

# Men and Women in the Church



## An Assessment of the Issues

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## 1 Timothy 2:12: Paul's Two Prohibitions

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We are living in days of great change and crisis in our nation, home, and church. A great shift has taken place in all of these institutions as the Christian world-view and the Biblical-Law ethic have been undermined. As a result there is great confusion in our culture and that confusion has manifested itself most pointedly in the roles of men and women in the home and in the church. With the advent of feminism our culture is running toward egalitarianism. Not only are we unable to make any distinctions between men and women, but we are increasingly unable to make any distinctions between that which is moral and immoral in the realm of sexuality in general. The reason for this little booklet is to try and sort out some of the pertinent texts of Scripture that have a bearing upon the roles of men and women in the church. In the final analysis the only hope against the cultural drift of our age is faithful adherence to the Word of God.

I will confine myself mostly to the first letter of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, the young pastor of the church located in the city of Ephesus. Paul gives Timothy instructions concerning these matters; instructions which we would do well to follow. I will begin with his general instructions concerning prayer in chapter 2 and then proceed to the texts which directly address the issue at hand.

1 Timothy 2:11-15

*<sup>11</sup>Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. <sup>12</sup>But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. <sup>13</sup>For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. <sup>14</sup>And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into*

*transgression. <sup>15</sup>But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint."*

Here the Apostle Paul continues his instructions concerning the duties of men and women in the context of the Church. Paul is giving Timothy instructions as a young pastor in the church at Ephesus concerning the specific duties of men as men, and of women as women. Paul addresses the men specifically in verse 8 when he says, "*I want the men in every place to pray lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.*" It is especially the duty of men to lead the church in its spiritual life. Although men will not be the only ones praying, it is especially incumbent upon the men to lead the church in its prayers when gathered together for worship.

In verses 9-15 Paul shifts the focus of his instruction from the *men* of the congregation to the *women* of the congregation. In verse 9 he begins by saying, "*Likewise, I want women...*" and in verse 11 he says, "*Let a woman...*", and in verse 12 "*I do not allow a woman...*," and in verse 14 "*but the woman...*," and in verse 15 "*But women shall be....*"

In verses 9-10 he addresses the matter of dress or clothing with respect to women in particular. They must dress themselves with modesty and discretion. Then in verses 11-15 Paul moves on to some further instruction that is specifically directed to women as women. Here he introduces a *restriction* with respect to the ministry in which a woman may engage. This restriction is found in verse 12 where the Apostle Paul states, "*...I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man. . .*"

Now of course this restriction is a matter of great controversy in the life of the Church today. We live in a day when any restriction of any sort whatsoever is automatically suspect. We do not like the idea of restriction in any arena

much less with respect to the relationship between men and women. And considering the *feminist movement* of the last fifty years or so, the idea that women should in any way be restricted with respect to what they may or may not pursue in any area of life is abhorrent to many if not most in our secular culture. So how do we view this restriction that is so clearly and unapologetically set forth by the Apostle Paul? How are we to understand this instruction set forth in this letter to Timothy?

In order to answer these questions, we need to consider some general principles of Biblical interpretation. First, we must let the Scripture speak for itself. Initially, you may not “like” what the Scripture teaches on a particular topic, but you must not try to press the Scripture into the mold of your peculiar likes and dislikes. If the Scripture is the Word of God, then your thoughts and ideas must be molded and shaped by it. (Isaiah 55:8; 2 Cor. 10:5) Scripture alone determines our belief. Jesus says in Matthew 4:4 “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’” The question is not, “What do you think or what do I think?” but “What does God think and what has He declared in His Word?” Scripture alone is the inspired Word of God! Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16 <sup>16</sup>“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” Scripture is inclusive of the writings of the Apostle Paul. Second Peter 3:14-16 states, <sup>14</sup>“Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, <sup>15</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, <sup>16</sup>as also **in all his letters**, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also **the rest of the Scriptures**, to their

*own destruction.*” Thus these words of instruction written to Timothy by the Apostle Paul cannot be summarily dismissed as some may wish to do simply by declaring, “Well, these are the thoughts of Paul, they are simply the expression of his opinions, and they are not authoritative for us!” According to Peter, these verses are included as part of God’s instruction to His Church.

Secondly we must interpret the unclear passages in the light of the clear. When you read in 1 Corinthians 15 about “baptism for the dead,” you should not stop then and there and develop a whole practice based on that one phrase alone. The Bible gives us a great body of clear teaching on the subject of Baptism and whatever one concludes about the passage in 1 Corinthians 15, that conclusion must be drawn in the light of the clear teaching of the whole Bible.

Third, we must interpret the part in the light of the whole. One cannot understand the purpose of the Old Testament sacrificial and ceremonial laws unless you study them in the light of the whole of God’s Word, including the Gospels and the Epistles. It is in these books of the New Testament that you come to a complete and full understanding of the function of these ceremonies and sacrifices in the practice of Israel.

Fourth, if all else fails consider the context. Since I am going to give quite a bit of consideration to the context in which First Timothy 2:11-15 are found I will not say much about this principle of interpretation at this point. Let me simply repeat this often used phrase: “A text without a context is a pretext!”

Now with these cautions and reminders we are ready to dive into the text before us. Here we see that the ministry of women in the church is restricted with respect to men. Let us note first the context in which this restriction is found.

What is the subject at hand in these verses? What is the broader context to be considered which defines the boundaries of this restriction? Or we might put it this way: *“Is this restriction absolute in nature? Does this restriction apply indiscriminately to all areas of life? Is there a particular realm in which this principle of restriction is applicable?”*

Now these questions have been answered in all kind of ways; perhaps in too many ways to recount in this brief study. I will mention just a few of them. Some have sought to restrict the application of these verses to the first century Church in Ephesus. In other words, it is contended that this restriction does not have universal application to all women in the church at all times and in all ages. It is surmised that in Ephesus women ruled in the pagan cult of Artemis or Diana and now Paul needs to correct these women. It is then concluded that there is no universal restriction concerning women with respect to the teaching of men.

Some have taught that the issue here is only applicable to worship services. In other words Paul’s prohibition here applies only to what may take place in a formal service of worship. Therefore, a woman may teach men in the church as long as she does not do so within the context of a worship service.

Some have taught that the issue here is one of rule and authority. That Paul’s prohibition has only to do with women holding the office of elder. In other words, Paul is forbidding a woman to be an elder and in that office exercising authority over a man. It is contended, from this perspective, that a woman may teach a man as long as she is not holding office and exercising authority over him.

Some may seek to extend this prohibition to all areas of life, asserting that Paul is prohibiting women from

teaching men, not only in the church, but in all areas of society or culture.

These are some of the ways in which these verses have been interpreted. However, I disagree with every one of these proposed interpretations. Why? Because I do not believe that the context in which these verses are found will allow these interpretations to stand.

There is nothing in the context of these verses that would lead one to conclude that Paul’s prohibition is to be restricted to the first century church in Ephesus which was supposedly struggling with the cult of Artemis or Diana. This is extra-biblical information which is imported to the text and forced upon it. If this is the proper interpretation of this text then for centuries this text has been unintelligible to the masses of Christians who have sought to understand it. If this is the proper interpretation then we have had to wait until this new extra-biblical information was made available to us so we could be enlightened.

There is nothing in this text that strictly restricts these instructions to worship services. This is an extrapolation from the fact that Paul introduces the subject of prayer in verses 1 and following. I do believe that Paul has in mind the life of the church in its public life but I don’t think that is the same thing as narrowly restricting these verses to worship services. And in fact, Paul explicitly states later on in this book that all of these instructions are to be applied generally to the corporate life of the body of Christ. Paul writes in **1 Timothy 3:14-15** <sup>14</sup>*“I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; <sup>15</sup>but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”*

Similarly I do not think that this prohibition can be reduced to a matter of the exercise of authority only. Paul is not here writing Timothy to prevent women from being ordained to the office of elder; that is understood. Rather he writes, *"I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man."* He does not say *"I do not allow a woman to be an elder."* In God's economy it is not just that a woman is not allowed to hold the office of elder, but it is clear that Paul is also stating that a woman is not allowed to assume the *functions* of that office either with respect to men; that is, *teaching or exercising authority over men in the Church.* Some have tried to separate these two concepts, office and function, from one another. They propose that it is acceptable for a woman to teach men as long as she is not exercising authority over them. However, I think that such a thing is not possible. These two functions are inseparably connected. To teach someone is, at least to some extent, an exercise of authority over them. The Biblical concept of teaching includes the exercise of authority and oversight. To exercise authority apart from the teaching of the Word of God is despotism. The only right that anyone has to exercise authority over any one in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is that right which is established by the teaching of God's Word. The authority of the elder is founded upon the teaching of the Word of God and the application of that Word to life. Paul is explicitly forbidding women *to teach or exercise authority over men* in the life of the Church, or it could be translated, *"to teach, that is, exercise authority over men."* There are some who have promoted the idea that a woman may teach men in the church if she is authorized to do so by the elders or Session of the church. In other words, they would make Paul to say, *"I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, unless she is authorized to do so*

*by the Session."* This seems to me to turn this verse on its head and make it to say the very opposite of what a plain and straightforward reading of it would require. What Paul is saying is that in the life of the church an order is to be observed. It is an order that has been established by God Himself. Men are to lead and oversee the life of the Church, and women are to follow and remain under the teaching and oversight of those men who are set apart and ordained to the offices of the church.

To interpret this text as only restricting women from holding the office of elder is missing the point. Women who teach men are exercising authority over them whether they hold office or not. To stand before men and teach the Word of God is an exercise of authority. This is the very thing that is forbidden by the Apostle Paul.

It is argued that no one can teach except that he does so under the authority of the elders. This is certainly true. If this is the import of Paul's prohibition then why does he single out women in this instance? Would this not be equally true of men? Those who argue that Paul is only prohibiting women from assuming an office of authority render Paul's prohibition a tautology. They make Paul to say, *"I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man because no one can exercise authority in the church unless authorized to do so."* Or, *"I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, unless the Session allows it, in which case a woman can teach and exercise authority over a man."* In other words it would be permissible if the Session would allow it. This makes the statement meaningless. The statement is made to say no more than is true of any one who teaches in the church. All the teaching in the church is to be under the authority of the elders. Well enough, then why does Paul specifically address the women if this prohibition is equally

applicable to men and women alike? The answer is that Paul is giving a specific prohibition that is applicable to women in a particular manner that is different from the general prohibition that would apply to any one.

Now on the other hand, I mentioned that there are those who have tried to apply this restriction to all areas of life; that is, including all areas of life outside the bounds of the life of the church. I will again simply refer to the context. **First Timothy 3:14-15** answers this question for us by explicitly stating that this principle is to be applied within the household of God. <sup>14</sup>*"I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; <sup>15</sup>but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."*

This then is the first and most crucial observation to be made about this **restriction**. We need to pay close attention to the **context of the restriction**. Paul is writing about the life of the church as the *"household of God."* As in the home the husband is the leader and head and his wife is to be under his leadership and care, so in the church, the *"household of God,"* women are to be under the leadership and care of men, not teaching, instructing, and exercising authority over them.

Now we must note that there is a restriction to the restriction. Verses 11-12 state, <sup>11</sup>*Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. <sup>12</sup>But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet."* Now here I want you to note with me what this restriction is not. It is not an absolute restriction forbidding women from having any ministry whatsoever in the body of Christ. As we have already seen this restriction is restricted to the realm of the *"household of faith."* And second this

restriction is restricted to the relationship of women to men in the *"household of faith."*

Paul is not prohibiting women from teaching altogether. Paul is not forbidding women from exercising authority. He is prohibiting them from teaching or exercising authority **over men** in the household of faith. That Paul is not prohibiting women from teaching altogether is clear from what he writes Titus, instructing him to exhort the older women to teach and train the younger women. **Titus 2:3-5** <sup>3</sup>*"Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, **teaching** what is good, <sup>4</sup>that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, <sup>5</sup>to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored."*

Women are to teach and instruct their children. Older, more mature, women are to disciple and train the younger women. Women are to use their spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ. In addition to all kinds of teaching and discipleship ministries there are diaconal ministries of service, helps, mercy, prayer, missions, etc. There is much work to be done and many avenues of service available to the women of the church. This is not some horrible all encompassing straight-jacket restriction that prevents half of the body of Christ from engaging in ministry. It is rather a recognition of the wisdom of God in ordering the Church in general, and in particular, the relationship between men and women.

With respect to their relationship to the men of the church the women are to *"...quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness."* There is to be a recognition of the order established by God Himself. We demonstrate our dependence upon the Lord and our willingness to live under

His authority as we humbly follow the order that He has established for us in the church.

Therefore, with respect to the leadership and teaching of the church, the women are to *“quietly receive instruction.”* By the way, I believe this is the proper context for understanding all of the passages of Scripture that address the duty of women to be *“silent”* or *“not to speak”* in the Church. This is not a blanket prohibition of all forms of speech. It is restricted to that authoritative and instructive speech that is found in teaching, and it is restricted to the relationship of women to men only. Silence was not to be understood in an absolutist sense. The word “speak” (λαλεω) is sometimes used to refer to some very specific communication which is inclusive of teaching and exhorting (See: Titus 2:1, 15). So there is a proper context for this restriction, there is a proper restriction to this restriction.

Now what might be the rationale for this restriction? In other words *“Why does God so restrict the ministry of women so as to prohibit them from teaching and exercising authority over men? What is the reason for this restriction?”* Paul writes in verses 13-15, <sup>13</sup>*For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. <sup>14</sup>And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. <sup>15</sup>But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.”*

First, I want you to note what this rationale is not. This has nothing to do with the *“being”* or *“worth”* of a woman as over against a man. Paul does not in any way or in any place infer that women are of less value in the sight of God than men. Submission does not *de facto* infer that one is of less value than the one to whom he is submitting. Men and women are both created in the image of God. The Scriptures declare, *“And God created man in His own image, in*

*the image of God He created him; male and female He created them...”* Both man and woman are created in the image of God. Both are human beings created with the capacity to reflect the image and glory of God. They are of equal value and worth before God and one is not superior to the other. That one is to be in submission to the other does not imply inferiority. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are *“...the same in substance, equal in power and glory,”* yet there is an order in the God-Head. There is an economy within the Trinity. Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 11:3** <sup>3</sup>*“But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.”* The Father is the head of Christ, but Christ is not of less value than the Father, He is the eternal Son of God and is of the same substance or being as the Father. Yet Jesus said, *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me.”* He was always subject to the will of the Father. Women are to be subject to the oversight and authority of their husbands or the male leadership of the Church not because they are of less value than these men. In this regard Paul declares in **Galatians 3:28** <sup>28</sup>*“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Also, this has nothing to do with the *“intelligence”* of women as over against men. Paul does not indicate that this order is due to any supposed intellectual deficiency on the part of women. In fact, we know that many women are more intelligent than many men. This is not a matter of intelligence. It is rather a matter of the order which has been established by God Himself.

This has nothing to do with the *“emotional nature”* of women as over against men. Paul does not say that women cannot make sound decisions because they are too emotional or anything remotely like that. He does not address the

nature of woman in a psychological manner. Again, this is not a matter of psychology. It is rather a matter of the order which has been established by God Himself. Well then, if it is not a matter of "worth," "being," or "intellect," or "emotion," what is the **rationale** for this restriction?

We note two things which Paul mentions as the rationale for this restriction; the order of creation and the fall of man into sin, both of which are not bound up in the culture. First, we note that the rationale is anchored in the order of creation. Verse 13 states, <sup>13</sup>*"For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve."* The Apostle Paul states that this restriction finds its rationale in the very order of creation itself. The record is found in Genesis 2:18ff where it is stated that God created man and then God created woman to be his companion and co-laborer in the duties of dominion. The order in the family between husband and wife and the order in the church between women and men is patterned after the very order of creation itself. This order then is not subject to the cultural factors of any age or condition. This order is clearly a-cultural. The manner in which we relate to one another as men and women in the church is to reflect the very order of creation itself. It is an acknowledgment of the sovereign will of God in creating man first and then woman. When we follow the instructions of Scripture we affirm this order and God's sovereign rule over us. When we do not follow these instructions in home and church we reverse God's order and seek to overthrow His rule.

Secondly, we note that the rationale is also anchored in the order of the Fall of man. Verse 14 states, <sup>14</sup>*"And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression."* The roles of men and women in the Church are also governed by what we observe in the Fall of mankind. The Fall of mankind was effected by a reversal of

the creation order. It was Woman leading Man, and Man following Woman with respect to the eating of the forbidden fruit that was, in part, the cause of the Fall. Paul refers to the deception involved. He states that Adam was not ". . .deceived, but the woman being quite deceived fell into transgression." Eve was led astray by deception and then Adam knowingly disobeyed the command of God. Adam followed Eve and did not offer her protection and spiritual leadership at the moment of her weakness.

When we do not follow the instructions of God's Word, when we do not observe this restriction as set forth in our text, we reverse the order of spiritual leadership that God has ordained. We follow the pattern of the Fall and I am afraid the results are equally calamitous for home and church.

By the way this restriction is upheld in First Timothy 3:1f as well. Paul writes, <sup>1</sup>*"It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do."* Here again Paul is continuing to address *man as man*, as over against woman; following the **creation order** of man being created first, and then woman being created as a **helper** for man in the accomplishment of the "**cultural mandate**". The Lord God has also placed the responsibility of caring for His people in His church upon the shoulders of gifted men. This had already been established by Paul in the previous chapter. **I Timothy 2:12-13**, <sup>12</sup>*"But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet,* <sup>13</sup>*For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve."* Thus, the **biblical principle** is that the leadership and care of the church has been entrusted into the hands of God-gifted/God-ordained men. It is worthy of note then that not only does God exclude women from positions of rule and authority in the church but also a **great host of men** are excluded as well.



Not all men are gifted by God to rule or called by God to rule, and not all men are qualified to rule.

The rationale for this restriction of office to men is not founded in some supposed intellectual, emotional, or ontological deficiency in women as over against men. It is the order established by God in the very act of creation. This is the order that He has established. It is suited to our nature as men and women. It is designed by our God for our benefit and blessing. It is in following this order in humility and meekness that we find the blessing of our God. In verse 15 we find the great hope of the Gospel. Verse 15 states, *<sup>15</sup>But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.*

Hendriksen states in his commentary, *“Not by way of preaching to adults but by way of bearing children does a woman attain to real happiness, to salvation, with stress on its positive aspect. The path that leads to salvation is ever that of obedience to God’s ordinances.”*

*“Again, not by way of exercising dominion over men but by way of submission does a woman reach the state of true freedom and blessedness.”*

*“Because of the prospect of child-bearing Adam’s wife was named ‘Eve,’ that is ‘life.’ Paul takes up this thought and develops it. Child-bearing will mean salvation for the Christian mother, for what Christian mother does not experience inner delight, joy, blessing, and glory in seeing the image of her Savior reflected in little ones who belong to Him? In bearing children the Christian mother by faith in God’s covenant promise looks forward to all the joys of Christian motherhood unto the glory of God. This to her is salvation.”*

*“I reject the following explanations: 1) she will be saved by means of “The Child-birth.” 2) she will come*

*safely through child-birth. 3) By means of bearing children and meriting salvation.*

*“Not child-bearing as such procures salvation. The love of God shed abroad in the heart, the peace which passes all understanding, the delight which is experienced when one submits to God’s ordinances, the joys of truly Christian motherhood, all these are experienced only if women ‘continue in the faith,’ etc. Faith comes first.”*

*“. . .if the women members of the church will abide in faith and love and sanctification, meanwhile exercising proper self-control and reserve, they will find their joy and salvation in bearing children to God’s glory, yes, in all the duties and delights of Christian motherhood.”*

Calvin also remarks, *“Accordingly, Paul, in order to comfort them and render their condition tolerable, informs them that they continue to enjoy the hope of salvation, though they suffer a temporal punishment.”*

*“First, by the hope of salvation held out to them, they are prevented from falling into despair through alarm at the mention of their guilt. Secondly, they become accustomed to endure calmly and patiently the necessity of servitude, so as to submit willingly to their husbands, when they are informed that this kind of obedience is both profitable to themselves and acceptable to God.”*

*“The apostle does not argue here about the cause of salvation, and therefore we cannot and must not infer from these words what works deserve...”*

*“Even ‘child-bearing’ is obedience acceptable to God, only so far as it proceeds from faith and love. To these two he adds sanctification, which includes all that purity of life which becomes Christian women.”*

And so we conclude that this restriction is not **Time Bound, Worship Bound, Office Bound, or without Bounds!**

There is nothing in the context of these verses that would lead one to conclude that Paul's prohibition is to be restricted to the first century church in Ephesus. There is nothing in this text that strictly restricts these instructions to worship services. Similarly we concluded that this prohibition cannot be reduced to a matter of the exercise of authority only. It is clear that Paul is stating that a woman is not allowed to assume the *functions* of the office with respect to men; that is, *teaching or exercising authority over men in the Church*. And lastly we concluded that we cannot apply this restriction to all areas of life; that is, including all areas of life outside the bounds of the life of the Church.

Thus we stated that as in the home the father is the leader and head and his wife is to be under his leadership and care, so in the Church, the "household of God," women are to be under the leadership and care of those men gifted and called by God, not teaching, instructing, and exercising authority over them.

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### OBJECTIONS:

Throughout the history of the church there have always been those who have offered objections to any restrictions placed on the ministry of women. The following are some which are most often presented by those who regard the teaching of the Scriptures as important in settling these questions.

#### 1) Women have been used by God in the history of Israel and the history of the church.

At various times in the history of the church women have been raised up by God to bless and benefit his people. Deborah was raised up during the time of the judges and at times various women prophets were raised up as well. John Calvin's comments are helpful as we consider the teaching of

the whole of Scripture on this matter. He writes, "Extraordinary acts done by God do not overturn the ordinary rules of government, by which He intended that we should be bound. Accordingly, if women at one time held the office of prophets and teachers, and that too when they were supernaturally called to it by the Spirit of God, He who is above all law might do this; but, being a peculiar case, this is not opposed to the constant and ordinary system of government." [Calvin's Commentaries, Vol. XXI, Commentary on First Timothy, pg. 67]

It is the clear teaching of Scripture that the ordinary principle of government in the church is that of male leadership. It has already been shown that this governing principle is anchored in the very order of creation itself and is not subject to the changing whims of culture.

#### 2) Phoebe was a "minister" or a "deacon" in the church mentioned in Romans 16:1.

In addition to Romans 16:1 there is also a reference to women in First Timothy 3:11. As is always the case the broader context must be taken into account. In verse 8 of the third chapter of First Timothy the Apostle Paul begins his instruction concerning the qualifications for the office of deacon by saying, "Deacons likewise must be men. . ." He sets forth the character qualifications for the office and then in verse 11 he inserts some instructions to women.

Some have deduced from this one verse that women are permitted to hold the office of deacon along with men. Phoebe (Romans 16:1) is often referenced since Paul states that she is a "servant (Greek: διάκονον) of the church which is at Cenchrea." It is proposed that Phoebe held the office of deacon as a *deaconess*. However, the evidence supporting this proposal is weak. The reference to Phoebe as a servant can mean no more than that she was just that, a servant. There is no requirement that she hold the office of deacon in order to

be of service in the body of Christ or to be called a servant by Paul. This is why the Greek word (διακονον) has been translated by the word "servant" and not "minister" or "deacon" throughout the history of the church. The word has both a general meaning, that is, *servant*, and a technical meaning, that is, *deacon*, when referring to an office in the church. With the advent of feminism in the broader culture, some within the church have suggested that the word should be translated "deaconess" or "minister" with respect to Phoebe.

With respect to the explicit instruction concerning deacons found in First Timothy it is clear that Paul is affirming the principle of male leadership within the church. The reference to women in verse 11 should be interpreted in the light of the whole of Scripture on this subject. Besides, the context of First Timothy 3 is clear in this respect. Throughout Chapter 3 of 1 Timothy the list of qualifications assumes the office holder is male.

So what should we make of this reference to women in 1 Timothy 3:11 where the Apostle writes, "*Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things?*" The answer is more easily discovered in the whole context of First Timothy. In First Timothy 5:9-16 there is extensive discussion about women who, as widows, are employed by the church as assistants to the church in performing certain duties. Notice, that a woman is "*put on the list*" only if she meets certain qualifications. Among these qualifications are such things as: 1) a reputation for good works, 2) a hospitable spirit towards strangers, and 3) a servants' heart manifested in assistance to those in distress. Only such women as these are to be put on the list, that is, placed in a position of service to the deacons and elders in the care of the body of Christ.

An excellent explanation of First Timothy 3:11 is found in William Hendriksen's commentary (page 133). "*The simplest explanation of the manner in which Paul, not yet finished with the requirements for the office of deacon, interjects a few remarks about women, is that he regards these women as deacon's assistants in helping the poor and needy, etc. These are women who render auxiliary service, performing ministries for which women are better adapted.*" An additional passage from Hendriksen's commentary is also worth quoting. Concerning First Timothy 5:9 he writes, "*There is sufficient evidence to show that in the early church such a body of widows, with definite functions actually existed.*" (page 173)

Thus we would conclude that there is really no substantial reason for believing that there ever was an ordained office in the church for women deacons. Most likely there was a group of women who assisted the elders and deacons with certain tasks which men would not be able to perform with women. They would also help in carrying out ministries of compassionate care. These women then must also meet certain qualifications. Verse 11 states, <sup>11</sup>*Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.*"

### **3) Priscilla taught Apollos in Ephesus.**

Here the reference is to Acts 18:26. <sup>26</sup>*...But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*"

This text is often presented as proof that women can teach men with the approval of God. John Calvin's remarks on this text are very helpful, "*...we must remember that Priscilla did execute this function of teaching at home in her house, that she might not overthrow the order prescribed by God and nature.*"

Note that this text does not present Priscilla as a teacher or officer in the church. Rather it conveys that she,

along with her husband, most likely in their home, helped Apollos to understand the word of God more accurately. The text says, "they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." Priscilla knew the Word of God and along with her husband helped Apollos grow in his understanding of God's truth. What a powerful combination; husband and wife as a team, using their home for the sake of promoting the cause of Christ.

**4) Paul teaches that all men and women are equal in the church in Galatians 3:28** "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither *male nor female*; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Some argue from this text that the Apostle Paul supersedes the previous instruction of Scripture concerning the role of women in the church. They promote the idea that the Apostle Paul pushes the church toward an egalitarian position in which the gender of persons is not to be considered when addressing the matter of service or office in the church. However, a closer look at this text will demonstrate that such is not the case.

The Apostle Paul is not addressing the issue of office in the church in this text. Rather he is addressing the way in which believers from various backgrounds view one another and relate to one another. Jews must not view their Greek brothers in Christ as inferior because they are not physical descendents of Abraham. Free men must not view their brothers in Christ who are slaves as inferior to them because of their civil status. Men are not to view themselves as spiritually superior to women because of their gender. In Christ we are all sons and daughters of God by the grace of adoption. Whatever roles we may have in the body of Christ, the possession of the particular role does not make us superior or inferior to any other believer. The service-role

that we assume in the body of Christ is not a matter of superiority or inferiority. It is a matter of God's appointed order in general and His calling in one's life in particular. The same is true with respect to the persons of the Trinity. The Father and the Son are of the same exact substance. They are equally divine. The Father is not a superior being to the Son. So it could be said with respect to "being" that there is neither Father nor Son in the Trinity, but all are one. However, this does not negate the fact that in terms of personhood and function the Son has a different role than that of the Father in the economy of the Trinity. So the Apostle Paul asserts that being female does not make one inferior to one's brothers in Christ, and being male does not make one superior to his sisters in Christ. In Christ, there is neither male nor female, "you are all one in Christ Jesus." This does not however, deny the clear differences in function between men and women in the body of Christ any more than the fact that some men are gifted and called to be elders and others are not. Those men who are called to be elders are not superior to those who are not called. Different callings and functions does not negate spiritual equality before the Lord.

## CONCLUSION

As we address these issues we are forever challenged to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and to resist the effort of the world to press us into its mold. Much of the church of our day is caught up in what I would call *cultural drift*. The church is drifting along with the secular and pagan culture to which it is called to bear testimony. The church is taking its cues from the culture instead of seeking to transform the culture by being salt and light. As the church

adopts the worldview of the culture by which it is surrounded it will become more and more "*feminized*" and "*egalitarian*" with respect to the roles of men and women. The liberal church has already jettisoned the role-boundaries of the church of the first nineteen or so centuries by dismissing the teaching of the Word of God as the flawed opinions of chauvinistic men. Of course, if this is your view much of what Jesus taught must be jettisoned along the way as Jesus Himself chose twelve men to lead His church. In the majority of the mainline denominations this battle has already been lost. However, the conservative church is not arising unscathed from this warfare. There are many who under the pressure of *political correctness* have adopted the *egalitarian* presuppositions of the world. They have adopted the world's perspective and now have returned to the Scriptures for a fresh look and new interpretation of the principles of leadership and gender in the church. New hermeneutics are employed and novel interpretations are submitted that are foreign to the history of the interpretation of the Scriptures. Are we to believe that the church has gotten this matter wrong for the better part of the 2,000 years of its existence? Are we to believe that only in this century has the church been provided with the extra-biblical hermeneutical information it needs to come to the correct understanding of the roles of men and women in the church? Are we to believe that the vast majority of believers to whom this new information has not been and is not accessible have been left and are left in the dark on this subject? Are we now to acquiesce to a new priestly class of interpreters who alone have the special knowledge needed to interpret the Scripture aright? Do these scholar-interpreters alone possess the *gnosis* needed to understand why the plain straightforward prohibition of 1Timothy 2:11-12 is not really a prohibition at

all? These are serious questions that should be addressed by those who are now trying to lead the church in a radically different direction with regard to gender and leadership in the church. As with all matters of faith and practice the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* must prevail. It has been the purpose of this little booklet to wrestle with some of the pertinent texts by which this issue can be resolved. It is submitted with the sincere desire to provide some clarity of thought on this matter. May God be praised and His order maintained in His church.

[For a thorough study on the question of whether or not the church ought to ordain women to the office of deacon see: Report of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church at [http://www.opc.org/ga\\_papers.html](http://www.opc.org/ga_papers.html) ]

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*Dr. George Knight*

## 1Timothy 2:12 – Paul’s Two Prohibitions

<sup>12</sup> διδάσκειν δὲ γυναῖκί οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ’ εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.<sup>1</sup>

### An innovative interpretation of 1Timothy 2:12

In this paper, I wish to interact with an interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12 that maintains that the verse prohibits a certain *type* of teaching, namely, authoritative teaching or teaching that comes with the office of an elder. Some believe that Paul allows women to teach men provided that the teaching is not an authoritative sort. For example, James Hurley seems to argue for this position: "We conclude, therefore, that Paul intended that women should not be authoritative teachers in the church." Earlier, in the same paragraph, he conceded the following: "Paul's grammar permits this reading [two prohibitions] by inserting the 'or.'"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> KJV: "But I suffer not a woman to teach, **nor** to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." NEB also has 'nor.' NASB: "But I do not allow a woman to teach **or** exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." NIV: "I do not permit a woman to teach **or** to have authority over a man; she must be silent." RSV and TEV also have 'or.' We also observe that the paraphrase versions follow the above translations. *The Living Bible* says, "I never let women teach men **or** lord it over them." *The New Living Translation* (which replaces *The Living Bible*) still retains the **or** in the translation: "I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly." The *Phillips Modern English* translation is, "I don't allow women to teach, **nor** do I ever put them in positions of authority over men – I believe their role is to be receptive." Even the silly *The Amplified Bible* uses **or**.

<sup>2</sup>J. B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 201.

Susan Foh does not seem to be very clear as to where she stands on this verse. She seems to favor Hurley's position at some points. In her book *Women and the Word of God*, she admits that "it is difficult to decide between the two" positions (namely, from teaching as an activity or from teaching with authority). "Paul may intend to eliminate women from consideration for the office of elder" but she is not forceful here. Yet, she seems to go with the traditional view when she says, "Paul does not say that a woman who usurps authority should not teach or exercise authority over men; he says that a woman should not teach or exercise (usurp) authority over men."<sup>3</sup> In other words, she suggests that the verse in question has two activities in mind. However, her applications later on seem to undermine this understanding. This lack of clarity cannot stand; we need clarity as to what the text actually teaches because many have used this verse to diminish its plain force.

There is no exegetical rationale for this growing new interpretation of the verse. All popular and faithful translations argue against this interpretation. A simple reader of the English text would never have entertained this innovative interpretation.

So the main point of disagreement lies in the area of prohibition(s). Is Paul prohibiting a single activity (authoritative teaching) or is Paul forbidding two activities, namely, prohibiting women from teaching men AND

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<sup>3</sup>S. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1979), 125-27. She seems to take 1Timothy 2:12 as teaching two activities: "It may be a surprise that I am inclined to think that the two activities in 1 Timothy 2:12 are not to be used as criteria for other jobs, because they refer particularly to the office of elder" (248). Yet in the same page, she says that the verse merely prohibits the woman from occupying the office of a teaching-ruling office.

prohibiting women from exercising authority over men? We maintain, with the standard Bible translations, that Paul is prohibiting two activities (see fn. 1).

## **1. Practical problems**

### **a. What does non-authoritative teaching mean?**

It is virtually impossible to apply this prohibition. There is no real concrete context for this prohibition to take place. It can only happen if a woman teaches as an elder of the church — but since that is not allowed in our denomination, she can teach all she wants "provided that the teaching not be of the authoritative sort." She is only in danger of breaking this prohibition when she takes upon herself the office of an elder. But Paul does not mention the office; he mentions two activities.

Some interpreters are even more specific. They argue that Paul merely prohibits women from carrying on "the role of senior pastor."<sup>4</sup> This commentator assumes that only the office is in view and applies it to his own ecclesiastical context. But clearly Paul is not prohibiting women from holding the office of a senior pastor (bad ecclesiology). This interpretation certainly gives the impression that the commentator takes the Bible very seriously. But if that is a faithful interpretation (apart from the translation issue), then a woman can possess the most important duty and function of a Teaching Elder (pastor, senior pastor, etc.) without his

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<sup>4</sup>T. D. Lea and J. Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 100. Another strange interpretation comes from a translation offered by Quinn and Wacker: "Moreover, I do not allow a wife to teach in the public worship and to boss her husband. That is learning 'quietly.'" See Jerome Quinn and William Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

responsibilities. She can have the proverbial cake and eat it too. She is *de facto* doing the work of a teacher without possessing his responsibilities and authority.

'Man' (ἀνδρός) is connected to both infinitives (prohibitions) in 1Timothy 2:12. Women are not allowed to teach men or to exercise authority over men. Now, how do we come up with this positive assertion, "Women can, however, teach men non-authoritatively."? One would think that it would be more appropriate for men to receive *authoritative* teaching than to receive non-authoritative teaching. Foh suggests that the teaching could be "nonofficial, informal."<sup>5</sup> If that is the case, then why bother? Why take the time on the Lord's Day to merely listen to non-authoritative teaching? Which is better for the congregation? Can't you hear someone saying, "I'm so glad what she said was non-authoritative — whew, I'm off the hook!" What does non-authoritative teaching really look like? What does it mean? Such an interpretation cannot be concretely applied.

### **b. This sort of distinction smells like a modern concession.**

Certainly Paul could have conveyed that idea much more clearly. This interpretation suggests that the church has simply mistranslated and misinterpreted this text for nearly 2000 years. This innovative interpretation has now liberated the modern woman; she can in fact teach after all (but not authoritatively).

In other words, such an exegesis is unquestionably more concessive to the modern mindset — it comports all too well with what the 20th century reader wants and expects; no paligenetic work is required to accept such a teaching. It's much too easy!

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<sup>5</sup>Foh, *Women and the Word of God*, 250.

I am not arguing that the more difficult reading should be the rule (as in textual criticism) but there should be a hermeneutic of suspicion if our clever interpretation fits very comfortably with modern expectations. For example, I expected I. H. Marshall to maintain this sort of position because he is a moderate Methodist 'evangelical.'<sup>6</sup> We expect this sort of an exegesis from men like Marshall since they do not believe in plenary verbal inspiration. Their exegesis will always sit well with modern sensibilities.

## 2. Grammatical, exegetical and historical problems

### **a. It simply does not say what they want it to say.**

The two prohibitions in the verse (teaching and exercising authority) cannot be collapsed into one. That is in fact what most of them have done. How can two 'separately forbidden' activities become a singular prohibition? Are they suggesting that one of these activities may exist without the other? Are we to think that a woman may teach a man without authority? Are we to believe that a woman can exercise authority over men without teaching? In other words, is the single activity permitted as long as it is not coupled with the other 'separately forbidden' activity?

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<sup>6</sup>I. H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield and G. N. Stanton, *The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 459-460. The only way he overcame the purpose of οὐδὲ was to use a vague parallel in vv. 11, 12 to which he concedes: "Although the parallelism is not exact, the relation between v. 11 and 12 suggest [sic]..." (460). By a mere suggestive parallel, Marshall overturns the grammatical purpose and function of οὐδὲ which introduces a separate prohibition. I admit that there is an *ad hominum* element to my criticism but I indeed expected Marshall to arrive at this conclusion before I read his comments.

Ἀϋθεντεῖν is not adverbial to διδάσκειν. The two verbs are separated by a coordinating conjunction οὐδὲ. Therefore Paul cannot be saying, "I do not permit a woman to authoritatively teach men." Nothing in the syntax suggests an adverbial use of ἀϋθεντεῖν. They are two separately forbidden activities. If two activities are forbidden, then it cannot be interpreted to mean that God forbids women only from authoritatively teaching.

### **b. We have a coordinating conjunction.**

Hurley believes that it would be legitimate to *insert* the "or" between the two infinitives (as if it were optional). One is not at liberty to choose if he or she wants to translate οὐδὲ or not. Οὐδὲ usually serves as a coordinating conjunction and not a subordinating particle (nor an introduction to an adverbial clause as some seem to suggest). There is nothing in the verse or in the context that allows us to arrive at such a forced construction; the natural force of the οὐδὲ should be maintained.<sup>7</sup> Οὐδὲ simply emphasizes "a previous negative."<sup>8</sup> The conjunctions force us to adopt οὐδὲ as a coordinating conjunction as opposed to some subordinating particle. Οὐδὲ introduces a separate prohibition. It says, "Not this... nor that... but this." All the standard Bible translations use a similar translation. The conjunction assumes a *series* unless

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<sup>7</sup>See Blass, Debrunner and Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 230-231; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 1183-1184.

<sup>8</sup>J. H. Moulton, W. F. Howard and N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908-76), 3:340. There is an interesting use of 1Tim. 2:12 in 4:82. It certainly suggests two prohibitions.



there are strong contextual evidences to the contrary. None exists (at least none have been put forward). The new interpretation and translation must distort the straightforward grammar to arrive at its desired results.

Here is an excerpt from a book which more adequately addresses the thrust of what we have been arguing. From *Women in the Church* we read:<sup>9</sup>

It should further be noted that the effort to make ἀθροῦν τεῖν subordinate to διδάσκειν so that it in effect functions as an adverb and to give it a negative connotation, as in 'to teach in a domineering way,' is contradicted by the fact that οὐδὲ does not function as a subordinating but as a coordinating conjunction. Neither the syntactical parallels in the New Testament nor the extrabiblical parallels lend support to the contention that the second term linked by οὐδὲ modifies the first term adverbially. And while 'teaching' and 'exercising authority' may well be perceived jointly in 1 Timothy 2:12, these concepts do not blend to the extent that they become one concept in which the two constituent elements are no longer distinguishable.

### c. We have consecutive and complementary infinitives.

None of the standard grammarians refer to 1Tim. 2:12 as an example of infinitives being used in an adverbial manner (to each other). The closest syntactical similarity seems to be the epexegetical infinitive (though none cite

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<sup>9</sup>Köstenberger, "A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. A. J. Köstenberger, T. R. Schreiner and H. S. Baldwin (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 90-91.

1Tim. 2:12 as an example).<sup>10</sup> In an epexegetical context, the infinitive ordinarily qualifies or clarifies either a noun/adjective (substantive) or verb.<sup>11</sup> Young seems to limit it to adjectives: "Infinitives also function adverbially when they explain or modify adjectives."<sup>12</sup> Modern proponents of the new translation have not argued that the verse contains an epexegetical infinitive (not that any could argue this, of course). But we note this to show that an epexegetical infinitive is one of two grammatical options left to them. Of the examples given in various grammar books, none give examples of epexegetical infinitives where two or more infinitives are present in a manner similar to 1Tim. 2:12.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Douglas Moo suggests that the proponents of the single activity position are appealing to Paul's use of 'hendiadys' which means that two words or ideas are used to convey a single idea. See D. Moo, "What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?: 1 Timothy 2:11-15," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. J. Piper and W. Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 187. Though very little attention is given to our particular concern, he nonetheless sides with the two activity position.

<sup>11</sup>D. B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 263. Hewett argues that epexegetical infinitives are in the categories called an 'indirect object' which is not particularly evident in 1 Tim. 2:12. See J. A. Hewett, *New Testament Greek: A Beginning and Intermediate Grammar* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 180. We will not enter into the 'debate' over the appositive use with nouns and epexegetical use with verbs (Moule, Hewett, and Porter, etc.).

<sup>12</sup>R. A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 172.

<sup>13</sup>For example, consult S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 196-197; J. A. Brooks and C. L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988),

On the other hand, C. F. D. Moule has observed "how thin the boundary wears here and there between exegetical (that is, explanatory and extensive) Infinitives and consecutive Infinitives..."<sup>14</sup> This important observation is true unless there are clear syntactical demands that favor one over the other (e.g. the presence of the coordinating conjunction).<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, Moule's observation is only relevant if we indeed did have an exegetical infinitive. Again, no one has dared to advance such a theory. Therefore the exegetical option cannot be utilized.

The other option is the general adverbial use of the infinitive. Since infinitives could legitimately be used adverbially and because the proponents of this new translation have used the second infinitive adverbially, let us see under what circumstances it would be permissible to do so. Young observes that adverbial uses of infinitives tend to modify the main verbs, usually in prepositional phrases.<sup>16</sup>

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142-143; W. D. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 106-107.

<sup>14</sup>C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (1959; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 127.

<sup>15</sup>Köstenberger's impressive study lists all the examples and parallels where οὐδε is linked to a second infinitive. None of the evidence from extrabiblical and biblical literature support the adverbial use. See Köstenberger, "A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Timothy 2:12," 91-102; the list is exhaustive. It is possible to translate it adverbially if οὐδε was not present to make sense of the infinitives; however, in this verse the two infinitives are separated by an οὐδε. The classic grammar by Smyth points out where one infinitive could be the subject of another when there are several infinitives in succession. However, his example of a series of infinitives are not separated by any particles, especially coordinating conjunctions. See H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 440.

<sup>16</sup>R. A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek*, 165.

Wallace lists the infinitives in 1 Tim. 2:12 as being complementary to the main verb ἐπιτρέπω.<sup>17</sup> Since ἐπιτρέπω is a 'helper' verb, we would expect an infinitive to complete its thought. This main verb must control the use of the other infinitives in the sentence. All the standard translations have utilized this principle. The only adverbial use permitted in this verse is making the infinitives complement the main verb. No grammarian has ever used the infinitive in 1 Timothy 2:12 as adverbial to the other infinitive. Therefore, there just does not seem to be any rationale for the new adverbial use of the second infinitive.

#### **d. The verse has a series of prohibitions.**

In 1 Timothy 2:12, we have three consecutive infinitives; the first two should serve as complementary infinitives to the main verb. As we noted, the newer interpretation somehow forces the second infinitive to act adverbially not to the main verb but to the first infinitive. But we must also notice that the infinitives have these conjunctions — "not...or... but" (οὐκ... οὐδε ... ἀλλ').<sup>18</sup> The existence of the three consecutive infinitives, the coordinating conjunction οὐδε and the strong adversative conjunction ('but', ἀλλ') clearly point to a *series* of commands and prohibitions. It is the simplest and clearest way of reading the verse. If we adopt the new interpretation, then the force of

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<sup>17</sup>D. B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 599.

<sup>18</sup>The first negative attached to the finite verb does not in any way affect the syntax. Mounce says, "...there does not seem to be any significance syntactically that the first infinitive precedes the negated finite verb." See W. D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, ed. B. M. Metzger, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 129.

those conjunctions is entirely lost. These interpreters functionally drop the οὐδε and then take the second infinitive as an adverb. We therefore end up losing the consecutive infinitives and a coordinating conjunction when we adopt this new interpretation and translation. There is no reason for such a translation. There are no contextual or syntactical clues to override the traditional rendering and interpretation.

These new interpreters have simply disregarded the coordinating conjunction to arrive at their own interpretation. There is nothing in the textual apparatus to suggest that οὐδε is not original. Neither textual criticism nor grammatical rules will permit them to do what they did. But we now have an interpretation that cannot be borne out grammatically or textually. Therefore, we submit that their interpretation cannot be supported from this verse.

#### **e. Historic commentators do not support the new interpretation.**

No one has historically interpreted this verse in this innovative way (as far as I can tell) until the present time. The standard elder commentators on the Greek text (1800s – early 1900s) never hinted at such an interpretation.<sup>19</sup> Alford, Bernard, Ellicott, Fairbairn, Lock (older ICC), Meyer, and White (EGT) never argued for such an interpretation nor did they offer it as an option. Many of these commentators were not friendly to evangelicalism and yet were competent Greek scholars. Either they were completely confused and all of

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<sup>19</sup>The most recent commentary on the Pastoral Epistles argues that the prohibition is dual. See Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 130: "It seems therefore that Paul is prohibiting two separate events: teaching and acting in authority... Paul does not want women to be in positions of authority in the church; teaching is one way in which authority is exercised in the church."

them missed this possibility entirely or, as we have suggested above, it is simply a modern invention devised to circumvent the plain and simple reading of the text.

The older and popular commentator John Albert Bengel (1687-1752) comes closest to the modern interpretation. He does seem to collapse the two verbs to convey a singular prohibition. But Bengel, in his much celebrated *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, gives a most interesting twist to this verse. He translates it as saying, "*To usurp authority – To use authority over the man, by teaching, by speaking, for example, in prayer. Over the man – Implying not merely a husband, but the whole human race.*"<sup>20</sup> He has taken διδάσκειν to be adverbial to ἀυθεντεῖν (modern interpreters, on the other hand, have taken ἀυθεντεῖν to be adverbial). As a result, Bengel does not suggest that our modern interpretation is an option; in fact, he argues (somewhat similar to Knight, see below) that the *activity of teaching* itself is an exercise of authority. The way a woman uses or usurps authority over men, according to Bengel, is "by teaching, by speaking." In other words, for Bengel, there is no such thing as non-authoritative teaching. He believes the very act of teaching is an exercise in authority. Though I like his suggestion because it is in keeping with the traditional interpretation, the syntax nonetheless emphasizes the first verb (διδάσκειν) and not the second (ἀυθεντεῖν).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>J. A. Bengel, *Bengel's Gnomon of the New Testament*, translated by Charles Lewis & Marvin Vincent, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Perkinpine & Higgins, 1861), 515.

<sup>21</sup>I am aware that word order is not the *most* important element in understanding Greek syntax because Greek is an inflected language. The word order, however, does serve some purpose in helping to clarify the emphasis and meaning.

Bengel at least gets at the gist of the prohibition though we believe his adverbial use is unwarranted.

The new interpretation cannot appeal to any historic precedent to advance their agenda. These elder commentators were extremely competent Greek scholars. Though we may not agree with many of their views, yet we all respect their skills. These scholars did not see our new interpretation as an option. I am not convinced that our modern scholars have advanced all that much in their ability to work with the Greek text and grammar (except in areas of verbal aspects and linguistic theories [word vs. concepts]). Though the elder commentators are far from being infallible guides yet we submit that if our modern interpretation was grammatically permissible, then they most likely would have noted it. They have not; the interpretation is a very recent creation. There is nothing to commend it.

#### **d. Paul calls for silence.**

How can a woman remain silent if she is teaching non-authoritatively? The phrase, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχία, means that the net effect of the prohibition must issue in silence (ἡσυχία). "Some have suggested that Paul is only ruling out teaching or exercise of authority apart from a man's oversight, or just a certain type of authoritative teaching. The insistence here on silence seems to rule out all these solutions."<sup>22</sup> The text does not teach that this silence could be broken if the woman were teaching non-authoritatively. Certainly if such an important qualification was in view, Paul would not have been so prohibitive (εἶναι is an imperatival infinitive)? The command

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<sup>22</sup>G. W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ed. I. H. Marshall and W. W. Gasque, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 142.

for silence does not allow women to break this silence by teaching men non-authoritatively nor by teaching men submissively.

Some have opined that a woman could indeed teach and break this silence in the church if she is teaching under the authority of the Session. This is quite ingenious. It is similar to the idea of Corban (Mk. 7:11-13); God's Word can be nullified under the guise of the Session's oversight. This invalidates the plain and simple reading of the text. The woman who teaches under the oversight and authority of the Session sins against God's Word; the elders have wickedly approved this.<sup>23</sup> The net result of such a position is that everybody can teach as long as the Session says so. Biblical guidelines are invalidated when the authority of the Session is invoked. We don't believe there is any other way of looking at it. We are not suggesting that these interpreters maintain this position (I certainly hope not) but their interpretation logically forces us to draw this conclusion.

We illustrate our point with the following scenario that we hope might shed more light on the issue. Let us suppose a new visitor (a young lady who is totally oblivious to our fine distinctions) attends a PCA church during its weekly Lord's Day worship service. She witnesses a woman "sharing" in the pulpit. The visitor greatly enjoys the warmth and charm of the woman speaking from the pulpit. The

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<sup>23</sup>This solution, however, has its own *ecclesiastical* problems. Technically, the Session as a whole has the oversight of the pulpit even when the Teaching Elder is teaching. When preaching, the male TE and the woman who is under the oversight and authority of the Session are virtually doing the same thing. There is no practical difference. If the new option is accurate and feasible, then it really doesn't matter who teaches at all. As long as the Session says OK, then the silence commanded in 1 Timothy could easily be overridden.

following week, she attends again and is very desirous of hearing the same woman. She, however, notices a zealous young man trying out his gifts (who just happens to be the pastor). She is unimpressed and wonders why the woman from the previous week was not speaking. She leaves the church for a few months and then returns to the same church. Again, the same woman she had enjoyed before is sharing from the pulpit. What can the visiting woman reasonably conclude from this? The visiting lady is unaware that the woman in the pulpit was only teaching or sharing under the authority of the Session; the female speaker was merely sharing and not authoritatively teaching. The visitor who loved to hear the female speaker will not make the kind of fine distinctions some are offering; the distinctions are lost on her.

The theoretical differences some interpretations have concocted mean nothing to this visitor. The visitor loves the non authoritative woman and wonders why she is not always preaching (or sharing under the Session's authority). It is akin to the traditional Roman Catholic distinction between *dulia* (hyperdulia) and *latria* — there is no real difference when it comes to practice. The Roman Catholic theologians argue that the people are merely honoring the saints (and hyper-honoring Mary) while they are worshipping God — but it certainly looks very much alike. We submit that the distinction between authoritative teaching and non-authoritative teaching falters both in theory and practice. The distinction appears to be more of an excuse than an argument.

**e. The activity and not the office is forbidden.**

Both *activities* of teaching and exercising authority are forbidden in this verse. The office is not in view (though no

doubt it is implied as a necessary consequence of the prohibition). Those who so narrowly define Paul's prohibition make this verse almost impossible to break from the pulpit. Are they suggesting that a women can only be silent as an officer?

There have been two sorts of detractors to the traditional understanding of the verse. One argues that the *office* is forbidden in this verse whereas the other argues that Paul forbids the *manner* in which a woman teaches (Marshall, "teaching in a manner which is heavy-handed and abuses authority"). Marshall concludes his lengthy assessment of this verse with this comment: "It is, therefore, more likely that the verb characterises the nature of the teaching rather than the role of the women in church leadership in general."<sup>24</sup> In other words, Marshall argues that Paul is prohibiting not authoritative teaching but heavy-handed authoritative teaching. He also suggests that the role of "church leadership" is not even being considered by Paul. Marshall essentially excludes interpretations advanced by those who argue that Paul only forbade the office to women. In summary, Marshall is saying that Paul prohibits abusive use of authority and not mere authoritative teaching. Marshall also is saying that Paul did not have in mind the office of teaching but rather "the nature of the teaching."

If one takes refuge in these creative interpretations, then one can qualify it to death. However, neither of the positions is explicitly addressed; nothing in the grammar hints at either of the two new options. The clearest and the simplest way of reading and translating the verse supplants both interpretations. The verse does not say what Marshall or others suggest. Paul's prohibition is more sweeping. Paul

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<sup>24</sup>Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 460.

forbids the very *activities* of teaching and exercising authority. "It is noteworthy, however, that Paul does not use 'office' terminology here (bishop/presbyter) but functional terminology (teach/exercise authority). It is thus the activity that he prohibits, not just the office (cf. again 1 Cor. 14:34, 35)."<sup>25</sup> There is no creative manipulation of words in this interpretation; it is the straight reading and translation of the text.

Some have specifically argued that Paul prohibits women from holding the office of an elder. Women, he says, are allowed to do everything non-ordained men are allowed to do. Women can even have teaching ministries, some argue. But the office itself is clearly not what Paul is explicitly prohibiting (as Marshall argues); Paul prohibits both activities of teaching and exercising authority. In a sense, the activity of exercising authority may point to the office while the activity of teaching may be something different.

Let us illustrate what we mean. Suppose the elders of the church recognized certain young men who have graduated from college as showing promising gifts. Under the oversight of their elders and after some extensive training, these young godly men are given a few opportunities to teach in Sunday School classes and in mid-week Bible Study settings (again, closely overseen by the elders of the church). The express purpose behind this is to test men's gifts. Should their gifts become somewhat evident, they would be encouraged to seek licensure. In our Presbytery, men pursuing licensure would have to submit an evaluated sermon to the committee. These candidates would be allowed to test their gifts of teaching while not exercising authority. Many other men may also be allowed to do the

same (under the Session's oversight). However, none of the women in the church would be permitted to do this precisely because they are forbidden from the *activity* of teaching men. Some have inappropriately argued something like, "Whatever a non-ruling elder male can do in the church, a woman can do." That is not true under the above scenario.

So, Knight's observation is important because many men have assumed that the office alone was prohibited. The text per se does not *explicitly* teach that nor can we conclude that Paul is *only* prohibiting women from becoming elders of the church. The prohibitions are more explicit and sweeping than that. Clearly, when Paul prohibits women from teaching and exercising authority, we must infer that women could not hold the office that practices those activities. But we must not equate the two. The latter may be included in the former but the latter is not equivalent to the former.

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<sup>25</sup>Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 142.