We are obliged to ask, were all of the women in Ephesus heretics? Certainly not. However Paul *cannot* expect the young Timothy to administer theological exams in the midst of a crisis! The Gordian knot must be cut or its rope will strangle all of them. Paul cuts it with 'I permit *no* woman to teach!' *All* of them are asked to study the faith! Is this not appropriate ruling, given the tensions of such circumstances?

The second line of this sentence illuminates the precise situation in Ephesus. The key word is *authenteo* (to lord it over) which appears only here in all of the NT. The noun form of this word *(authentes)* entered the Turkish language as *effendi,* the title for the Sultan with his life and death powers over the people of his empire. It is a very strong word and can also be translated to 'commit murder' or 'assert absolute sway'.[28] Marcus Barth translates it with the Authorised Version as 'usurp authority'.[29]

It is impossible to see this ruling as a general principle that everywhere governed the life of the NT Church. As a deacon/minister of the church in Cenchreae, Phoebe surely exercised *some* form of authority over men. Priscilla had theological authority over her student Apollos. The women prophets naturally carried the authority which their message gave them. Lydia is prominent in the founding of the church in Philippi. The weight which Mary the mother of Jesus carried in the Early Church is unknown, but it is impossible to imagine that she had none! Older women in Middle Eastern society are generally powerful figures. Are we to imagine that the Apostles totally disregarded her views? Did the one who 'kept all things in her heart' have no opinions on any aspect of the faith and life of the Church? So what is intended here?

Misogyny was also a part of Roman society. Indeed it was part of the times. Against this background Paul gives a clear directive that a Christian woman must *learn* the faith.

I would submit that the overtones of this rare, very strong word, make clear the author's meaning. In Ephesus some women had acquired absolute authority over the men in the church and were verbally (and perhaps theologically) brutalizing them. Paul calls for a halt to this dehumanizing attack. Again our centuries-long middle-eastern exegetical tradition is instructive. The Peshitta Syriac (fourth century) translates with *mamralza.* The root of this word has to do with insolence and bullying. The early Arabic versions, translated from Greek, Syriac and Coptic, read either '*yata'amaru*' (to plot; to be domineering; to act as 'lord and master'; to be imperious[30]) or '*yajtari*' (to be insolent). The last two centuries have preferred '*yatasallat*' (to hold absolute sway). Thus middle-eastern Christianity at least from the third century onward has always remembered that something dark and sub-Christian was involved.

As noted, the male leadership in the local temple was castrated. The author of 1 Tim. was perhaps saying to the Ephesian Christians, 'There is no place for any carry-over of these Ephesian attitudes into the fellowship of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord of women and men'. An expanded and interpreted translation of the intent of this verse might be:

> I do not allow these ignorant women to batter the men. They are to stop shouting and calm down.

Two wrongs do not make a right. The great standard set in Gal. 3:28 affirms that 'in Christ . . . there is no longer male and female' (NRSV). Progress towards that goal of full equality cannot be made if either gender is asserting de-humanizing power over the other. In Galatians Paul is very harsh with male heretics. Here he deals with female destroyers of the faith. It is only fair to observe that in some places in the English-speaking world today, anti-male sexism is sufficiently intense that men find themselves intimidated, with leadership opportunities denied them because they are male, and under constant hostile monitoring for any failures in rigid linguistic conformity. Biblical theology is under attack by radical feminists and in some quarters academic freedom is on the verge of being threatened. Neither gender is completely innocent of mistreating the other and if Paul's vision in Galatians is to be followed neither gender has the right to absolute control over the other. This text can be seen as relevant to a part of this collection of problems.

Verses 11–12 are as follows: 'For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.' Difficulties continue: What is meant here? This text appears to be in direct clash with Gal. 3:28 on the one hand and Rom. 5 and 1 Cor. 15:21–22 on the other. Gal. 3:28 (as noted) says that in Christ there is no more 'male *and* female' (NRSV). Paul is quoting Gen. 1:27 and affirming that in Christ this order is no longer relevant.[31] Here, apparently it is significant. This is indeed a *crux interpretum*. Yet in this text Paul is angry and is surely not attempting to write a calm dispassionate essay that can be critically compared to what he wrote decades earlier in another time and to another situation.

Furthermore, we can observe at least one other occasion of stress where Paul affirmed opposing views on a single topic. In 1 Cor. 12:4–11 he carefully states that God gives *different* gifts to different people as *he* wills! Then, returning in ch. 14 to the subject of the spiritual gifts, and fully warmed to his subject, Paul blurts out, 'Now I want you all to speak in tongues!' (14:5).

In this latter text it appears that all must have *one* gift (tongues) which all are free to choose as the right gift for themselves! In this second statement Paul appears to affirm the exact opposite of what he has just said in 12:4–11! However, in our middle-eastern culture people are expected to become emotional over the things they care about. When they do, they are permitted to make their point by exaggeration. No one presses the logic of these exaggerations. This rhetorical style may well be the key to 1 Cor. 12 and 14. It may also assist us with the text before us.

The second problem is as follows: In Romans Paul says, 'Sin came into the world through *one man*'. The same idea appears in 1 Cor. 15:21–22 which reads, 'by a man came death. . . .' But here, as in Ben Sirach (25:24), Eve is blamed for everything! If someone in the Pauline theological circle rather than Paul is the author, the problem remains. What can be said?

Chrysostom is again helpful. He makes a connection between Romans 5 and this text. He writes,

> After the example of Adam's *transgression* ... so here the female sex *transgressed,* not the male. As all *men* died through one (Adam), because that one sinned, so the whole *female* race transgressed because the woman was in the transgression.[32]

Building on Chrysostom's insight, the following is a possible reconstruction of the situation in Ephesus. It is generally assumed that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians while resident in Ephesus. As noted, 1 Corinthians, like Romans, affirms '. . . in Adam all die.' There can be little doubt that Paul's second-Adam theology, set forth in 1 Cor. 15:42–50, was also proclaimed by Paul in the city of Ephesus. If any first century person was so inclined, Paul's views set forth Rom. 5 and 1 Cor. 15 *could* have been understood as *very* bad news for men. In Rom. 5:12 the reader is told 'Sin came into the world through *one man*. . . .' In vv 13–19 which follow, there is a total of eight further references to that *one man's sin*!

On the basis of these texts it is theoretically possible to accuse Paul of harbouring bitter anti-male biases! Trespass (*parabasis*) is the key problem and one man is held responsible for *all* of it. The question is not, what did Paul mean? Rather we would ask, could anti-male women have used such ideas for their own purposes? Obviously, they could have.

Thus perhaps some theologically illiterate women in Ephesus had been exposed to Paul's views in some form and had concluded that *men* had polluted the earth with their sin. Therefore the more innocent women must push them aside. The author of 1 Tim. may be responding by taking up the story of Genesis with a bold statement, '*Eve was a transgressor!*' meaning, she *also* is to be blamed, not only Adam. Chrysostom seems to have understood our text as the other side of the coin to Paul's first-Adam/second-Adam theology. Chrysostom's views turn the text into a thoughtful response to what appears to have been a critical misunderstanding.

The last section of the text is as follows:

> . . . and she will prosper (*sozo*) through bearing children if *they* continue in faith and love and holiness and good judgment.

There are two attractive ways to understand this text. The first is to take 'the childbearing' as meaning one specific occurrence of childbearing, namely the birth of Jesus. In this case the text would need to be translated, 'and she will be saved through the birth of a child.' The intent of the next would then be:

> How can these heretics teach women not to bear children when God has entered history to save *through childbearing*!

However, many interpreters argue from internal evidence that here the definite article refers to childbearing in general. If this be true, there is a second possible way to understand the text.

The verb *sozo* (save?), which is at the heart of this text, has a variety of meanings. In this same chapter Paul affirms that we

are *saved* (*sozo*) through Jesus Christ 'who gave himself ransom for all' (2:6). The reader is told that salvation is through the cross of Christ. Are we then to understand him, ten verses later, to say, 'Well, actually for women there is a second way to be saved, have a baby!'? This cannot be the intent of the author. A solution to this problem is available when we observe that *sozo can* refer to salvation, but it can also mean 'good health' and occasionally has a more general sense of 'to prosper'.[33] As noted, someone in the Church in Ephesus was teaching the women that they should not get married, and thus naturally, not have children. Paul counters with:

> Childbearing is not an evil act! It is an act blessed by God. A woman can *prosper* through childbearing; if *they*, (the husband and the wife) continue in faith and love and holiness with good judgment.

The text shifts from a singular 'she' to a plural 'they'. This plural is best understood to refer to a husband and wife and not to women in general. Children can be a blessing to the family. But if faith, love, holiness and good judgment (*sofrosune*)[34] are missing, the family will not necessarily prosper by having children.

In conclusion, when history is taken seriously, 1 Cor. 14:34–35 and 1 Tim. 2:11–15 tell women to be silent when they disrupt public worship and when they teach heresy. Special problems in Corinth and Ephesus were dealt with firmly for the sake of the upbuilding of the body of Christ in those places. I submit that these admonitions can be understood to be in harmony with the clear affirmations of the presence of women as disciples, teachers, prophets, deacons, (one) apostle, along with the possibility of women elders.

In this manner all the NT texts considered can be seen as supportive of the great vision in Gal. 3:28 where 'in Christ . . . there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

Notes

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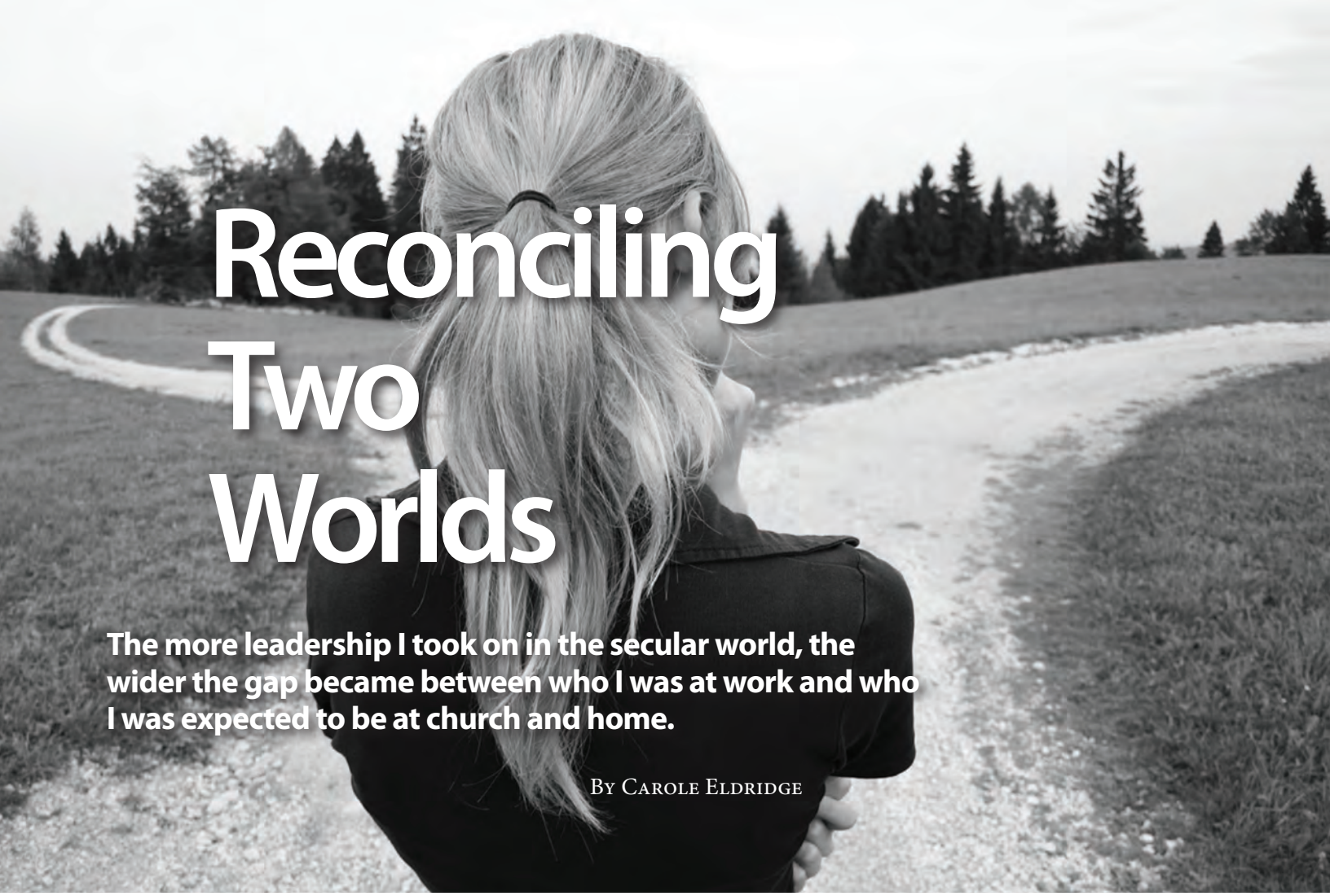

Reconciling Two Worlds

The more leadership I took on in the secular world, the wider the gap became between who I was at work and who I was expected to be at church and home.

By Carole Eldridge

I married a minister when I was twenty years old, just as I was finishing my degree in nursing. I had long felt a call to ministry, and I believed my training as a health care worker would enable us to minister as a couple to hurting people. My husband and I worked together in churches as God led, with me filling leadership roles suited to my gifts and interests.

We had an egalitarian marriage from the beginning. We believed that Scripture taught mutual submission, and that the dominance of any person over another, in marriage or otherwise, went against Christ's teachings. Our views on gender and relationships were often different from those held by people we ministered with, but initially our choice was accepted. We lived and taught servanthood founded on love, with men and women equal in all respects. My husband was my encourager, offering me opportunities for service and inspiring me by his confidence in my abilities.

A few years after we married, it became apparent that a shift was occurring in our denomination. We began hearing from our leaders and teachers that Scripture prohibited women from leading in church or home, and that God wanted men to be the authority in all matters. We heard at one conference after another that the scriptural model for families and churches required submissive women and decision-making male leaders. Complementarianism became the approved model, and other views were deemed to go against God's order for the world.

We tried earnestly to conform to this model, even though it felt awkward to us both. I dropped from leadership roles at church, and with our two children I continually deferred to their father as the decision-maker and spiritual leader. I felt like I was abdicating my responsibilities, but the lessons I heard from our denomination were clear and definite, so I did my best to follow them. We believed that the people holding positions of authority in our churches and in our denomination must know more than we did about such matters. We saw apparently successful marriages that seemed to conform to the approved model, so it made sense to follow their example. I taught complementarianism to the women in our local church, and strived to live it.

Meanwhile, I was doing well in my career. I started health care businesses, worked hard to make them successful, and then sold them to bigger companies. I became chief executive officer of a multi-state corporation and then senior vice president of a large publicly held national firm. My husband was also succeeding in his world, assuming ministry positions in successively larger

churches and then moving into a denominational role with wide influence. Our lives were very full, with enormous demands, but in our respective work worlds we were happily using our gifts. The problem was that the more leadership I took on in the secular world, the wider the gap became between who I was at work and who I was expected to be at church and home.

I tried to find ways to reconcile the two worlds. I was traveling a lot, speaking at national conferences, and finding myself with previously unimagined opportunities. Yet I still carried the work burdens of the household and was the main caregiver for our children. Paradoxically, I continued pushing decision-making onto my husband. He didn't want the role I was trying to force on him any more than I wanted to be subservient. I was fulfilled at work and frustrated at home; conflicted and confused.

As my work responsibilities grew, my husband and I finally realized we had to rethink our division of labor. We worked things out so that everyone pitched in to keep our home on an even keel. We took on nontraditional roles in which we had strengths: I managed the money, while my husband cooked and decorated. We resumed our collaborative approach to decision-making. We moved back into the egalitarian marriage we were most comfortable with, working as a team for the health and security of our family, at least as far as tasks, finances, and everyday decisions were concerned.

However, I still wanted to follow my church's teachings, so I continued trying to conform in other ways. I stopped leading our children in prayer and Bible study. I left that to my husband, although my resentment grew as I felt he wasn't doing the right things. I wanted him to provide spiritual leadership as I defined it, which meant I was asking him to take on responsibilities God had actually given me. As I look back on this, I am particularly ashamed of abdicating this responsibility to help lead my children in spiritual growth.

I continued trying to conform to expectations at church. Putting on the cloak of a submissive woman, however, became more and more burdensome as time went on. I felt a stranger to myself at the denominational gatherings I attended, smiling and pretending to be content with being on the sidelines. On more than one occasion I wanted to shout, "I have abilities that could help this organization, but I cannot contribute because my ideas are not welcome!" I identified with an acquaintance of ours, a chief financial officer for a major banking system, who left her church after being told she could not serve on the finance committee because that level of decision-making was reserved for men.

As I led my companies—and as it became apparent that the best, most loving, and most practical model for our family was egalitarian—I became increasingly conflicted. My own lived experience of what was right for me and for my family was in direct contradiction to the things we were being taught, and I couldn't make sense of why what I felt and lived were so at odds with what God supposedly wanted.

One morning the conflict inside me came to a breaking point. As I was entering one of our branch offices, I was stopped by an employee who was waving a page of *The Wall Street Journal* and wearing a wicked grin. "So," my employee said, "are you going to start being a submissive woman now?" I didn't know what she was talking about, but I soon learned. Our denomination had made a historic change to its statement of faith, adding language that affirmed the complementarian view of men and women. Women were being told very publicly what our scriptural place was, and that we were to stay firmly in it or be out of God's will. Although I knew this was the message being taught in many of our churches, it had never before been the official position of the denomination. Now it was, and my internal conflict finally had to be faced.

One thing was clear: I could not continue to lead my hypocritical double life. I either had to find some way to reconcile my personal experiences, sense of calling, and abilities with the scriptural teachings that seemed to deny women an equal place in the world, or I would abandon my faith. I could no longer live with the inconsistencies, and I no longer wanted to follow a God who seemed to want to make me a second-class citizen.

One thing was clear: I could not continue to lead my hypocritical double life. I either had to find some way to reconcile my personal experiences, sense of calling, and abilities with the scriptural teachings that seemed to deny women an equal place in the world, or I would abandon my faith.

Not long after this, our denomination declared that all the ministers holding denominational posts would be required to sign a document affirming their agreement with the revised statement of faith. This was a difficulty of another level entirely. My husband was supportive of my journey, and together we were exploring other ways to understand the confusing scriptural passages about women. But he did not feel as strongly as I did, and now he had to choose between keeping his job and making his wife happy. I actually threatened to divorce him if he signed it, although we both knew that was an empty threat. He signed, not knowing any other way to keep his job, and feeling that I was making too big an issue of it anyway. He said I should just learn to ignore this particular teaching and make the best of the other good things our church offered. On most days, I thought he was right, and that it was very unloving of me to expect him to change his career because of my struggles with principles that millions of other people believed. On other days, I knew this was a teaching I couldn't ignore, because it meant living my entire life as a lie.

We continued studying, reading, and praying to achieve a proper understanding of Christian gender roles. Someone recommended Dr. Bilezikian's book, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says About a Woman's Place in Church and Family*, and I read it eagerly. My excitement grew the more I read, because

here was a respected Bible teacher giving a reasoned picture of God's true view of women, based soundly on Scripture. I experienced enormous relief as the puzzling inconsistencies in my head and heart began to dissolve. I understood at last the overarching principle of God's empowerment of women through the centuries, his encouragement of our gifts, and his liberation of our gender from the restrictions placed on us by culture. I began to feel whole again and affirmed in my leadership abilities, instead of feeling out of God's will. I could finally accept what I knew in my heart—God gifted me as a leader, and he wants those gifts used in his service.

My husband, however, pleased that I was settling things in my own head, put the issue aside for a few years. During that time, pressures at his job to conform to increasingly rigid theological positions led him to start looking for alternatives. As he followed God's prompting away from his denominational role and into another area of ministry, he came across another of Dr. Bilezikian's books, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as Community of Oneness*. The picture of God as community, and our call to community, transformed my husband's view of how God wants us to operate, including how God views people in community, male and female as equal contributors to the whole.

As God continued bringing us the books we needed to read, I found CBE. I cried as I realized there was an entire organization devoted to helping people like us. My husband, after much agonizing, deliberation, and prayer, left his denominational position and stepped out on a risky ministry venture that was more compatible with our new understanding. He even began, slowly and cautiously, to quietly champion women in ministry leadership.

Interestingly, sometimes I still have to remind myself that it's okay to lead, okay to step out and be in front at church and home. I have to give myself permission to be a whole person everywhere, not just leading at work but also in God's kingdom. Yet, I am convinced that God does not want to relegate me to the margins of life. God wants me and other women in the thick of things, changing our worlds for the better.

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- Believers must develop and exercise their God-given gifts in church, home, and world.
- Believers have equal authority and equal responsibility to exercise their gifts without regard to gender, ethnicity, or class and without the limits of culturally defined roles.
- Restricting believers from exercising their gifts—on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, or class—resists the work of the Spirit of God and is unjust.
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- *We believe* in the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ.
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- *We believe* that eternal salvation and restored relationships are possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.
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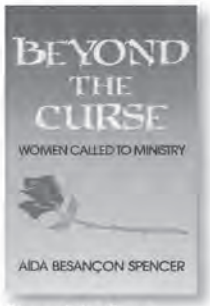

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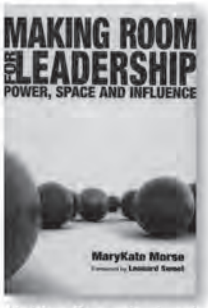
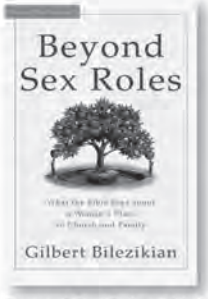


Making Room for Leadership
MaryKate Morse

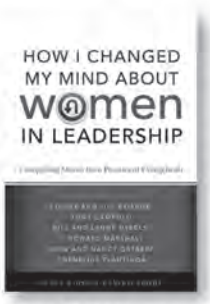
Women in the New Testament
Kenneth E. Bailey



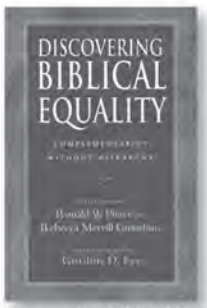
Beyond Sex Roles, third edition
Gibert Bilezikian

Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes
Kenneth E. Bailey

Partners in Marriage and Ministry
Ronald W. Pierce



How I Changed My Mind About Women in Leadership
Alan Johnson



Discovering Biblical Equality
Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon Fee, ed.