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I TIMOTHY 2:11-15: MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

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The contemporary debate over the role of women in Christian ministry has generated studies in a broad spectrum of disciplines, most of them discussing at some point the relevant NT passages. Sometimes these discussions are based upon adequate study of the crucial texts, but all too often a superficial and arbitrary exegesis is found which, not surprisingly, serves only to confirm conclusions which have been arrived at on other grounds. But, whether erudite or simplistic, these studies have at least one factor in common: a failure to agree on the conclusions to be drawn from the NT evidence. This disagreement is all the more serious when it is recognized that it exists even (perhaps one should say especially!) among scholars who hold a similar view of Scripture and hermeneutical procedure.

Interpretations of 1 Tim 2:11-15 exhibit this lack of consensus to a remarkable degree. Moreover, despite the fact that the text is one of the few which touches directly upon the question at issue, a systematic exegesis of the passage is difficult to find. Thus it is not inappropriate to attempt an interpretation of these important verses in order to illuminate their significance for the issue of women’s ministry.

As an organizing method, the study will be divided into two general stages. In the first, I will attempt to determine the “meaning” of the text; that which Paul sought to communicate to Timothy in the setting of First Century Ephesus. In the second stage, the crucial question of “significance” will be investigated: to what extent is Paul’s instruction applicable to the contemporary church? While these two questions are distinguishable, they must not be regarded as separate: the exegetical conclusions directly and importantly influence the question of normativeness.

I. The Meaning of 1 Timothy 2:11-15

The first part of 1 Timothy 2 focuses on the subject of prayer, almost certainly with reference to the conduct of the congregational worship service.¹ After expressing his desire that men (τοις ἀνδραῖς) pray “in every place” (v 8),² Paul turns to the women. The transition is made with the word ἑκατέρως,

¹ So most commentators.
² ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἀνδραῖς in v 8 probably has reference to the several house churches in Ephesus, although it may extend beyond that (“wherever Christians gather”). Cf C. Spicq, Les Epîtres Pastorales (EBib; 4th ed.; Paris: Gabalda, 1969) 1, 372.
which may suggest that Paul desires the women to pray "in like manner" to the men, or that, just as he wishes the men to pray (βασίλευσι...προσεύχονται), so he wishes the women to "adorn themselves" (βασίλευσι...κοσμεῖται ἑαυτᾶς). While the former cannot be definitely excluded,¹ the latter finds some support in the manner in which ἀδυνατίσεως is employed in the Pastoral epistles as a rather loose transitional word, linking together series of regulations.⁶ In either case, it is likely that the context of public worship is retained: in the assembly, women are to avoid ostentatious dress and should clothe themselves with modesty and sobriety (αὐσοφοροῦσαν; a virtue often praised in the Pastoral) and with good works.⁸ Further, inasmuch as v 11-15 seem to include a description of these "good works,"¹⁹ and the learning and teaching activities described there are obviously communal, it is almost certain that Paul's instructions in these verses must be taken as directed to this same context: the congregational worship service.¹⁰

The subject of verses 11-15 is γυνή, a word which can be translated either "wife" or "woman." It is argued that the former translation should be accepted here, since the qualification in v 15 is clearly limited to mothers and, it is claimed, Paul consistently relates wives to husbands, not women to men.¹¹ But it is not at all obvious that Paul confines his teaching to marital as opposed to sexual roles, and the context of the passage before us strongly supports the broader meaning. Leaving aside v 15 for the moment, which will be treated later and which is a problem however the present question is answered, we observe that vv 8-9 are clearly directed respectively to men and women, not husbands and wives; unless, indeed, Paul commands only husbands to pray and

³Walter Kaiser, "Paul, Women and the Church," Worldwide Challenge, (Sept., 1976) 10. In 1 Cor 11:5, the praying of women in the assembly is assumed, on which cf. infra.
⁴BAG, 907.
⁵Charles Ryrie's contention that Paul clearly limits praying in the assembly to men only in this passage cannot be sustained (The Place of Women in the Church [New York: MacMillan, 1958] 76).
⁷καταστάσεως involves general "deportment" as well as dress (BAG, 420; K. Rengstorf, "καταστάσεως," TDNT 7 [1971] 596).
⁹Face Speig (Epistles Pastorales, 379), the assumption need not indicate a transition to another "plan" or topic. Note 1 Tim 1:12, 15, 2:3.
only wives to adorn themselves modestly. Furthermore, the context to which vv 11-15 are directed makes it likely that believers are being addressed as worshippers, not as family members. Finally, one might have expected the article or perhaps a possessive pronoun before ἴδιοςσάχ in v 12 had Paul wanted to make clear that he was speaking of husband-wife relationships.

The command that the women learn is qualified by two ἄν phrases, expressing the manner in which the woman is to learn. ηπογραφή can denote either “silence” (cf. Acts 22:2) or “quietness” (2 Thess 3:12), but in a context having to do with teaching and learning, the former is more likely. Additional support for this translation might be found in the context if Paul intended the two prohibitions of v 12 to be counterparts of the two qualifications in v 11 (ἐν ηπογραφῇ = ἀδελφάλεγνυ, ἐν ἴδιοσσάχ = ἀδελφάδενκευ). In addition to the need for “silence” as women learn is the need for submissiveness. But submissiveness to whom or what? The several Pauline texts in which wives are commanded to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22; Col 3:18; Titus 2:5; perhaps 1 Cor 14:34), the focus of v 12 and the close parallel between 1 Tim 2:11-14 and 1 Cor 14:32-35 (silence in the church submission - OT) would suggest that ἴδιοσσάχ should be inferred as the object. On the other hand, the situation at Ephesus, in which false teachers were leading many astray (including some women; cf. 1 Tim 5:13 and 2 Tim 3:6-7), and in light of which there was great need for attentive and obedient learning, argues for a broader reference: women were to submit “to the constituted authority, i.e. the officials and regulations of the church.” Perhaps, however, we are not forced to choose between these alternatives. ἴπογραφή could very well have application both to the learning process, in which submission to “sound teaching” is commanded, and to the prohibitions of v 12, where submission to men is the issue. Again, support for this dual reference may be found in the structure of vv 11-12, which appears to be chiasmic:

A γυνὴ ἐν ἴδιοσσάχ
B μαθαίνετο
C ἐν πάγοι ἴπογραφή
B διδασκών δὲ γυναικὶ ὄθεν ἐπετρέπομεν, ἀδελφάδενκευ ἴδιοσσάχ
A ἄλλ᾽ εἴη αἱ ἴδιοσσάχ.

ἵπογραφή is then found at the focal point of the verses.

13Herman Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 462 n. 107.
14On the use of ἄν to indicate manner, sometimes called the adverbial usage, see BDF, para. 198.
15So BAG, 350; pace Kaiser, “Paul, Women,” 10. For a discussion of the term in Hellenistic philosophy, see Spicq, Epîtres Pastoraux, 389-390 note 4. The meanings “silence” and “quietness” or “rest” are found, with roughly the same frequency, in LXX, Josephus and Philo.
A mildly adversative δὲ introduces the corollary of v 11: If a woman is to learn in silence and submission, she is forbidden the contrary, to teach or to exercise authority over a man. Paul’s counsel is introduced with the verb εἰπώρρησα, which Paul elsewhere uses with God as the subject (1 Cor 16:7) and which thus can hardly be weakened to indicate a personal preference and no more.¹⁷ Nor does the present tense justify restricting the advice only to Paul’s day or to peculiar circumstances in a given period;¹⁸ the first person singular formulation renders the present tense necessary and can have almost a gnomic timeless force (cf. also 2:1 and 2:8). This, of course, does not prove that it does here, but any limitation will have to be inferred from the context and not on the basis of tense alone.

Two distinct, yet related, activities are prohibited women in this verse—both of which require elucidation. Teaching is ranked by Paul as one of the preeminent gifts given to the church (1 Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11; Rom 12:7); a gift which he himself possessed (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11) and which Timothy also had been granted and was not to neglect (1 Tim 4:11-16).¹⁹ While the evidence is not clear-cut, the teaching gift seems to have been restricted to definite individuals.²⁰ The teacher was above all a transmitter of the tradition about Christ (cf. Gal 1:12), which tradition was received by the churches and to which they must remain true (Rom 16:17; Eph 4:21; Col 2:7, 2 Thess 2:15).²¹ This latter emphasis is particularly strong in the Pastorals, where destructive and demonic teaching (διασκασίας δαίμονων—1 Tim 4:1) necessitated particular attention to “sound teaching” (ὁμοθυματικός διασκευή).²² The authority inherent in the teaching, and thus in the teacher, is indicated by the fact that the teaching ministry was restricted to particular individuals (the elder-overseer in the Pastorals [1 Tim 3:2, 5:17; Titus 1:9]) and by the combinations in which one finds the word: thus, Paul who was appointed a “herald, apostle and teacher of the nations” (1 Tim 2:7; cf. 2 Tim 1:11) “proclamations, admonishing and teaching” (Col 1:28), and Timothy is

¹⁷ Rightly Knight, Role Relationship, 31 n. 4; contra J. Massyngberde Ford, “Biblical Material Relevant to the Ordination of Women,” JES 10 (1973) 682; Grant R. Osborne, Hermeneutics and Women in the Church,” JETS 20 (1977) 347; Kaiser, “Paul, Women,” 11. It may be that a rabbinic formulism of prohibition is reproduced with this word (Spicq, Epitres Pastoraes, 379). Cf. 1 Cor 14:34, where the passive is used in a parallel formulation.

¹⁸ Pace Don Williams, The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church (Van Nuys, Calif.: BIM, 1977) 112.

¹⁹ The gift (χάρις) which had been given to Timothy is not specifically designated in 1 Tim 4:14, but in light of the conclusion of v 13 (διασκευή) and the command in v 16 (ἀγαθὸς σωτήριον καὶ ἀπατελών), teaching was almost certainly at least one component.

²⁰ Only 1 Cor 14:26 and Col 3:16 suggest otherwise. The former, however, should not be pressed to mean that everyone who gathered exercised the gift of teaching: “... it does mean that any of them might be expected to take part in the service.” (Leon Morris, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians [Tyndale New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958] 199). On the latter text, Greven is probably correct: “Vielmehr ist jeder zu seiner Gabe angemessen. In ihren Lehren lehrt ‘sich’ in ihren Ermahnenden ernährt ‘sich’ die Gemeinde zu Kolosse” (H. Greven, “Propheten, Lehrer, Vorsteher bei Paulus,” ZNW 44 (1952-53) 17).


encouraged to “command and teach” (1 Tim 4:11), to “teach and exhort” (1 Tim 6:2) and to “preach the Word . . . in teaching” (2 Tim 4:1). In sum, “teaching” according to Paul involves the careful transmission of the tradition concerning Jesus Christ and His significance and the authoritative proclamation of God’s will to believers in light of that tradition. This description corresponds closely to that activity designated in later Judaism by the absolute διδασκέω, and the corresponding Hebrew limád. According to Rengstorf, these words denote “the manner in which, by exposition of the Law as the sum of the revealed will of God, instruction is given for the ordering of the relationship between the individual and God on the one side, and the neighbor on the other, according to the divine will.”

With the word αὐθεντέω, denoting the second activity prohibited women, we come to a major κατὰ ἀριθμὸν interpretation. Translations of this Biblical Greek ἄρχω range from the simple “have authority” (NIV; NASB) to the more nuanced “dictate” (Moffat) to the remarkably dissimilar “engage in fertility practices.” This divergence is a factor of the obscurity of the word: it is rare before the third century and its cognates, while more numerous, do not present the lexicographer with a clear picture. The noun αὐθεντής is employed in the fifth-third centuries B.C. with the meaning “murderer,” a meaning preserved in Wis 12:6. An apparently later meaning is “author,” “perpetrator,” while later still αὐθεντής is used to mean “master.” The noun αὐθεντήσω and the adjective αὐθεντικός are attested beginning in the first century A.D., signifying, respectively, “authority” or “restriction” and “original” or “authoritative.” In Patristic Greek, the verb αὐθεντέω is widely used, with the sense “hold sovereign authority,” “act with authority,” “possess authority,” etc., and this is the meaning suggested for one of the two extant pre-Christian


24K. H. Rengstorf, “διδασκέω” TDNT 2 (1964) 137.

25In light of all this, it is difficult to understand how Hommes can assert that the function teaching in 1 Tim 2 is “very far removed” from the office of minister (“Let women be silent,” 12).


27Polybius, Hist. 22. 14. 2; Josephus, J. W. 2. 12. 5; Diodorus Siculus 16.61.

28Cf. BAG, 120. If Euripides, Suppl. 442 is not emended, the noun appears as early as the fifth century B.C. with this meaning (Cf. LSJ, 275; BAG, 120).

29Cf. LSJ, 275; BAG, 120. For the adjective see particularly P. Oxy. 260.20 (αὐθετικός χαρακτῆρας [“authentic deed”]) and II Clement 14:3 (τὸ αὐθεντικόν [“the reality”]).

occurrences, in the *Rhetoric* of Philodemus. The other pre-Christian occurrence comes in a papyrus letter dated 27 B.C., where ἀδειντῆσιν apparently means “self-assured, firm.” In the second century A.D. Ptolemy uses the verb to mean, clearly, “have authority over” or “dominate.” It is sometimes suggested that the verb is of vulgar origin because it is condemned by the lexicographer Moeris (as is the noun by Phrynichus). But such condemnation, coming from Atticists, proves only that the word was part of the vernacular.

While the evidence is not extensive, the information outlined above allows for the fairly certain conclusion that ἀδειντῆσιν in 1 Tim 2:12 must mean “have authority.” This is the meaning of the verb in one of the two pre-Christian occurrences, in the second century, and in the Church Fathers. Furthermore, whatever the etymology of the noun be, it is clear that its meaning in the Hellenistic period was most often “master, authority.” The connotation of sexual involvement, suggested by Kroeger, is nowhere attested in the Classical or Hellenistic period; her argument depends entirely upon later sources and on the dubious use of terms coordinate with the verb. Furthermore, while the nuance “usurped authority” or of arbitrary of dictatorial rule is often posited, there is nothing inherent in the word that suggests it; only a clear contextual feature would allow such a connotation.

Having sought to determine the significance of each of the prohibitions of v 12, it is now necessary to investigate their relationship with each other. We may begin by noting that, since Paul elsewhere encourages older women to teach younger women (Titus 2:3-4), his prohibition of teaching here must be in some way restricted. The focus on ἰδιωτικὴ in vv 11-12 and the parallel passage in 1 Cor 13:33b-34, where Paul forbids women from speaking because they are

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32 BAG, 120.
33 BOU IV 1208:37-38. Cf. Dibelius-Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles* 47. This papyrus letter and the Philodemus passage were unavailable to me.
34 Tetrabiblos 157: ἀ μνον ἐν τοι κράτισθαι μάφυ τὸν οὐκοδοσιον τῆς ψυχῆς λαθὼν καὶ ἀδειντῆς τὸν τε ἐκουσάν καὶ τῆς αὐλήσιον... (“If Saturn alone is ruler of the soul and dominates Mercury and the moon...”). Note particularly the parallel with οὐκοδοσία.
35 Moeris, (ed. J. Pierson) 58; Phrynichus 96.
38 W. Gunian Rutherford (*The New Phrynichus* [London: Macmillan, 1881] 201) thinks it probable that the meaning “master” for ἀδειντῆς came from one of the older dialects.
to be in submission, suggest that it is particularly the proper relationship
of
men and women with which Paul is concerned. If this is so, the second
prohibition can be regarded as the basis for the first: women are not to teach in
the assembly because such activity would constitute “wielding authority” over
men and, hence, violate the principle of submission.40 But while the second
prohibition explains and qualifies the first, it is necessary to maintain that two
separate prohibitions are given: the construction with ‘sērēס admits of no other
explanation.41 Thus, it is illegitimate to view v 12 as forbidding only “the kind
of teaching in which women dictate to men;” such a restriction of ‘sērēς
ignores the fact, as indicated earlier, that teaching by its nature involves
authority and limits the meaning of ‘sērēς without warrant.

Paul’s commands with respect to the woman’s role in the learning-teaching
activities of the assembly are given their rationale (γιαυδ) in vv 13-14. These
verses offer assertions about both the creation and the fall, but it is not clear
how they support the commands in vv 11-12. The relevance of these
statements was presumably evident to Paul and Timothy and it is our task to
define this relevance.

With obvious reference to the Genesis 2 creation account, Paul first of all
asserts, without further explanation, that man was “formed”42 first. Clearly,
his emphasis is on chronological priority (πρωτός... ἐδρά) and it may be that
he is suggesting, in accordance with the view popular among both Jews and
Greeks, that priority in time necessarily involves superiority.43 But if, as seems
necessary in a statement so brief, elucidation of Paul’s intention is sought from
parallel texts, a different picture emerges. In 1 Cor 11:8-9, Paul substantiating
his claim that “woman is the glory of man” (v 7) argues: “for man did not
come from (ἐκ) woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for
woman but woman for man.” These two assertions encompass both derivation
and subordination; according to Genesis 2, woman was made by God from
man’s rib, and she was to be a “helper corresponding to him.”44 If this line of
reasoning is assumed to lie behind Paul’s statement in v 13, his point would
appear to be that the role of women in the worship service should be in accord
with the subordinate, helping role envisaged for them in creation.

40Spicq, Epîtres Pastorales 379-380; Robert L. Saucy, “The Negative Case Against the
Ordination of Woman,” Perspectives on Evangelical Theology: Papers from the Thirtieth
Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ed. K. S. Kantzer and S. N.
Gundry; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 278. Spicq (Epîtres Pastorales, 380) and J. N. D.
an additional reference to the Genesis context, specifically to 3:16: “he will rule over
(LXX κυριεύεται) you,” but there is little to suggest that this context is already in the
Apostle’s mind.

41While it is tempting to suggest a kind of hendiadys (διδασκαλίη... αὐτή
αὐτός ενερεῖν = “to teach authoritatively”), an examination of Paul’s use of αὐτή in similar
constructions shows that two separate provisions are always envisaged.

42πρωτός, used also in Gen 2:7-8, 2:15 and 2:19, establishes a verbal link between 1
Tim 2:13 and the second creation account.

43Spicq, Epîtres Pastorales 380; cf. Str-B 3.256,626.

44Knight, Role Relationship 40-41.
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Whereas it is possible to suggest a plausible interpretation of v 13 by means of parallel texts, such a recourse is not open to us in v 14. The assertion that Eve alone was “deceived” finds no parallel in the NT; nor is the fall elsewhere introduced into a discussion of sexual roles. The situation is different in contemporary Judaism: it became popular to lay virtually sole blame for human sin and death on Eve’s shoulders, as the well-known statement in Sirach demonstrates: “Women is the origin of sin, and it is through her that we all die” (25:24). But in light of Paul’s very clear assertions about Adam’s responsibility for sin and death in Romans 5 and elsewhere, it is most unlikely that he is attempting to exempt man from blame and to picture Eve as the sole culprit.

A second view of v 14 holds that Paul is making reference to the fact that it was the woman, according to Genesis 3, who convinced man to eat the forbidden fruit, so that, in Chrysostom’s words, “The woman taught once, and ruined all.” But if Paul had meant this, he could hardly have chosen a less obvious way of saying it; the use of the verb ἄναρτω clearly suggests that the focus is upon Eve’s relationship to the serpent, not on her influence over Adam. Thirdly, others suppose that the domination of man over woman, part of the judgment pronounced upon the woman in Gen 3:16, is evoked by Paul. While this idea probably cannot be excluded, again it must be asked whether such a view does justice to the emphasis upon deception; the Gen 3 narrative nowhere attributes the judgment upon the woman to her being deceived.

What does seem clear is that Paul pays close attention to the actual wording of Genesis 3, where he would note that only the woman confesses to have been deceived (Gen 3:13; LXX – ἄναρτω): it is this deception upon which he focuses. An acceptable interpretation of this verse must do justice to this fact, and to the emphasis on the contrast at this point between Adam and Eve; moreover, it must show how the assertion about the historical experience of

45 ἄναρτω may have a perfective sense, “completely deceived” (Spicer, Epitres Pastoralis 381); cf. Alfred Plummer on 2 Cor 11:3 (A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians [ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 1915] 295), but this is not certain since Hellenistic Greek is known for the blunting of such emphases. (Whyte, “The First and Second Epistles to Timothy,” 109).


Several of the Church Fathers express a similar view (e.g. Tertullian, de Cult. Fem., I. 1; Augustine, Civ Deo, XIV 11).

47Hom. IX on 1 Tim 2:11-14, NPNF, XIII. 436.

48 Kelly, Pastoral Epistles 68. Fritz Zerbst views v 14 as a counter to an argument that the fall obliterated created distinctions (The Office of Women in the Church [St. Louis: Concordia, 1955] 54). But it is unlikely that such a view would have had any prominence.

Eve can lend support for the instructions to Christian women in general in vv 11-12. If these requirements are to be met, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Paul cites Eve’s failure as exemplary and perhaps causative of the nature of women in general and that this susceptibility to deception bars them from engaging in public teaching. 50 In addition to the obvious need to link v 14 to its context, this general application finds support in the use of ἡ γυνή, “the woman,” which may imply a broader reference 51 and in the perfect participle γινόμενε, which suggest the continuing effects of the deception. 52 While ambiguities remain, it is arguable that only this interpretation adequately accounts for the data given above: the stress on Eve’s deception, the indication of the lasting effects of the action, and the fact that v 14 functions as support for the teaching in vv 11-12. It should be noted that, in attributing blame to the woman here, Paul in no way seeks to exonerate man and obviate his responsibility for sin: he concentrates upon the woman because it is her role which is being discussed. Elsewhere, Adam comes in for severe criticism, indeed more severe perhaps than Eve’s: to disobey (Rom 5:19), is less excusable than to be deceived. 53

While less explicit, it may be that Paul intends to make a further point by juxtaposing v 13 and v 14: the woman, created to be man’s helper and subordinate to him (Genesis 2), acts independently when confronted with temptation, to the downfall of both (Genesis 3). It may be that Paul views the teaching/ruling activity of women in the church as just such an improper reversal of intended roles. 54

In vv 13-14, then, Paul substantiates his teaching in vv 11-12 by arguing that the created order establishes a relationship of subordination of woman to man, which order, if bypassed, leads to disaster, 55 and by suggesting that there are some activities for which women are by nature not suited. That Paul’s argument from Genesis supports his prohibition of particular functions as well as the general need for submission 56 is made clear by the nature of his

51The article with γυνή is almost certainly anaphoric, yet the shift from the proper name earlier in the verse implies a broadened reference. (Whyte, “The First and Second Epistles to Timothy,” 109).
52ἀπεδόθη ἐπίσκοποι entrance into a given situation, the perfect stressing “les effects permanents de l’acte initial.” (Spicq, Épîtres Pastorales 381-382).
53Contrast Milton: “Against his better judgment, not deceived, but fondly overcome with female charms.” (Paradise Lost X. 998).
54Fairbairn, Pastoral Epistles 129; Peter Brunner, The Ministry and the Ministry of Women (Contemporary Theology Series; St. Louis: Concordia, 1971) 27-28; Knight, Role Relationship 31. For the sake of completeness, the view of Scanzoni and Hardesty should be mentioned. They argue that the “primary concern here is not so much the role of women as the possibility of false teaching,” and that Paul warns all his readers to avoid becoming deceived as Eve was. (All We’re Meant to Be 70-71, 37). Such an interpretation does violence both to the contrast in v 14 (not Adam, but Eve) and to the context.
argument in v 14: the verse simply does not make sense as a substantiation of the need for submission only.

Virtually all commentaries understand v 15 as a qualification added to lessen the impact of vv 13-14, but there is little argument as to what precisely this qualification is. The following views can be found:

1) Despite the judgment pronounced upon woman (Gen 3:16), Christian women will be safely preserved through the experience of childbirth.57

2) Christian women will experience salvation even though they must bear children (Gen 3:16).58

3) By observing her proper role (τεκνογονία) and maintaining Christian virtues, the woman will be kept from the error just mentioned (lording it over the husband and being deceived).59

4) Christian women are saved through good works, figuratively represented by τεκνογονία.60

5) Despite the disastrous results of Eve’s deception, Christian women will be saved through the childbirth, the coming of the Messiah, just as was promised in the protovangelium (Gen 3:15).61

6) It is not through active teaching and ruling activities that Christian women will be saved, but through faithfulness to their proper role, exemplified in motherhood.62

Options two, three and four can be quickly eliminated because they fail to do justice to the sense of the words: two gives an unnatural meaning to διὰ; three to σωζω and four to τεκνογονία. Option one can probably be excluded also; σωζω consistently indicates salvation from sin in Paul,63 and the conditional clause is hard to explain in this reading. It is more difficult to decide between five and six. In favor of the former is the context of Genesis 3, clearly in Paul’s mind in v 14, the natural meaning given σωζω and διὰ and the article with τεκνογονία. Despite this, however, option six should probably be preferred. While τεκνογονία could possibly denote the birth of Christ, it is certainly not the most natural explanation,64 and Paul uses the verbal form of this word in 1 Tim 5:14 to mean the rearing of children. The article need not be specifying, but may be generic.65

Positively, the view that regards v 15 as a specification of the role through

57Moffatt’s translation: “get safely through childbirth;” cf. also NASB: “Preserved through the bearing of children;” Moule, Idiom Book 56.
58Scott, Pastoral Epistles 28.
60A view mentioned by Spicq (Epîtres Pastorales 383).
61Liddon, First Timothy 20; Ellicott, Pastoral Epistles 38-39; Lock, Pastoral Epistles 33; Williams, Apostle Paul 113. Pace Williams, it is impossible to view v 15 as “erasing” the priority of Adam in creation.
62Robert Falconer, “1 Timothy 2:14,15. Interpretative Notes,” JBL 66 (1941) 376-378; Huther, Timothy and Titus 133; Kelly, Pastoral Epistles 69; Spicq, Epîtres Pastorales 382-83; Ridderbos, Paul 309 n. 140.
63Cf. BAG 805-806; only 2 Tim 4:18 is questionable.
64As Guthrie says, “… if that were the writer’s interpretation, he could hardly have chosen a more obscure or ambiguous way of saying it” (Pastoral Epistles 78).
65Guthrie, Pastoral Epistles 77.
which women experience salvation admirably suits the context of vv 9-14, where the issue is obviously the proper sphere of women’s activities. Moreover, such an interpretation finds support in the larger context, for a frequently recurring motif in the Pastoral Epistles is the need for Christian women to devote themselves to the care of homes and the raising of children (1 Tim 5:9-10, 5:14; Titus 3:4-5). Such advice was clearly needed as an antidote to the false teachers, who counseled abstention from marriage (1 Tim 4:3) and generally, it seems, sought to denigrate those virtues and activities which Paul regarded as fitting for Christian women.66

Finally, this view satisfies the linguistic evidence better than any other. σωτηρία retains its natural Pauline sense, deliverance from sin and its condemning power, perhaps especially here in the ultimate, eschatological sense. διά will indicate not the ultimate cause, but the efficient cause: τεκνογονία is one of those “good works” (v 10) through which the Christian woman preserves her place in the salvific scheme.67 in contrast to those women who have hearkened to the false teaching, and who have “turned away to follow Satan” (1 Tim 5:13). Similarly, Paul admonishes Timothy in 4:16 to watch his life and doctrine closely and to persevere in them, “because if you do, you will save (σώθησαι) both yourself and your hearers.”

A serious difficulty with this view still has to be faced, however. Does v 15 imply that women experience ultimate salvation only insofar as they beget children? Clearly such a conclusion is incompatible with clear Pauline teaching,68 but an explanation can be found which blunts the force of this objection. τεκνογονία, which may indicate child-bearing as well as child-rearing,69 may represent, by synecdoche, the general scope of activities in which Christian women should be involved.70 That this is a legitimate interpretation is suggested by the text in 1 Tim 5:14, in which Paul expresses his wish that young women “marry” and “beget children” (τεκνογονοῦσα) where, again, it can hardly be the case that Paul wants all young women to marry. Finally, to remove any possibility of an ex opere operato understanding, Paul adds the

66Falconer, “1 Timothy 2:14,15” 376-378. And note b Ber. 17a: “Whereby do women earn merit? By making their children go to the synagogue to learn Scripture. . . .”


68Most who hold the view outlined above interpret διά as denoting “attendant circumstances” (Falconer, “1 Timothy 2:14,15,” 376; Spicq, Épîtres Pastorales 383). Ridderbos translates: “. . . the way in which this salvation takes place.” [Paul, 309 n. 140]. But the connection between σωτηρία and τεκνογονία would appear to be closer than this; “good works,” after all, are not a means of salvation, but are essential components of the continued experience of salvation.

69Cf., e.g., 1 Tim 5:3-10; 1 Cor 7:8-9, 26-27, 34-35.

70That Christian women are the subject of μετουσίως, rather than their children (Joachim Jeremias, Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus [NTD; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968] 19) or husbands and wives (Whyte, “The First and Second Epistles to Timothy,” 110) seems clear from the context and represents a natural shift from singular to plural, perhaps thereby stressing the paraletic quality of the condition. (Spicq, Épîtres Pastorales 383; Lock, Pastoral Epistles 33).
condition that women must also maintain essential Christian virtues; legitimate activities, by themselves, are insufficient.

Thus, v 15 ends on the note with which the passage has begun in v 9: the need for ςοφρονίσθη. This quality is advanced by Paul as a chief virtue of Christian women, in contrast both to the example of some who have been led astray by false teachers and to the mother of the human race:

Εὰν, παρά ταυτόν και τοῦ δικαίου τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ τός καὶ τός τοῦ Χριστοῦ, οὐκ ἐγένετο ταύτης δικαιοσύνης, ἀλλὰ τίμιαν, ὁ δικαστὴς ἔδωκεν τοῦ τούτῳ τῆς οἰκογενείας τῆς κυκλώσεως τῆς καθήκονσας τῆς κοινωνίας.

In this respect, vv 11-12 can be viewed as an example of the kind of propriety expected of Christian women in the context of the worship service. Their learning in silence and submission and declining to take the initiative in teaching and wielding authority is a good work which is in accordance with the relationship of man and woman as established in creation and with the nature of woman as exhibited in the fall. Maintaining their proper role will also, finally, insure their participation in the eschatological salvation.

II. The Significance of 1 Timothy 2:11-15

It must now be asked to what extent Paul’s instructions to Timothy can be made normative for the conduct of Christian worship in other eras. This question, the hermeneutical one, cannot be ignored in view of the fact that every passage of Scripture is written against a particular and to some extent unique cultural and historical background.72 On the other hand, however, it is not legitimate to limit the scope of 1 Tim 2:11-15 simply by mentioning cultural or historical factors which could have been operative; the presence of such a factor must be adequately demonstrated. While the passage we are considering seems at first sight to surmount cultural barriers with appeals to creation and the fall, other factors which might serve to limit the scope of Paul’s instructions must be considered. We will now attempt to enumerate and evaluate such limiting factors as have been suggested.

Perhaps the most significant of such circumstances would be teaching in the NT that contradicts the evident meaning of 1 Tim 2:11-15.73 Scripture must always be read in the light of Scripture, and if such contradictory evidence were to be found, we would have to question the accuracy of our exegesis or assume that Paul’s advice to Timothy was limited to a particular time and place.

Two crucial texts are found in Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians: 11:2-16 and 14:33-34. The former passage makes mention of women who

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71Spicq, Epîtres Pastorales 384.
73John Reumann claims that this is the “acid test” for determining whether 1 Tim 2 forbade the teaching office to women (“What in Scripture Speaks to the Ordination of Women?”; CIT 44 [1973] 22).
"pray and prophesy" (v 5) while the latter forbids women to speak in the assembly. If 1 Cor 14:33-36 is not omitted as a later interpolation, for which there is insufficient evidence, 74 one must seek to reconcile Paul's prohibitions in chap. 14 with his approval in chap. 11. Indeed, it has been argued that Paul does not give approval to women speaking in the assembly in chap. 11, but merely cites current practice. 75 But it is hard to believe that Paul would have given such extensive instructions for a practice of which he did not approve. Others suggest that chap. 11 involves a private gathering and chap. 14 a public meeting, 76 but it is best to view the different instructions as directed to different activities. In 1 Cor 14:29-33a, Paul encourages worshippers to evaluate the messages of the prophets, and in vv 33b ff. it is probably this questioning of the validity of the prophetic word that is forbidden women. Such an activity would, it seems, have constituted a transgression of the commandment that the woman should be submissive (v 34b - Δικαστήριον ἑσδέσθαι) 77 which commandment finds support in "the law." Because no OT text prohibits women from speaking, it has sometimes been argued that Paul refers here to a rabbinic commandment as to current social practice, 78 but such a meaning for νόμος is unexamined in Paul, 79 and it is overlooked that Paul uses the Law to justify not the silence, but the submission. While Gen 3:15 is usually thought to be the passage which Paul has in mind, Feuillet, noting the parallel in 1 Corinthians 11, makes a very strong case for Genesis 2:80

If Paul, then, is most concerned with the need for women to maintain submissive behavior, his permission to "pray and prophecy" might suggest that such activities do not constitute a violation of that principle. That such is indeed the case can be shown when the relation between prophesying and


75For the view that these verses have been interpolated, perhaps in dependence on 1 Tim 2:12-14, see Johannes Leopold, Die Frau in der antiken Welt und im Christentum (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1954) 190-191; C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (NTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 331-333 (weakly). Wm. O. Walker holds to the view that 1 Cor 11:12-16 is an interpolation ("1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and Paul's views regarding women," JBL 94 (1975) 94-110).


79While Mosaic Law is not always meant by Paul where he uses νόμος (cf. Rom 7:21) nor even δικαίωμα (Rom 8:2), the clear contextual basis must be found for any other meaning.

80"La Dignitė," 164-166.
teaching is discerned.

"Teaching," as we have seen, involves the careful transmission of the Christian tradition and the authoritative proclamation of God's will, based on that tradition and study of the Scriptures. While no clear and fast demarcation line can be drawn, "prophecy," in distinction to teaching, appears to involve a more directly revelatory experience and consequently involves to a lesser degree the preparation and consciousness of the individual. Friedrich succinctly states this difference:

"Whereas teachers expound Scripture, cherish the tradition about Jesus and explain the fundamentals of the catechism, the prophets, not bound by Scripture or tradition, speak to the congregation on the basis of revelations."81 Paul's teaching to the Church at Corinth thus offers no contradiction to his advice to Timothy in Ephesus: women are allowed to pray and prophesy, but not to participate in activities, such as teaching and the questioning of prophets, which would place them in a position of authority over men.82

A different kind of contradiction is found by those who employ "indirect" NT evidence as a means of demonstrating the important role played by women in the early church.83 Margaret Howe asserts: "The overwhelming impression communicated by the Pauline writings is that the Pauline communities affirmed the leadership role of women as being both theologically viable and practically effective."84 And, indeed, these texts must not be overlooked. Jesus' attitude to and involvement with women represented a revolutionary shift from the tradition of Jewish society, and there is evidence that this new attitude was maintained in the early church. Philip's seven daughters have the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9); Priscilla, with her husband, "explains the way to God" to Apollos (Acts 18:26). Paul himself refers to women as "working hard in the Lord" (Rom 16:6, 12); and as his "co-laborers" (Rom 16:3; Phil 4:2-3); and (perhaps) assumes that they will be appointed as deacons (1 Tim 3:11). Phoebe is certainly commended as a διάκονος who has a prominent position in


In light of this, it is difficult to understand how it can be asserted that 1 Corinthians 11 permits women to teach (pace C. E. Cmilang, Jr., "Women Ministers in the New Testament Church?" JETS 17 [1976] 213).


Other culturally-limiting factors, whether it be involvement with idolatry (M. E. Thrall, The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood: A Study of the Biblical Evidence [Studies in Ministry and Worship; London: SCM, 1958] 75-76) or the possible impact on unbelievers and proselytes cannot be clearly established. Nor can λαλεῖν mean "idle chatter" (pace Scanzoni-Hardesty, All We're Meant to Be 68-69) in light of the usage of the term in this chapter.


84 E. Margaret Howe, "The Positive Case for the Ordination of Women," Perspective on Evangelical Theology 216; cf. also Scanzoni-Hardesty, All We're Meant to Be 61; Cmilang, "Women Ministers," 209-215; Osborne, "Hermeneutics," 346.
the church at Cenchreae (Rom 16:1-2); in the same chapter (16:7), there may be a reference to a female apostle.

While these references certainly demonstrate that women fulfilled important ministries in the Apostolic church, the claims made on the basis of them by Howe and others are far too great. As a matter of fact, none of the texts clearly portrays a woman in the role of a leader or teacher of the church. Jesus, in a contrast to his Jewish culture, certainly accorded a status to women equal with men, but he stopped short of appointing them to any position of authority. That Paul recognized the significant ministry of a number of women can hardly allow conclusions as to the type of ministry in which they were involved. Priscilla's work with Apollos was clearly a matter of private instruction, carried out in the home of her and her husband, and it should be noted that διάκωμος is not used to describe her work. Phoebe, whether she was an official "deacon" or not,85 was probably involved in lending financial or legal support to indigent believers, rather than leading the church.86 If Ιουνία in Rom 16:7 is from the name Junia, a female apostle may be attested, but it is perhaps more likely that Ιουνία is a shortened form of Judianus, a masculine name.87 Blum exactly describes the situation as determined by these "indirect" references:

The examination of all the references in the Pauline Epistles and in Acts therefore shows that women definitely played an active part in the life of the community, without, however, exercising a missionary or teaching office of any kind. Women, whether in official or quasi-official positions, are only found as διάκωμοι.88 Thus the NT evidence presents no conflict with the exegetical conclusions.

85It is debated whether διάκωμος has a technical sense in Rom 16:1.
86προατή (Fem. προατής in 16:2) was "used, like the Latin patronus for the legal representative of the foreigner" (William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans [5th ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1903] 417; cf. Matthew Black, Romans [NCB: London: Oliphants, 1973] 170). It is difficult to give προατής the sense of "presiding" here because Paul himself is one of the objects of this activity (John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968] 227 n. 1).
87Otto Michel, Der Brief an die Römer (Meyer; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 379; Sanday-Headlam, Romans, 442-23 (who note that a number of abbreviated names are found in Romans 16). It is possible, if Ιουνία is feminine, that Andronicus' wife is meant (M. J. Lagrange, Saint Paul Epître aux Romains [EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1916] 365).

It is hard to understand how scholars can be accused of "bias" in these cases as does, e.g. Howe ("Positive Case," 269-270), when there is legitimate question about the proper translation.


It is worth mentioning that the practice of the early church is in close conformity with this evidence (Jean Daniels, The Ministry of Women in the Early Church [London: Faith, 1968] 7-31; R. Gryson, The Ministry of Women in the Early Church (Collegeville, Minn.: Lit. Press, 1976) 112. Zerbst maintains that it has only been in situations where there has been an over-emphasis on the eschatological and charismatic that such practice has varied (Office of Women, 100).
reached in our study of 1 Timothy 2; indeed, a view remarkably similar to that maintained in this passage has been everywhere found.89

A second approach which restricts Paul’s teaching in 1 Timothy 2 to a limited situation begins with an alleged inconsistency observable in Paul’s attitude toward women. Arguing that Paul’s essential attitude is found in Gal 3:28 (“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”), exponents of this approach argue either that Paul restricted women’s sphere of activities elsewhere only for local, cultural reasons90 or that he failed to carry through the implications of this insight consistently.91 Two primary criticisms can be levelled against this approach.

First, the picture presented to us of Paul, “the man in conflict,” initiating a veritable revolution in sexual relationships at one point and lapsing back into restrictive “Judaistic” attitudes at another, is hardly believable. That Paul did, in keeping with Jesus’ attitude and teaching, move far beyond the teaching of Judaism with respect to women’s role in the religious community, is clear. In contrast to the synagogue, where women were, perhaps, seated in a separate location,92 and were not allowed to take an active part in the service,93 Paul gave women the right to pray and prophesy (1 Cor 11:5). Paul likewise encouraged women to learn (1 Tim 2:11), in violation of the Talmudic advice: “May the words of the Torah be burned, they should not be handed over to

89 Two more minor difficulties, not alluded to in the text, should be mentioned. It is asserted that the NT attitude toward women should be viewed as comparable to the view on slavery: deeper insight should cause a change in Christian perception. But as Waltke points out, “Paul never grounded his instructions concerning the behavioral relationship of master and slave to the abiding order of Creation.” (“1 Corinthians 11:2-16: An Interpretation.” B&H: 135 [1978] 56).

90 The other objection is that if women are not to teach, they are also to wear veils since the arguments adduced for both are the same (which is Waltke’s conclusion: “1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” 46-57; Meier, “On the Veil of Hermeneutics,” 224). But there is a fundamental distinction between the veil and teaching: the former by nature represents a transitory form of dress; the latter is an activity grounded in Scripture and at the heart of the continuing life of the Christian church.


women."94 With respect to 1 Tim 2:11-15, the point is this: Is it likely that Paul, within the space of a few words, would both decisively transcend his Jewish background by encouraging women to learn, and then fall prey to its clutches again, by forbidding them to teach? Certainly Paul said a number of things about women that can be paralleled in Jewish teaching, but such statements can be regarded as sub-Christian only if a) all opinions held by Jews are sub-Christian; or b) Paul can be shown to be in conflict with his own teaching. Could it not be that the so-called conflict in Paul is in reality a conflict only in the mind of modern man?95 Such a suggestion leads us back to Gal 3:28, which must now be considered with respect to our second objection.

It has become popular to view Gal 3:28 as an expression of the most basic and authentic Pauline attitude toward women and to interpret it as establishing an equality between man and woman that annuls any gender-based distinctions within the church. Three objections to this view may be offered. First, Paul in this text is making an assertion about the equality of all people before God, probably with a view to the Jewish prayer in which the man expresses his thanks to God that he had not been created a woman, a slave, or a Gentile.96 Although it is frequently pointed out, it must be reiterated again: equality in status before God does not require the abolition of all hierarchical relationships.97 Secondly, then, it is false to view Gal 3:28 as the central Pauline text on women, since that is not the basic topic.98 Thirdly, it is methodologically objectionable to exalt one text to programatic status and dismiss or interpret in a forced manner all others. Much more acceptable is the approach which seeks to allow each text to speak and then determine where assimilation into a consistent outlook is possible. In this case it is. In essence and in terms of means and ability in approaching God all are equal; in relationships with one another, distinctions, sometimes involving submission and obedience, are maintained. In this light, the frequently noted parallel to the Trinity is apt: Jesus, though one with the Father, also does all that His father commands him.

A third factor which is said to limit the applicability of 1 Tim 2:11-15 is Paul's use of the Genesis narratives. Thus, it has become customary to fault the Apostle's interpretation of the creation accounts and to reject his conclusions

98 Saucy, "Negative Case," 281-284.
for this reason. Representative is the assertion of the Catholic Biblical
Association of America’s Task Force on the Role of Women in Early
Christianity: “The presuppositions of Paul’s patriarchal culture have influenced
his interpretation of Genesis.”99 Such a conclusion is unacceptable to those
who, like myself, would maintain the inerrancy of Scripture, and it must be
noted that this is precisely what is involved: Scripture errs if any part presents
false teaching through faulty exegesis and argumentation.100 But, to assert the
position is not to justify it and it must be asked whether Paul’s understanding
of the Genesis passages can be justified.

While the majority of modern commentators deny the presence of any
subordinationism in the second creation narrative and rightly criticize some of
the excesses found in older works,101 there are two points at which some
degree of subordination seems to be implied. The first is found in the purpose
for which woman is created, to be a “helper corresponding to man” (אֶזֶר
קְנֵגְדוֹן Gen 2:18). The fundamental correspondence between man and
woman, in contrast to man and the beasts, is clearly affirmed (2:23),102 but this
“likeness” in no way diminishes the fact that woman is created as a
“helper.” Nor does the fact that אֶזֶר is commonly used of God in the OT
necessarily remove the sense of subordination in Genesis 2.103 For when God
is portrayed as the “helper” of his people, it is a manifestation of His grace.
Once again, it is crucial that the distinction between essence and relationship
be maintained: essentially, of course, God is not inferior to man nor is woman
to man, but in the sphere of relationship (God-man at certain points; female-
male at every point), a sustaining, helping role can exist which has as its
purpose the welfare of the other. The man’s “naming” of the woman is the
second point at which some degree of subordination can be discerned. In
Hebrew culture, to name something is to express its fundamental characteris-
tics,104 but also generally implies the authority of the one giving the
name.105 While it is asserted that no sense of authority can be inferred in the
“naming” activity in Gen 2:23,106 the nihpal imperfect form of גָּאַה suggests

cf. also Karen W. Hoover, “Creative Tension in 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” Brethren Life and
Thought 22 (1977) 163-165; van der Meer, Women Priests 29; Anthony Tyrrell Hanson,
The Pastoral Letters (The Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: University Press,
1966) 38; Jewett, Male and Female 119-125.


Tavard, Women in Christian Tradition 7-8; Marie de Merode, “Une aide qui lui corresponde’” L’exégèse de Gen 2, 18-24 dans les écrits de l’Ancien Testament, du
judaisme et du Nouveau Testament,” RTL 8 (1977) 329-338; Swidler, Women in Judaism
25-27; Claus Westermann, Genesis (BKAT; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen, 1966- )
311-316; Ernst Haag, Der Mensch am Anfang: Die alttestamentliche Paradiesvorstellung
nach Gen 2-3 (Trierer Theologische Studien 24; Trier: Paulinus, 1970) 176-77; Hans

102Haag, Der Mensch am Anfang 176-177; Treible, “Depatriarchalizing,” 36.

103 Pace Treible, “Depatriarchalizing,” 36; Scanzoni-Hardesty, All We’re Meant to Be 26.


105 V. Cassuto asserts: “The naming of something or someone is a token of lordship” (A

106 Treible, “Depatriarchalizing,” 38; Haag, Der Mensch am Anfang 47.
otherwise: it is employed most often in prophetic speech, where the destiny or character of a person or thing is to be characterized in the name. So, for instance, Gen 17:5: “No longer shall you be named Abram,” and Isaiah 56:7: “My house shall be called a house of prayer...”.\(^{107}\) The element of authority inherent in such semi-imperative predictions is clear. Adam, ish, names Eve, isha, and expresses thereby both her essential equality with him and his right to predict determinately her character.\(^ {108}\)

In addition to an alleged incorrect understanding of Genesis 2, Paul has been accused of misusing the creation accounts by employing Genesis 2, where female subordination might be implied, in isolation from Genesis 1, which affirms the full equality of the sexes.\(^ {109}\) However, Genesis 2 is certainly to be understood as an expansion of the brief account of Genesis 1, the second narrative focusing particularly on the relationship between man and woman.\(^ {110}\) Thus the second account, which is more specific on the matter of relationship, is more important for that question and is naturally employed when that is the subject of discussion.

A fourth attempt to deny the continuing validity of the teaching prohibition in 1 Timothy 2 focuses upon the “new creature” situation in the redemptive economy. According to this view, the original creation situation (Genesis 1 or Genesis 1-2), in distinction from the post-lapsarian age (Genesis 3 or Genesis 2-3) is held to be re-established, at least potentially, in the church.\(^ {111}\) But such a view must overlook the fact that Paul appeals to creation, as well as to the fall, for substantiation of women’s subordination; according to him, there exists in this point a “harmony between the order of creation and the order of redemption.”\(^ {112}\) Furthermore, the assumption that in the redemptive economy sin is overcome to the extent that hierarchal patterns are no longer necessary, lacks exegetical support and is theologically questionable.\(^ {113}\)

A number of cultural circumstances which may prevent a direct appropriation of Paul’s teaching in 1 Timothy 2 are linked to the status of women in the ancient world. We have already sketched and rejected the view

\(^{107}\)Of the thirty occurrences of the niphil imperfect of *qā‘* in the Heb. Bible, eighteen clearly possess this connotation. The others are not really parallel to the Gen 2:23 text.

\(^{108}\)Peillott, “La Dignité,” 168; Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977) 75; Alan Richardson, *Genesis I-XI: Introduction and Commentary* (Torch Bible Commentaries; London: SCM, 1953) 68; Keight, *Role Relationship* 41-42. It is probable that simple priority does not require superiority, although against the assertion that such an idea is impossible in Genesis 1, since the beasts are created first (Trible, “Depatriarchalizing,” 36; Scanzoni-Hardey, *All We’re Meant to Be 28*) one should note b.Sanh. 38a, where, it is said, if man becomes proud, he is to be reminded “that the gnats preceded him in the order of creation.”


\(^{113}\)Davis, “Reflections on Galatians 3:28,” 203-204.
that in several passages, including 1 Timothy 2, Paul was influenced by his Jewish heritage in such a way that he contradicted himself. A related and more acceptable approach holds that Paul issued the restrictions he did in a desire to avoid contravening the societal mores of his time. Several varieties of this viewpoint require consideration.

Quickly discarded can be the idea that Paul was accommodating himself to the practice of the synagogue. While, to be sure, women were forbidden to teach in the Jewish service, they were also, as we have seen, prohibited from learning. Were the sensibilities of Jewish brethren at issue, it is inconceivable that Paul would have allowed the one and forbidden the other.

If, however, the scruples of Jewish brethren cannot be the reason for Paul’s advice, it may be that his limitation is given with a view to the attitudes of pagans, who would have looked askance at women teaching in meetings. But, in fact, it is difficult to envisage such objections from pagans in light of the attitude toward women in the Hellenistic world. As Swidler points out, this attitude must be distinguished from the Jewish view, which was considerably more conservative, and from the outlook characteristic of fifth and fourth century Athens. In the Hellenistic period, the status of women had improved “... so vigorously and continually that one must speak of a women’s liberation movement which had a massive and manifold liberating impact on the lot of women...” Women played a prominent role in many of the mystery religions and, to cite evidence more directly relevant for the text under discussion, the cult of Artemis in Ephesus was well-known for the many priestesses who officiated at the great Temple. As Barth notes, “The cult of the Great Mother in the Artemis Temple stamped the city more than others as a bastion and bulwark of women’s rights.” Thus, there is little that can be discerned in the atmosphere of Hellenistic Ephesus which would have caused anyone to take a critical view of women teaching or officiating in Christian worship services.

A third suggestion relating to the status of women is that lack of educational opportunities prevented women from achieving the level of

115Pfohl, Woman in the Church, 48-65; Hull, “Woman in her Place,” 15. Katharina C. Bushnell (God’s Word to Women [n.p., n.d.] par. 313-326) and Kaiser (“Paul, Women,” 11) further suggest that the prominence of Christian women at a time when Nero was strongly influenced by the Jewess Poppaea had led to persecution. For this there is no evidence, and it assumes a date for 1 Timothy rather later than probable.
116Swidler, Women in Judaism 18-24 (24); Barth, Ephesians 2. 656.
119Ephesians 2. 661.
competence demanded of the Christian teacher. Again, though, while Jewish women were not normally educated, many more opportunities were available to Greek women; the Stoics believed in educating men and women equally and in Hellenistic Egypt there were more women than men who could sign their names.

One final local factor must be evaluated: Could Paul have prohibited women from teaching because of their involvement in the heresy at Ephesus? Two observations suggest not. First, there is nothing in the Pastorals to indicate that women were any more susceptible to the false teaching than were men; the two texts which mention women in this connection (1 Tim 3:14-15; 2 Tim 3:6) must be balanced against many more that relate to all or to men in particular (1 Tim 1:10, 2 Tim 2:17-18). Second, even if women were particularly prone to the views of the heretics, nothing suggests that they were teaching it; and in light of the Jewish element in the heresy, this is most unlikely.

Conclusion

The results of the investigation carried out in Part II can be succinctly stated: nothing which would have effect of restricting the application of Paul’s advice in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 to a particular time and place has been discovered. Indeed, the very structure of the passage must point to the inherent improbability of such restrictions, for Paul roots his teaching deeply in the culture-transcending events of the creation and fall of man and woman. There is absolutely nothing in the passage which would suggest that Paul issued his instructions because of a local situation of societal pressure. This being the case, it can only be concluded that the results of the exegetical investigation carried out in Part I must stand as valid for the church in every age and place: Women are not to teach men nor to have authority over men because such activity would violate the structure of created sexual relationships and would involve the woman in something for which she is not suited.

Finally, it might not be amiss to suggest that the background against which Paul wrote is remarkably similar in many respects to the situation in which the


123 As asserted by Scanlon-Hardesty (*All We’re Meant to Be 37*), Aida Dina Besancon Spencer (“Eve at Ephesus [Should women be ordained as pastors according to the First Letter to Timothy 2:11-15?]”) *JETS* 17 (1974) 21b-22 and Fuller (“Pro and Con” 9-10).

124 If the heresy was a form of proto-montanism (J. Mazingbed Ford, “A Note on Proto-Montanism in the Pastoral Epistles,” *NTS* 17 [1970-71] 238-246), some evidence for women as teachers could be adduced from the later history of the movement, but it is most improbable that such a connection can be made.


126 In agreement with this, cf. especially the conclusion of Zarbst (*Office of Woman* 80-81) and Brummet (*Ministry of Women* 32-35).
church finds itself today. In both cases, one finds teaching which denigrates marriage and the family and encourages women to pursue involvement in all spheres of activity.\textsuperscript{127} To both situations Paul’s advice would appear to be the same. While many of these pursuits are proper, and should be sanctioned by the church ("let the women learn"), women must not engage in activities which have the effect of disruption created sexual role relationships and should never regard tasks such as raising children and managing homes as second-rate. Indeed, it is in devoting herself to such activities consonant with her created role that the Christian woman experiences the salvation to which she has been called. Far from being degrading or unsatisfying, this role, inasmuch as it accords which the purpose of the Creator, constitutes "the dignity" of the woman.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{127}Cf. Falconer ("1 Timothy 2:14,15," 378) and Barth (Ephesians 2. 661) for the situation in first century Ephesus.

\textsuperscript{128}The term represents one of the themes in the important article by André Feuillet ("La Dignité").