

Should Women Teach or Have Authority Over Men in the Church?

An Exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:8–15

By Lane Keister

INTRODUCTION

There are few passages in the New Testament more in dispute than 1 Timothy 2:8–15. In the bibliography that Mounce has compiled on this passage, there are three hundred and twenty-five entries (eight pages of small print).¹ One might then wonder why yet another article should appear on this text. Recent scholarly developments always need to be examined in relationship to this passage. In particular, the appearance of Bruce Winter's book *Roman Wives, Roman Widows*, the commentaries on 1 Timothy by Towner, Ryken, and Barclay, and the appearance of the second edition of *Women in the Church* are sufficient reasons to justify another look at this (in)famous passage.² Through the exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:8–15 (especially taking these new developments into account), and examination of the hermeneutical issues surrounding the exegesis, I will attempt to prove that Paul had a universally binding application in view regarding a prohibition of women, in a church setting,

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1. William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000) 94–102.

2. Bruce Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2007); William Barclay, *1&2 Timothy* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2005); Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas Schreiner, editors, *Women In The Church*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

3. See the very able arguments for Pauline authorship in George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 4–52.

4. I am assuming the information provided by Baugh in his excellent article on the historical background (*Women In the Church*, 2nd ed., 13–38). I do not have the space or the expertise to improve upon it. My concern is more grammatical/linguistic.

teaching Christian doctrine to men, or having spiritual authority over men.

I. EXEGESIS

A. *The Flow of 1 Timothy as a Whole*

The dispute about Pauline authorship need not concern us much here, as it has little bearing on the precise meaning of our passage. However, inasmuch as canonical authority rests on the Pastoral Epistles (PE), we want to affirm its canonical status. I will assume that Paul wrote the PE, but will not take the time to argue that here.³

The next question (and a very important one) is the reason for the letter.⁴ False teachers had infested the Ephesian church. They were interested in long genealogies (1:4), myths, speculations, and erroneous conceptions of the law (1:6–7); and as a result were leading people astray from the truth (especially, it seems, some of the women, such as the widows). The corrective to these evils is a straight proclamation of the truth of the Gospel (3:14–16), and correct behavior in the church of God (which would presumably be antithetical to the false teaching; in 1:10, Paul makes an explicit connection between right doctrine and right living). These are the things that we can know for certain about the false teaching. Anything else goes beyond the scriptural evidence and must be weighed very carefully before being allowed hermeneutical force. See more below on the question of hermeneutics. The truth of the Gospel in the context of false teaching and behavior in the church setting is the subject of 1 Timothy.

B. *Immediate Context*

I have found that the immediate context has been almost universally neglected by advocates of the egalitarian

position, and by a good many of the proponents of the complementarian position as well.⁵ This is all the more startling given the οὐν in the postpositive position in 2:8. One might have expected the egalitarian position to take more notice of the universals in verses 4–5, as it might be seen by them to relativize the commands of Paul concerning women (such a “universal salvation” could be used, illegitimately, to lessen the force of Paul’s different commands to men and women). One might also have expected the complementarian position to take more notice of the qualifications for elders immediately following, as Paul argues that elders must be men, since they must be husbands (one who does take notice is Mounce, p. 118). Therefore, we will not ignore either the preceding or the succeeding context.

In 2:1, Paul makes it plain that prayer is his driving concern for the first part of this chapter.⁶ Four different words for prayer or components of prayer form the bulk of the first verse, which is then expanded to avoid “cliquish” praying only for those with whom one has agreement. This could be directed against the false teachers, who might have been encouraging people to pray only for those who are close to themselves (the false teachers), thus putting a wedge in the body of Christ. Against the false teachers’ insistence on knowledge outside the Gospel, Paul reaffirms the one true way to God, which is through Jesus Christ, the faithful and true Mediator. If this truth would be remembered by the members of the Ephesian church, then it would follow that the men would cease their wrangling and their angry arguments. And so, we have a natural progression into verse 8, which speaks of men praying without argumentation or quarreling.

The passage immediately following our passage deals with the qualifications for elders (3:1–7). This passage is also much in dispute. However, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that elders must be men. This is evident from verse 2: μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα. In order to be a husband, one must be a man. Vern Poythress argues that male leadership in the home requires male leadership in the church. He is one of the few who note the connection of 3:1–7 to 2:9–15.⁷ Plainly, there are role distinctions within the unity of the body of Christ. The relationship of the roles of men and women to Galatians 3:28 will be handled in the hermeneutics section.

C. Structure of 1 Timothy 2:8–15

Verses 8–10 have to do with behavior in the church, presumably in the worship service. Verse 8 deals with men, and verses 9–10 deal with women. Mounce notes that commentators usually see Paul’s focus in terms of gender issues

and, as a result, they divide the passage into two parts, the first focusing on men in worship in verse 8 and the second on women in worship in verses 9–15 (see Mounce, p. 103). If, however, Paul’s focus shifts slightly in verse 11 to a disturbance in the church, a different structural division is discernible from prayer to learning, and from singular “woman” to plural “women.” Verses 11–12 indicate what a woman must do (“learn”), as well as what she must not do (“teach or exercise authority”), and verses 13–14 indicate the reason(s) underlying this command and prohibition. Verse 15 is a concession to a possible misunderstanding and alarm that might have been created by Paul attributing the fall of the human race solely to women.

D. Verses 9–10

One of the main questions here is whether Paul is inferring prayer as the context of women’s behavior in these verses, or whether the men are the ones praying, while the women adorn themselves properly.⁸ We know that women are allowed to pray in the worship service (1 Cor. 11:5), but is that the issue here? Specifically, is προσεύχασθαι to be understood from verse 8, despite the already existing complementary infinitive in vs. 9? Clark (citing Meyer) indicates that to understand another infinitive is grammatically impossible.⁹ However, as noted above, the structure of the context indicates that prayer was a major concern of Paul in this chapter. The πρῶτον πάντων of verse 1 indicates that prayer was of paramount importance. It is then more than likely that the οὐν of vs. 8 refers back to verse 1. This adds weight to the idea that prayer should be understood as the context for women as well. As Phillip Ryken puts it,

5. The egalitarian position holds that there should be no role distinctions between men and women based on the sex of a person. Complementarians hold that the roles of women and men each complement the other, and that God has prescribed different roles for men and women in the church.

6. Towner argues that adornment is the driving concern of verses 9–10, and that insufficient evidence exists to prove that prayer is the unifying concept. However, his rejection of Marshall’s position (that if prayer is not the unifying theme, then the instruction to women is an unmotivated digression) is marred by the fact that this is not a *Hausstafel* (house code) instruction. Paul’s concern here is plainly in the context of worship, not primarily the context of the home. See Towner, p. 204, responding to Marshall, p. 447.

7. See John Piper/Wayne Grudem, editors, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991) 233–247, esp. p. 238; see also James Beck and Craig Blomberg, editors, *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 364.

8. See the excellent discussion in Winter, *Roman Wives*, pp. 103–109 on the question of adornment.

9. See Gordon H. Clark, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1983) 43.

“Men are to pray without argumentation, women are to pray without ostentation” (p. 81). The very fact that the infinitive is not present in verse 9 could indicate Paul’s sensitivity to this grammatical issue. The ὡσαύτως at the beginning of verse 9 indicates at the very least that what he says about the men *in church* will be paralleled by this statement about women *in church*. It is safe to conclude, therefore, that prayer is to be understood as the context with regard to women, though larger concerns are not out of the question.¹⁰ Verses 9–10, then, describe the *manner* in which they are to behave in church, with special regard to prayer.

The English Standard Version translates the second half of verse 9 with admirable literalness. Braided hair was an excuse to show off various valuable gems and gold jewelry (so most commentators). Therefore, braided hair is to be taken with both gold and pearls as the grammatical unit. Costly attire is then something separate. As Mounce notes (p. 114), this corresponds with the connectives used (καὶ . . . ἢ . . . ἢ). The point is that women are not to show off. Marshall puts it well: “The picture is of a flashy luxury that is out of place in sinners seeking the mercy of God.”¹¹ As many commentators note, this passage does not forbid the use of jewelry. Rather, it forbids the ostentatious showing of such jewelry.¹² Verses 9–10 have the same structure as the statement, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” The statement does not negate the importance of sacrifice, but rather relativises sacrifice in regard

to mercy. In the same way, Paul wants the women to strive for true adornment, which consists of good works coupled with modesty and self-control, and not to strive for the merely outward adornment of jewelry. As Barclay notes, “ostentatious dressing by women was associated with immorality and loose morals, and was often seen as a form of seduction.”¹³

E. Verse 11

Here a shift in subject matter occurs from prayer to learning. Paul also changes the plural γυναιξίν of verses 9–10 to singular γυνή. However, does this shift involve also a shift from speaking about women in general to speaking about wives and husbands?¹⁴ The singular form does not automatically mean “wife,” even in close contrast with the plural form (see BDAG on the word in question). Context must decide. Scholars and translations have not followed Quinn and Wacker here.¹⁵ I believe that Paul has in mind already the points he will make in verses 13–14, which require a singular to connect with Eve as a representative. Therefore, Paul is using a generic singular to make his point. Mounce argues (p. 119) that a general principle is being stated here, and that the singular is most apropos. This is further borne out by Paul’s argument in verses 13–14, which speak of Adam and Eve as representative of male and female.

As many egalitarians have noted, ἡσυχία need not mean absolute silence.¹⁶ The word means “quiet, at peace.” The phrase at the end of the verse, ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ, indicates that ἡσυχία must mean something in keeping with such submission. Students cannot learn if they are constantly interrupting the teacher. This phrase ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ is usually overlooked by egalitarian scholars. They are quick to note the command for women to learn (μανθανέτω is an imperatival form; this learning is an advance on Judaism, supposedly), but they are not quick to note the πάσῃ in the last phrase of the verse. Paul has been emphasizing the *manner* in which men are to pray and in which women are to pray. Now, he stresses the *manner* in which women are to learn. It is an “in quietness, in *all* submission, and without teaching” kind of learning. Lock notes that ὑποταγῇ hints at the entire relationship of woman to man in the house, another point in favor of the complementarian position.¹⁷ Some scholars think that the question of manner extends through verse 12. However, as will be shown, such is not the case.

A word needs to be said here about the new Roman woman paradigm advanced by Bruce Winter (see Winter, pp. 17–74). The basic idea of Winter’s thesis is

10. See Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924) 29.

11. I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999) 450.

12. See George W. Knight, III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 136, and Ryken, pp. 80–83.

13. Barclay, p. 89. See also Ryken, p. 83: “A Christian woman does not go to church to meet men; she goes to meet God.”

14. See, e.g., Jerome Quinn and William Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 191, 199.

15. See especially Thomas Schreiner, in Andreas Köstenberger/Thomas Schreiner/H. Scott Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995, 1st edition) p. 117, hereafter abbreviated WC1. In the second edition (Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas Schreiner, eds. *Women in the Church, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), hereafter abbreviated WC2), the quotation is found on p. 94.

16. Towner, pp. 214–215, *contra* Knight, p. 139. This meaning is further shown by the use of the cognate adjective in 2:2.

17. Lock, p. 32. This is *contra* Ryken, who argues that these words “do not describe an unusual style of learning that is unique to women. Rather, they describe the only way a person can learn at all” (p. 90). If this is so, then why does Paul include the πάσῃ? Ryken contradicts himself when he says later, “‘with all submissiveness’ in verse 11 stands in opposition to ‘I do not permit a woman to exercise authority over a man’ in verse 12” (p. 96).

that the *Sitz im Leben* for Paul's commands in 1 Timothy 2 is concerned about the rejection of the morals of "a woman in high position, who nevertheless claims for herself the indulgence in sexuality of a woman of pleasure" (Winter, p. 21). The main problem with this view is that Ephesus is a Hellenized city, not primarily a Roman-influenced city. Again, see Baugh's excellent article on this, quoted above. As Towner notes (p. 196), Greek women had less access to public life than Roman women had. If this is so, then it is not likely that this new Roman proto-feminist type of woman was Paul's foil.

F. Verse 12

In many ways, this verse is the crux of the passage, and the most disputed. First, we will address the issue of the two infinitives. Köstenberger has shown that the construction of οὐκ ... οὐδὲ means that whatever those two words connect are viewed by the author either both positively, or both negatively.¹⁸ His argument is that if διδάσκειν be viewed positively, then so must ἀθροεῖν. Διδάσκειν is viewed positively within the Pastoral epistles as the passing on of the apostolic tradition. Therefore, ἀθροεῖν must also be viewed positively here as the normal exercise of authority. The importance of this argument will become sharper when the definition of ἀθροεῖν is discussed. Köstenberger's argument has been challenged by I. Howard Marshall, in his commentary (p. 458), and by Linda Belleville.¹⁹

Marshall argues in strange fashion from the less well-known word to the better-known word. He grants the structure of Köstenberger's argument (that the two infinitives are viewed both positively or both negatively), but then takes it in the opposite direction of Köstenberger by saying that because ἀθροεῖν most likely means "domineer," or some such other negative meaning, that therefore διδάσκειν must mean "false teaching." Marshall says further that "the context makes it clear that the prohibition is stated because there was something wrong with the teaching given by the women. Although, then, the prohibition may appear to be universally applicable to women, it is in fact meant for a specific group of women among the recipients of the letter" (p. 455). The problem with Marshall's position is that he gives no evidence for his view of the context. It also does not follow that it is meant for a specific group within the community, even if we grant that the women were teaching. The issue is whether or not women are teaching men *at all*. Köstenberger notes that if false teaching were in view, Paul would

have used ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν. Marshall objects that this would imply that Paul *would* allow men to teach falsely.²⁰ But as Blomberg notes (p. 361), this objection does not carry force, because Paul could have said it in a way that clearly avoided such an implication (e.g.: "I do not allow women to continue to teach falsehood"). Furthermore, as Köstenberger notes, Marshall's position leaves him open to his own critique: if "to teach" means "to teach falsely," then how would that forbid the implication that Marshall disavows (WC2, p. 76)?

Belleville's objection to Köstenberger's argument is that the construction οὐκ ... οὐδὲ can be used to express goal (the first idea leads to the second). The translation then would be, "I do not permit a woman to teach in order to have mastery over a man." However, in the examples she gives (Mt. 13:13 and Acts 17:24–25), her spin on the two ideas is not proved. Hearing is not necessary to understanding (in Matthew 13:13), nor is dwelling in a man-made temple necessary to being served by human hands (in Acts 17:24–25).²¹ Her understanding of these passages would make the two infinitives more of a *hendiadys* than is warranted by the evidence. Διδάσκειν and ἀθροεῖν are not likely to be a hendiadys, because they are separated by so many words. Rather, διδάσκειν receives the emphasis, being first in the sentence, and ἀθροεῖν is almost an afterthought: "I do not permit a woman to teach, or, come to think of it, have any authority over a man (in the church setting)." Belleville further criticizes Köstenberger for not treating the infinitives like verbal nouns (*Two Views*, p. 136). She thinks they modify γυναικὶ. However, what this assertion does for her argument is not clear. The infinitives complement οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω (not γυναικὶ). Γυναικὶ is then the subject of the infinitives.

We must now deal with the meaning of ἀθροεῖν. Major research has been done on this word. Baldwin has done a very thorough job in researching all the known occurrences of the verb in extant Greek literature. His conclusion is that the one unifying concept of the word is that of authority (see WC2, pp. 199–201, endnote 31). The fact that the verb form is never used to mean "murderer," while the noun form ἀθροεῖτης is, gives the lie to

18. See WC1, pp. 81–103, WC2, pp. 53–84, with updates on responses to the earlier edition.

19. See James R. Beck, Craig Blomberg, editors, *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 124–127, 136.

20. Marshall, p. 458, fn. 157. In arguing in this fashion, Marshall commits the fallacy of accent. He is assuming that Paul would emphasize the word "women."

21. *Two Views*, p. 127, talking about Matthew 13:13 and Acts 17:24. See WC1, p. 83, WC2, pp. 55–56 for counter-examples, and especially WC1, p. 90, WC2, p. 62 for counter-argument.

Keener's and Belleville's objections to Baldwin's study.²² Keener is guilty of the etymological fallacy, when he says that Baldwin should have included the noun form in his study (See *Two Views*, p. 53, footnote 39). Marshall agrees with Baldwin on this issue of treating the verb form separately (See Marshall, p. 456, footnote 149). In fact, Marshall criticizes Wilshire for making that very mistake in his analysis of the word ἀϑεντεῖν.²³ Keener then makes the surprising claim that the entire argument for the complementarians depends on the meaning of this one word! As we shall see, such is far from the truth. Belleville claims that the one sense *not* in use at this time was "to have authority" (*Two Views*, p. 125). Baldwin has decisively shown that this is not the case. A more important argument is that of Belleville (*Two Views*, pp. 124–125) to the effect that Paul did not have to choose such an ambiguous word, and that if he had a positive meaning in mind, he could have used ἐξουσιάζω. However, as Blomberg notes (*Two Views*, p. 362), ἐξουσιάζω is hardly unambiguous itself. Blomberg notes the possibility that it might have been precisely *because* of the ambiguity of ἐξουσιάζω that Paul decided to choose ἀϑεντεῖν. Variety in word choice could be another factor. It is certainly not the case that this word *has* to have a special nuance simply because it is a *hapax legomenon*.²⁴ The New Testament hardly exhausts the Greek vocabulary of the day.

The meaning that complementarians assert that this word has is "to have authority over." Bruce Winter argues that the preceding context (2:11) and succeeding context (2:12b) imply that the word has the connotation not only of "having authority," but of "an inappropriate misuse of it" (Winter, p. 119). However, in making this case, he has ignored the syntactical point that Köstenberger has made (on which, see above). Winter at this point quotes Marshall's commentary, which makes the very same etymologizing fallacy (p. 457) that was rejected just on the previous page. Marshall cannot say that it is wrong "to assume that what is true for the meaning of the noun will also be true for the verb," and then go on to say that "Ideas such as autocratic or domineering abuses of power and authority appear to be more naturally linked with the verb in

view of the meaning of the cognate nouns ἀϑέντης and ἀϑεντία..." (Marshall, pp. 456–457). He cannot have it both ways. Furthermore, Köstenberger has decisively answered Marshall on other points (including Marshall's taking both terms of the construction in a negative way) in the second edition of his essay (pp. 75–76 of WC2).

The noun ἀνδρός that follows is best understood as being the object of both verbs: "I do not permit a woman to teach (a man), or to exercise authority over a man" (see Knight, p. 142). This has the effect of limiting the sphere in which a woman may not teach or have authority. This verse does not imply that women may never teach anyone. Paul plainly indicates that women may teach other women, as well as children. The church setting of these verses excludes women from the office of elder (see especially the following context of 3:1–7). However, in other institutions and settings, there is room for gray areas.

The syntax of the two infinitives and the meaning of ἀϑεντεῖν are closely related. Therefore, I have chosen to address ἐπιτρέπω only after both issues had been addressed. Some egalitarians argue that the present tense of ἐπιτρέπω seems to indicate that the command is only to be in force for a limited period of time, or that he is only stating his opinion. For denial of the latter interpretation, see Mounce.²⁵ In regard to the former, however, I think there is another, much more likely explanation of the present tense, namely, that Paul does not permit women to teach or to have authority in the churches where he himself ministers, and that Timothy therefore ought to follow his example. Wallace further notes that the generic γυναικὶ indicates that ἐπιτρέπω be taken as gnomic, which would imply universality (quoted in Mounce, p. 122). This is, after all, a pastor to pastor epistle. Nothing would be more natural for Paul than to use himself as an example.²⁶ In any case, Paul uses the present tense in verses 1 and 8, where no such argument about the limited force of Paul's expression is forthcoming from the egalitarian side. Furthermore, the language of 1 Corinthians 14:33 speaks of what is to be the case in *all* the churches. The conceptual and verbal parallels between that verse and this passage are quite striking. Lastly, the pronoun "I" is part of the verb "permit." There is no additional pronoun, which would be needed if Paul was limiting the command to those churches in which he had ministered. Consequently, the pronoun receives no special emphasis, as if *other* ministers would be allowed to have women teach in their churches.

22. See also Winter, *Roman Wives*, p. 117.

23. See L.E. Wilshire, "The TLG Computer and Further Reference to ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ in 1 Timothy 2:12," *NTS* 27 (1981) 593–604 for Wilshire's analysis.

24. As Marshall claims, p. 458.

25. Mounce, 106, commenting on verse 8, and 121–123, on verse 12.

26. See Walter Liefeld, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1&2 Timothy/Titus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999) 98.

Schreiner, in his essay in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, makes a very solid argument against the notion that Paul forbade women to teach based on their being led astray (*Two Views*, p. 223). Why would Paul only mention women? Why would men be allowed to teach, who had been led astray, but not women? Second, were *all* the women of Ephesus led astray by the false teaching? Surely, this is too much to assume. There is no textual indication of a limitation on the command.

As Knight notes (p. 142), the interpretation that Paul is only excluding women teaching if there is not proper oversight is ruled out by Paul's reiteration of "quietness" (Knight sees ἡσυχία as "silence"). This would form some sort of *inclusio* with verse 11. The chiasm goes as follows: a ("in quietness"); b ("not teach"); b ("not have authority"); a ("in quietness").²⁷ That this structure does not have a *hendiadys* at the center is proved by the grammar ("neither . . . nor" does not support the idea of one idea expressed through two words) and by the general tenor of the passage, which is not intended for rhetorical value, but for didactically practical purposes.

G. Verse 13

This verse gives foundational argumentation for the preceding verse. However, even this is disputed. Belleville argues that the verse is not causal in force, but explanatory (*Two Views*, p. 128, fn. 96). The issue here is whether verse 13 gives a *reason* for Paul's command in verse 12 (a reason that would be outside a culturally relative milieu, since it is based on the creation order), or whether verse 13 simply *explains* the Artemis connection that Belleville posits. However, she gives no reason whatsoever as to why Paul would give Adam's created priority even as an *explanation* of a woman's remaining quiet. The verse makes much better sense if explained causally, offering the reason why women should learn in quietness, and not be allowed to teach men in the church.²⁸ Belleville objects that verse 15 is against such an interpretation (*Two Views*, p. 128). For her argument to work, verse 15 must be seen as continuing the foundational reason of verses 13–14. However, verse 15 is *concessive* in character. The reason for verse 12 stops with verse 14. Verse 15 is concessive. Ann Bowman makes the point that Paul, in verses 13–14, is using the rabbinic technique known as *summary citation* (See *Two Views*, pp. 288–289). Paul is reminding us of the *entire* context of Gen 2–3. Adam is the head of the family. He was formed first. Therefore, he deserves some kind of honor.²⁹ This does not imply superiority in kind, but rather priority in time. Belleville offers a specious

objection that εἰτα means a simple order of time (*Two Views*, p. 129). But this is precisely the point! He is the "first-born," although we should not import the Bible's full understanding of birthright into the passage here, as the first-born got twice as much as the next in line, whereas women are equal sharers in salvation (*Two Views*, pp. 62–63). Belleville makes a false dichotomy in her discussion of the creation narrative (*Two Views*, p. 140). She says, "Do these narratives (Gen 1–2) put forward a divinely instituted gender hierarchy, as traditionalists claim? Or do they teach a male-female relationship of mutuality, as egalitarians contend?" In a sense, the answer is "yes." Hierarchy (in terms of roles in the church and home) does not exclude mutuality (with regard to salvation).

H. Verse 14

Is this verse a second reason for vv. 11–12, or is it a continuation of the vs. 13 reason? For grounds that will become clear later in the hermeneutics section, I believe that this is a second reason added to verse 13. Note that a "diabolical passive" exists here. Satan is the implied agent of Eve's deception. Quinn and Wacker note (p. 229): "In the argument of 1 Timothy 2:14 the serpent has disappeared into the anonymity of the Greek passive participle." This "diabolical passive" contrasts with the "divine passive" given in verse 15. More on the divine passive below.

The reason Paul gives for why women should remain quiet in church is that men are to lead. It was this way in the beginning (that is the import of verse 13). The Fall was the result of Eve trying to subvert her husband's covenantal headship by making the decision apart from him.³⁰ She was mastered by the animal whom

27. See Schreiner, WC1, p. 124, WC2, pp. 98–99.

28. See also Barclay, p. 92. Towner (p. 224) argues that the issue is not a creation ordinance, but the presence of a circle of wealthy women. He does not argue this case, which seems bizarre in the extreme as an explanation for why verses 13–14 are in the text. In the preface to his treatment of this passage (p. 200), he argues that the creation text is being misunderstood, and that this is the reason why Paul includes it. But this explanation does not do justice to the *causal* force of the verses.

29. Keener, in *Two Views*, p. 63, seems incredulous that such an argument of temporal priority should be cogent for this point. Yes, the first can sometimes be subordinated to the second. However, this is not true in every instance, and does not in any way lessen the force of what Paul says here. As Ryken notes (p. 100), this is very similar to the laws of primogeniture.

30. Keener, in *Two Views*, p. 65, states that the nature of women being easily deceived is the *only* way that this passage can support the complementarian position of male headship. Such is not the case.

she should have mastered. She mastered the one being on the planet she should *not* have mastered. She subverted her husband and was subverted by the serpent. Therefore, the punishment was that there would always be a battle for leadership between the man and the woman in marriage (Gen. 3:16). This is hardly placing the full blame of the Fall on the woman as some have said about the complementarian position. This passage does not say that women are more easily deceived than men, though that is the conclusion of most of the history of the complementarian position, and even of a few modern commentators. As Schreiner says, it was a moral failing of Eve, not an intellectual deficiency.³¹

I. Verse 15

This verse is a concession, a correction of a possible misunderstanding. Given the guilt of Eve in the Fall, one might wonder whether or not there is any hope for woman at all. Paul affirms that there is hope. Note the passive voice of “be saved.” As Knight hints (p. 147), this is probably a divine passive, which is difficult in the extreme to account for on any other interpretation of “child-bearing” than that given below. Through the regaining of her proper role in the world, reaffirming man’s headship in the family, the Christ would come. It is quite possible that this child-bearing is singular and plural like the seed of Genesis 3:15–16 and in Galatians 3:16 compared with 3:29.

In the context of Gen 2–3, transgression has both temporal and eternal consequences. We therefore have at least to consider whether the promise of Gen 3:15 and Paul’s word of comfort in 1 Tim 2:15 do not contemplate both temporal and eternal consequences of salvation. It is striking to notice that in the historical context of Gen 3:15, God’s mercy meant that the woman’s temporal work of childbearing would not be in vain: though her childbearing would be in pain, she would not lose all her seed to sin and death. Rather woman would be mother of the One who will save many and mother of the many who will be saved by the One. In other words, woman and the remnant born to her will be saved by the One savior born to her, and in their salvation that One savior will have saved woman from the vanity of this life as well as from sin and death.

31. WC1, p. 143, WC2, p. 113.

32. See Knight, pp. 146–149, Quinn and Wacker, p. 232, and Liefeld, p. 101–102.

33. See Bowman, *Two Views*, pp. 288–289.

34. “The Mission-Lifestyle Setting of 1 Timothy 2:8–15.” *JETS* 41, (Fall, 1998): 215–238.

Paul is temporarily assuming the perspective of the time before Christ. The future tense σωθήσεται is not fatal to this position. I interpret “child-bearing” as referring first of all to normal child-bearing, and then to *the* Child-bearing, that is, the birth of the Messiah. This interpretation has a long and honored tradition.³² It does justice to the presence of the article in front of τεκνογονίας (the article cannot in any case be decisive, but is rather suggestive), makes sense of “saved,” which otherwise is almost unintelligible and results in an unnatural understanding of the preposition διὰ, and does justice to the background of Genesis 3. The fact that Genesis 3 is in the background of this passage has escaped most commentators who have dismissed this interpretation (such as Marshall, p. 469). If one remembers the curses of Genesis 3, one is certain also to remember the promise of the Seed which would eventually come to destroy the serpent.³³ The curse on Eve was a curse on her *child-bearing*. Paul wants then to remind them that the promised Seed would also come through *child-bearing*. This interpretation also allows σωθήσεται to have its normal salvific force without introducing any works righteousness, which, as many commentators have noted, would be contrary to Paul’s theology. The only major objection that can be raised against this interpretation is that current child-bearing would then seem to be irrelevant, now that the Seed has come. However, this is where the insight of Royce Gordon Gruenler is applicable.³⁴ He argues that the Pastoral epistles are missions epistles (pg. 216). He argues this from vv. 1–7, esp. vv. 4–6. The implication for women today, therefore, is that child-bearing is a missionary activity. They are to remember that child-bearing was the instrument that God used to bring the Messiah into the world. See also Bowman’s assertion that “child-bearing” is a *synecdoche*, a figure of speech in which a part stands for the whole, the whole then being all of child-rearing (*Two Views*, p. 290). The “she” at the beginning of the verse refers primarily to Eve, therefore, and secondarily to all women who come after her. This is somewhat akin to the federal headship of Adam. This might be the reason why Paul switches from singular to plural in this verse (see Mounce, p. 143). Certainly, Quinn and Wacker’s suggestion (p. 233) that “they” refers to the husband and wife is rather strange, given that child-rearing is not *directly* in view, but only by *synecdoche*. Furthermore, the *woman’s* “salvation” would then depend (at least partly) on the *man’s* remaining in faith, love, and holiness (see Mounce, p. 147). It is more natural to understand “they” to refer to women. The second part of this verse corrects the possible misunderstanding that might result

if one took the “divine passive” too far at the beginning of the verse. One might think that salvation automatically accrues to women. Therefore, Paul stresses these things to ensure a non-automatic view of salvation (see Knight, p. 147). The verse stresses the necessity of perseverance. The presence of perseverance means also that salvation in the narrow sense of conversion is not in view. Rather, the larger view of salvation as including the entire Christian life is Paul’s purview here.

II. HERMENEUTICAL ISSUES

A. Situation in Ephesus

Is it the case that complementarians pay absolutely no attention to the background of the situation in Ephesus, or do not let that information affect their exegesis?³⁵ Who was Artemis of the Ephesians, for instance? Baugh argues against various egalitarian and otherwise commonly held opinions regarding who Artemis was and the situation of the cult, as well the position and status of women in Ephesus.³⁶ I will not reproduce his arguments here, but only summarize them: Artemis at Ephesus was the regular Greek goddess, not the fertility goddess of the Ancient Near East; the cult did *not* involve cult prostitution, since the priestesses were largely prepubescent; there were educated women at Ephesus, contrary to the suggestion that Paul is merely forbidding unlearned women from teaching. The idea of the mother-goddess being conflated with Artemis is a common but highly speculative opinion, based on the interpretation of the famous statue having many breasts. Baugh indicates that this interpretation is highly suspect. Other examples have been found having such protuberances on *male* statues of Zeus.³⁷ Therefore, the position of the Kroegers (that Paul was reacting against some kind of Amazonian feminism gone awry, and that ἀὐθεντεῖν means “to originate”) is untenable.³⁸

B. Creation, Fall, Redemption

The issue of Eve and the relation of her position to the Creation and the Fall is a complicated issue. Keener argues that the subordination of women was due to the Fall, and that therefore it is not prescriptive (*Two Views*, p. 63). However, this assertion does not make sense of the argument made about the temporal priority of the creation of the male in verse 13. In Ephesians, Paul notes that the man is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church (a handling of the much-vexed discussion of κεφαλή is beyond the scope of this article), and that this was true from the beginning. Actually, the

Fall *obscured* this relationship in that the woman would want to rule over the husband, but that the husband would domineer over her (Genesis 3:16). In redemption, therefore, it is possible, through a relationship with Jesus Christ, to restore this relationship back to what it was originally supposed to be. Women need to fulfill their God-appointed roles in order to do so. This is not to say that every woman needs to be a stay-at-home mother. On the other hand, it means that such stay-at-home women ought not to be despised, as they so often are today. The Bible would say that such a calling is the most noble calling to which a woman can aspire.

C. Other Pauline Passages

What of Galatians 3:28? This verse has been used as a grid through which all the other literature in the New Testament on the question of gender relationships has had to pass. But is it to be (ab)used in such a manner? Verse 27 (usually conveniently overlooked by all who quote verse 28) says that the unity is that of *being in Christ*, and having his righteousness given to us. Verse 24 invokes justification by faith. Therefore, verse 28 is talking about our status *in Christ before God the Father*. This is said by the same Paul who said that there are different roles for different people in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–30). Role distinction is *not* a sign of inferiority! Just as there is no shame in being a brigadier general as opposed to a lieutenant general in the army, nor is there any inferiority of person, only hierarchy of role, so it is in the family/church.

A word must be said about the relationship of this passage to 1 Corinthians 11:2–16. Keener argues that if we are going to be consistent about women in the church not having positions of authority over men, then we have to have them wear head coverings as well.³⁹ It is disputed, however, whether Paul refers to something in addition to hair, or not.⁴⁰ We cannot just assume that head coverings over and above the hair (hair is called a covering, verse 15) is what is in view. Therefore, Keener’s objection is premature. He seems also to suggest that there is absolutely no cultural relativity in applicability of the Bible in the view of complementarians. This is

35. See the irritatingly patronizing comments of Keener in *Two Views*, p. 55.

36. See WC1, pp. 13–52, WC2, pp. 13–38.

37. WC1, p. 31, WC2, p. 25.

38. See R.C. Kroeger and C.C. Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

39. *Two Views*, p. 62; see also Liefeld, pp. 109–110.

40. See David Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003) 505.

manifestly not the case. “Greet one another with a holy kiss” is not usually interpreted to be universally binding in terms of its particular expression. Our equivalent today would be hugs or handshakes. However, in 1 Timothy, Paul argues from something that is not culturally bound, namely, the creation order of Adam and Eve, and the headship of Adam as male.

Another issue that must receive treatment is the issue of female prophecy. Several authors argue that prophecy is just as authoritative as teaching. Prophecy is allowed to women. Therefore, teaching should be allowed as well. However, the context of allowed prophecy in 1 Corinthians does not include situations where the authority of male leadership could be challenged. Schreiner’s contention that prophecy is more vertical, and teaching more horizontal does not convince me.⁴¹ What holds true for all the biblical examples of women teaching or holding a position of prophethood is that such examples are not part of the church’s worship practice, but are rather private examples.⁴² In the New Testament, prophecy was supposed to come upon women, because of the prophecy in Joel. Prophecy is not a continuing entity in any case. It belonged only to the early church. Schreiner argues more convincingly that women could exercise prophetic gifts without disturbing male headship, whereas women could not teach men without disturbing male headship.⁴³

Towner has argued (p. 218) that there are passages that prove that women were involved in various aspects of ministry, and that therefore this passage cannot be limiting the teaching authority to men. First, he argues that Titus 2:3 implies that women had a broad teaching ministry that was not limited to the young women.⁴⁴ However, if the purpose (*ἵνα*) of the women teaching

is so that *younger women* will love their husbands, etc., but the *younger men* are to be exhorted by Titus himself (vs. 6), then it follows that the scope of the teaching in Titus 2:3 is limited to younger women.

Acts 18:26 does not necessarily mean anything for the normal functioning of the church. It was not a church situation. They took Apollos into their own home. Priscilla was not teaching Apollos in the church. Undoubtedly she knew her theology, and in this context, she could and did teach Apollos. But that is not a parallel situation to 1 Timothy 2. In other words, the passages that Towner cites do not prove what he intends them to prove.

CONCLUSIONS FOR ETHICS

A. Goal, Motive and Standard of the two interpretations

The goal of the complementarian position (despite immense pressure from the culture to conform to the egalitarian position) has been, and should continue to be faithfulness to the biblical witness about the role of gender in the church. The motive has too often been a desire to keep the reins of power within the grasp of the men, without encouraging women to participate in the ministry at all. This has resulted in the current backlash against tyrannical rule in the church, which rule has been based all too often on a view of women as inferior. However, to the extent that modern complementarian interpreters of this passage have discarded such unworthy motives, they are to be commended. Everywhere women are allowed to serve Christ, they should be encouraged to do so. The standard of the complementarian position has fairly consistently been the Bible as faithfully interpreted.

A great contrast between the ethics of the complementarian position and the ethics of the egalitarian position exists. The goal of the egalitarian position has been to be sensitive (many would say over-sensitive!) to those features in the text which might seem to point in a culturally relative direction.⁴⁵ Culture has the upper hand in hermeneutics in the egalitarian position, and culture interprets the Bible, rather than the other way around. This is demonstrated by the fact that the egalitarian position only became viable after about 1970.⁴⁶ The motive might be many things. It is much easier to get a job at a main-line seminary or church, if one holds to egalitarian views. On the other hand, many “evangelical feminists” are not acting out of such impure motives, but are rather seeking to end inequality.

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41. WC1, p. 129, WC2, p. 102.

42. See R. Fowler White’s article “The Concept of ‘Authoritative Teaching’ and the Role of Women in Congregational Worship,” available at the following website: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/women/white1.html>, and originally published in *Ordained Servant*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January 2001) 10–13. My thanks to Dr. White, for directing me to this paper, which corrected my thinking on this point.

43. WC1, p. 130, WC2, p. 102.

44. See also his comments on the Titus passage, p. 724, fn. 43.

45. The self-professed goal of many egalitarians is not so simply stated, however. Many would claim to be upholding the Scriptural view of women. Such a position would also hold to the authority of Scripture. My position is that such a stance is self-defeating, ultimately.

46. See Yarbrough, in WC1, pp. 170–171, WC2, p. 134–135. This problem greatly undermines the argument of Towner that too little change too slowly in regard to these issues “could neutralize the church’s impact in society” (p. 239). Did twenty centuries of supposed patriarchalism undermine the church’s goal of saving souls?