

WOMEN IN CHURCH OFFICE:
HERMENEUTICS OR EXEGESIS?
A SURVEY OF APPROACHES TO 1 TIM 2:8-15

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It has become commonplace in recent scholarship to acknowledge the determinative role of hermeneutics in the discussion of the Scriptural right of women to hold church office.¹ Even if I was competent to do so, in the present study it is not my concern to address the larger issues raised by women's ordination or feminism. My concern, rather, is to demonstrate that while the crucial role of hermeneutics is not to be denied, the current discussion still appears to be vexed all too frequently by an assumed but perhaps faulty exegesis of the relevant Biblical texts.

As an illustration of this point the present essay will consider 1 Tim 2:8-15, generally conceded to be the most forceful of the handful of NT passages that appear to oppose the right of women to hold church office.² For convenience I will begin with a summary of what may be called the "traditional" exegesis of 1 Tim 2:8-15. Following this I will analyze four alternative hermeneutical approaches to this widely held exegesis, which, it turns out, reflect alternative assessments of Paul's use of the example of Adam and Eve. Finally I will offer my own exegesis of the passage and seek to demonstrate that all four alternative approaches err by failing to note that Paul cites Adam and Eve precisely because his concern in this text is not with male-female relationships in general but with the husband-wife marital relationship in particular.

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¹ In contemporary discussion the terms "exegesis" and "hermeneutics" exhibit an almost bewildering variety of usage. In the present paper the term "hermeneutics" will be employed in its more restricted and popular sense to refer to the principles and methods for deriving the contemporary relevance of an ancient text once its ancient meaning has been established by exegesis.

² S. T. Foh argues that 1 Tim 2:12 is the only adequate reason for not ordaining women (*Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980] 238-240). Cf. also G. W. Knight, III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women: New Testament Teaching* (rev. ed.; Chicago: Moody, 1985) 17. Other passages that are frequently adduced as opposing women in church office include 1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33-35 and possibly 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1:5-9. On the other hand Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:11-12; 1 Pet 3:7 are often alleged to point more in the direction of an equality of the sexes and their equal access to authoritative ministry.

I. THE "TRADITIONAL" EXEGESIS

1 Timothy 2:8-15 does not explicitly forbid women from the eldership. Nevertheless it is argued by proponents of what we may call the "traditional" exegesis that such a prohibition is the inescapable implication of vv. 11-12: "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent."

The "traditional" exegesis of 1 Tim 2:8 begins with the conviction that wherever this text utilizes *anēr* or *gynē* it means by these terms respectively "man" and not "husband" or "woman" and not "wife."

The RSV seems to support this assumption by its rendering of v. 12: "I permit no woman (*gynaiki*) to teach or have authority over men (*andros*)." In a world where even the pagans rejected polyandry, clearly Paul could not have meant "I permit no wife to teach or have authority over (her) husbands."

With D. J. Moo one may "observe that vv 8-9 are clearly directed respectively to men and women, not to husbands and wives; unless, indeed, Paul commands only husbands to pray and only wives to adorn themselves modestly."³

The context of vv. 11-15, to which we will return, seemingly has in view worshipers and not merely family members.

Had Paul intended to address husbands and wives rather than men and women in general, we might have expected a possessive pronoun "her" or at least an article before the *andros* ("husband"/"man") of v. 12.⁴

The literary structure of 1 Timothy 2 allows comparison with the *Didache*, where there is a similar core of materials having to do with church order. M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann compare the outline of *Did.* 7-10, where mention is made of baptism, fasting, prayers, and eucharistic prayers, with the exhortation to prayer in 1 Tim 2:1 ff.⁵ Similarly *Did.* 14 is concerned with ethical requirements of the worship service. Here Dibelius and Conzelmann compare 1 Tim 2:8, which they title "ethical requirements of the worship service." Finally *Did.* 15:1-2 takes up bishops and deacons, as does 1 Timothy 3.

When we turn to consider v. 12—"I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men"—Paul need not be prohibiting any and every instance of a woman teaching or exercising authority over a man. So to construe Paul's exhortation would be to introduce unnecessarily a contradiction between this passage and what Paul and the Scriptures elsewhere seem to endorse both by example and precept.

Accordingly interpreters often urge that the immediate context of ecclesiastical concerns and, more particularly, a possible setting within a public worship service should control our interpretation of these verses. In

³ D. J. Moo, "1 Tim 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance," *Trinity Journal* 1 (1980) 63.

⁴ *Ibid.* 64.

⁵ M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) 5 ff.

support of this alleged ecclesiastical context a number of arguments have been advanced.

Paul's desire that "in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands" (v. 8) is often taken as suggestive of public worship.⁶

The "likewise" (*hōsautōs*) with which v. 9 begins may be taken either to suggest that Paul now desires that the women should pray "in like manner" to the men or, alternatively, that just as Paul desired that the men should pray without contention so he now wishes that the women should "adorn themselves modestly." On either view, by virtue of this transitional word the setting for Paul's instruction to women would appear to be the same as that to men in v. 8. Hence while Dibelius and Conzelmann concede that the following regulations "originally referred to the behavior of women in general," in their present context they are "doubtless intended for the worship service."⁷

Paul goes on in the immediate context (chap. 3) to consider the qualifications of bishops and deacons, so that it may be deemed likely that this same interest in church order underlies 2:8–15 as well.

Assuming with most commentators that "these instructions" (*tauta*) refers to the entire contents of 1 Timothy, then 3:14–15—"I am writing these instructions (*tauta*) to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God"—may offer a further support that 2:8–15 has in view the conduct of women specifically in a church/worship context.

In 2:9 the concern to avoid ostentatious dress would appear to imply a public gathering, such as a church service, where such apparel could be deemed offensive.

Finally, the learning, teaching and exercise of authority mentioned in 2:11–12 taken by themselves may suggest a setting within a congregational worship service.

In such a context, then, Paul may well intend to restrict the application of his prohibition of women teaching men in at least three respects. First, in terms of the subject matter of what is taught it would appear unwarranted to insist that in v. 12 Paul forbids women from teaching men how to cook, how to solve differential equations, and so on. Certainly the subject matter most suitable to the posited ecclesiastical context would seem to be of an ethical or theological nature.

Second, since it is a public worship service that is the alleged immediate context of these exhortations, it may be that Paul intends only to prohibit public teaching at such a formal gathering. In this way it is seen that Paul is not forbidding the kind of informal teaching within a private setting that is seemingly approved in the case of Abigail who taught David (1 Samuel 25), the wise woman of Tekoa who taught David (2 Sam 14:1–20), the wise woman of Abel Beth Maacah who taught Joab (20:16–22), Anna who instructed all those "who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem"

⁶ C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles in the New English Bible* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963) 54.

⁷ Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral* 45.

(Luke 2:38), or Priscilla who with her husband Aquila took Apollos aside and "expounded to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26).

Finally, given that 1 Timothy 3 will make mention of elders who must be apt to teach, Paul may have intended 2:12 to eliminate women from consideration by prohibiting them specifically from any *official* teaching within the church. In this way Paul is seen not to be prohibiting the general sort of Christian teaching and mutual exhortation, much of which is to take place within the assembly, that the Scripture enjoins on all believers, male and female, in such passages as Col 3:16; Heb 3:13; 5:12; 10:24; 1 Cor 14:26; 1 Pet 3:15, among many others.⁸

Further support for the limitation of Paul's prohibition to official teaching may be found in the qualifying expression "or to have authority over men" (*oude authentein andros*), assuming that *authentein* actually does mean "to have authority," which is uncertain, and assuming that this expression functions as a qualifier of "to teach," which seems plausible.⁹ Understood in this manner, 2:12 might be rendered: "I permit no woman to teach men authoritatively; she is to be silent."

But even if the expression "or to have authority over men" refers to a separate prohibition from teaching, similar attempts may be made to allow the ecclesiastical context to restrict the precise kind of authority that is being prohibited. In this way, for example, Paul may not be intending to prohibit women from exercising authority over men in the political or social spheres since these may be considered beyond the scope of our text.¹⁰ The Scriptures elsewhere offer an impressive number of examples of

⁸ Likewise this removes any necessary contradiction between Paul's prohibition here and his own mention in 1 Cor 11:5, 13 of women praying (which, if like Paul's own prayers, may well include considerable didactic material) and prophesying (which according to 1 Cor 14:31 specifically includes teaching) in church. Cf. also the various prophetesses mentioned elsewhere in Scripture including Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Anna, the promised women of Acts 2:17-18, and the four daughters of Philip.

⁹ As argued by P. B. Payne, "Oude in 1 Tim 2:12" (unpublished paper read at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting, November 21, 1986). In support of the view that *authentein* means "to have authority" cf. G. W. Knight, III, "AUTHENTEŌ in Reference to Women in 1 Timothy 2.12," *NTS* 30 (1984) 143-157. Against Knight, however, cf. C. C. Kroeger, "A Critique of George Knight's 'AUTHENTEŌ in Reference to Women in 1 Tim 2:12'" (unpublished, n.d.); "1 Tim 2:12—A Classicist's View," *Women, Authority and the Bible* (ed. A. Mickelsen; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986) 225-244. Kroeger's own interpretations of *authentein* as meaning either "to engage in fertility practices" ("Ancient Heresies and a Strange Greek Verb," *Reformed Journal* 29/3 [1979] 13) or "to represent oneself as the originator of" or as a reference to a ritual action related to both sexuality and death ("Classicist's View") appear less than convincing. Cf. A. J. Panning, "AUTHENTEIN—A Word Study," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 78 (1981) 185-191; C. D. Osburn, "AUTHENTEŌ (1 Tim 2:12)," *ResQ* 25 (1982) 1-12. Although Knight's interpretation remains a possibility, perhaps it is safest to agree with Payne that the present state of our evidence is insufficient to decide between any of several alternative interpretations: "to act autonomously," "to be contentious," "to domineer." Similarly favoring "domineer" are, *inter alios*, Osburn, "AUTHENTEŌ"; A. B. Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (New York: Nelson, 1985) 86-88; B. Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (SNTSMS 59; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1988) 121.

¹⁰ Foh, *Women*.

women exercising social or political authority without raising any questions as to the propriety of that authority.¹¹

Although differing over many important details, such is the underlying "traditional" exegesis for this passage held by a majority of those who oppose women's ordination. What may prove surprising, however, is that with only a few variations in detail (some of which will be discussed below) such also is the underlying exegesis of a majority of scholars who favor the right of women to hold church office. Indeed it is precisely because of this widespread fundamental agreement over exegesis that the scholarly debate over this text has increasingly concerned itself with the issue of hermeneutics. What is of special interest to our study is to note that at the focus of this hermeneutical question is the precise way in which the interpreter understands Paul's utilization of the Adam and Eve narrative.

II. FOUR ALTERNATIVE HERMENEUTICAL APPROACHES TO 1 TIM 2:8-15 CORRELATED TO THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF PAUL'S ADDUCTION OF THE ADAM AND EVE NARRATIVE

1. *Even if Paul's admonitions concerning praying while "lifting hands" or wearing "braided hair" are in some sense culturally conditioned, his prohibition regarding women teaching and exercising authority over men is normative for all ages precisely because Paul grounds his injunction in the universally applicable facts of Genesis 2-3.*¹² Paul offers two specific reasons why women should not teach or exercise authority over men: (1) Adam was created before Eve, and (2) Eve was deceived and so became a transgressor.

Paul's logic in offering these two observations is less than transparent. According to certain scholars, however, it may be seen in 1 Cor 11:8 that Paul understood the priority of Adam in creation as implying not female inferiority but nevertheless a functional subordination of women to men.

¹¹ Cf. the various Gentile queens: the Gentile but converted Queen of Sheba, Tahpenes, an unnamed queen of Chaldea (Dan 5:10-12), an unnamed queen of Persia (Neh 2:6), Vashti, Candace. Cf. also the Judahite queen Athaliah (though apostate, nevertheless the sole ruler of Judah for six years) and the Jewish queen Esther. Cf. especially Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, who was both a prophetess and judge (presiding elder over Israel) in Judges 4-5. Some scholars dismiss Deborah as a regrettable exception to a preferred male leadership with an appeal to Isa 3:12: "My people—children are their oppressors, and women rule over them." This passage appears to concede female leadership but interprets it as a rebuke to Israel. Supporting the application of this rebuke to the ministry of Deborah, appeal is often made to the questionable reluctance of Barak to go to war against Sisera without Deborah in Judg 4:8. But the MT of Isa 3:12, in addition to its troublesome vocabulary, appears to be textually corrupt (cf. BHS; LXX). Compare the preferable rendering of the NEB: "Money lenders strip my people bare, and usurers lord it over them" (cf. also TEV). In any case Deborah is introduced in Judges 4 as judging Israel before Barak's failure. And while Barak loses the glory he was seeking, it goes not to Deborah but to Jael. Indeed it is possible that Judges intends to portray Deborah as a second Moses with Barak acting as Deborah's Joshua.

¹² So e.g. E. F. Brown, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: Methuen, 1917) 20; Foh, *Women* 123-124, 127-128.

Likewise Paul's mention of the deception of Eve need not imply any inclination to exonerate Adam, whom Paul elsewhere charges with singular responsibility for the fall. While some interpreters are inclined to understand Paul's stress on the particular character of Eve's sin as implying a general female susceptibility to deception, such a view is by no means necessary and in fact appears quite speculative in the absence of any other Biblical support. Not only does Paul customarily regard the tendency to deceive and to be deceived as an affliction of all mankind, not just females, but were it really the case that he considered women particularly prone to deception it would call into question Paul's wisdom elsewhere in entrusting women with responsibility for teaching other women, as he does in Titus 2:3-5, much less vulnerable children (as may be inferred from 2 Tim 1:5; 3:15).¹³

2. *Other scholars discern in Paul's use of Genesis 2-3 a rather unpersuasive (in terms of the methods of modern exegesis) rabbinic argument.* As C. Spicq points out, Paul's emphasis on chronological priority necessarily involving superiority was a popular view among Jews of his day.¹⁴ Likewise the claim that Eve alone was deceived is virtually unparalleled elsewhere in the NT but finds numerous parallels in contemporary Judaism.¹⁵

One of two implications may be drawn from this observation of "rabbinic" exegesis. The first is to take this as additional confirmation that Paul was, in fact, not the author of 1 Timothy. In the undisputed Pauline epistles, Paul readily identifies Adam as the first transgressor (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:21-22) and implies that Adam was in fact deceived (Rom 7:11). Similarly elsewhere Paul makes clear the full equality of woman with man (e.g. Gal 3:27-28), and, unsurprisingly, we learn of a considerable number of female coworkers with Paul.¹⁶

Having thus denied Pauline authorship to 1 Timothy there is often the assumed result that in this manner the authority of this text is somehow diminished.¹⁷ But even apart from the merits for this claim for non-Pauline authorship, such an approach lacks conviction in that it confuses authorship with canonicity.¹⁸

The alternative implication scholars have frequently drawn from this observation of "rabbinic" exegesis of Genesis 2-3 leading to a prohibition against women teaching or exercising authority over men is to conclude that it is not so much un-Pauline as un-Christian—that is, it is super-

¹³ As noted by Foh, *Women* 127

¹⁴ C Spicq, *Les Epîtres Pastorales* 380

¹⁵ Cf e.g. Sir 25 24, Philo *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1 33, *Adam and Eve* 18 1, 35 2-3, 44 2, *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* 30 17-28, *Midr Gen* 17 8 But cf 2 Cor 11 3

¹⁶ Cf V P Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul Selected Issues* (2d rev ed, Nashville Abingdon, 1985) 91-92, 101 ff, 106

¹⁷ Cf e.g. R Scroggs, "Paul Chauvinist or Liberationist," *Christian Century* 89 (1972) 307-309, L Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Women* (Philadelphia Westminster, 1979)

¹⁸ For a defense of Pauline authorship for 1 Timothy cf e.g. D Guthrie, "Pastoral Epistles," *ISBE* 3 679-687

seded by the fuller, more authentically Christian insight set forth in the "equality" texts (e.g., Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:11–12; cf. 1 Pet 3:7).

K. Stendahl takes such an approach, concluding that the texts that speak of subordination merely reflect Paul's rabbinic training and deeply ingrained cultural bias, analogous to the prevailing attitude toward slavery.¹⁹ On the other hand, according to Stendahl, texts that speak of equality, beginning with the breakthrough of Gal 3:28, are thought to reflect a more authentically Christian reversal of the order of creation.

This approach, however, is flawed in several respects. First, it appears to commit a kind of genetic fallacy in that it assumes that simply because a NT teaching may derive from earlier Jewish convictions, this settles the issue of authority.

Second, it fails to account for the very unrabbinic advice found in our text where Paul urges that "a woman learn in silence," and at the same time it appears to misconstrue that "breakthrough" insight claimed for Paul in Gal 3:28.²⁰ A number of scholars have argued that Gal 3:28 may not constitute so radical a departure from the Judaism of his day after all. Such, for example, is the conclusion of M. Boucher, M. Barth and B. J. Brooten.²¹ Brooten in particular offers a provocative reassessment of the inscriptional evidence for female leadership in the synagogue, including women elders, among Jews during the Roman and Byzantine periods. But it should be noted that this evidence is rather limited and ambiguous, and it may be that the positions occupied by women were more of an administrative character than of significant authority.

Perhaps more compelling, however, is an objection being raised with increasing conviction: Galatians 3:28 and the other so-called "equality texts" actually have less to do with ecclesiology than with soteriology and are in fact concerned to assert not equality but salvific unity within the body of Christ.²²

3. *Paul's citation of Genesis 2–3 is a polemic directed against several misconceptions concerning Adam and Eve believed to have been popular among the Ephesian Christians.* R. C. Kroeger and C. C. Kroeger, for example,

¹⁹ K. Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women: A Case Study in Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966). Cf. also P. K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 111–147; V. Mollenkott, *Women, Men and the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977) 20–25.

²⁰ As evidence for reluctance among the rabbis to allow women to learn the Torah, P. B. Payne cites *m. Soṭa* 3:4; *m. Qidd.* 4:13 ("Libertarian Women in Ephesus: A Response to D. J. Moo's Article, '1 Tim 2:11–15: Meaning and Significance,'" *Trinity Journal* 2 [1981] 187). Cf. also Spencer, *Beyond* 71–95.

²¹ M. Boucher, "Some Unexplored Parallels to 1 Cor 11:11–12 and Gal 3:28: The NT on the Role of Women," *CBQ* 31 (1969) 50–58; M. Barth, *Ephesians* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1974) 655–662; B. J. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (Chico: Scholars, 1982).

²² Cf. e.g. J. J. Davis, "Some Reflections on Gal 3:28, Sexual Roles, and Biblical Hermeneutics," *JETS* 19 (1976) 201–208; B. Witherington III, "Rite and Rights for Women—Galatians 3.28," *NTS* 27 (1981) 593–604.

suggest that Paul's appeal to Adam and Eve may not have been designed to adduce creational norms so much as it was intended to refute a major tenet of the false teaching at Ephesus that glorified Eve as a celestial power, similar to the conviction of certain strands of later gnosticism.²³

On the other hand, rather than thinking in terms of the errors of pro-*gnosticism* P. B. Payne argues that Paul's use of Adam and Eve is designed to refute the false tenets of the Judaizers at Ephesus.²⁴ He suggests that the Judaizers may have been saying "Adam was formed (*ep-lasthē*) first" in order to indicate male superiority since, although Jacob, Israel, Job, David, Habakkuk, and so forth, were said to have been "formed" (LXX: *plassein*) by God, nowhere does the OT say that God "formed" a woman. But when Paul adds "and then Eve" (*eita Heua*) he is affirming the essential equality of men and women in that both were formed by God. Likewise Payne hypothesizes that the Judaizers may have claimed "Adam was not deceived," again to indicate male superiority, but Paul's reply—which alludes to women's unique role in "the childbirth" that brings salvation (i.e. the birth of Christ)—counterbalances any undue tendency to blame women for the fall.

As intriguing as these suggestions are, caution is warranted about any specific errors that may be posited for Paul's opponents based on evidence that is in the nature of the case rather slender and at best ambiguous.²⁵ But even if a polemical purpose does inform Paul's use of Genesis 2–3, in the light of his stress on Adam being created "first and then Eve" (a point reiterated in 1 Cor 11:7–9 and not related by Payne to the alleged heresy at Ephesus) this view does not finally succeed in denying Paul's use of what would appear to be abidingly valid "creational norms" in developing his argument.²⁶

4. *The aptness of Paul's citation of Eve's deception rests precisely in the fact that certain prominent female believers at Ephesus had been deceived.* On this view 1 Timothy 2 (as well as 1 Corinthians 11 and 14) records a culturally relative application of what may well be an abidingly valid principle (hence Paul's appeal to creational norms), but in any case these injunctions ought not to be applied uncritically to the often radically dissimilar modern church.

For example A. B. Spencer stresses how 1 Timothy 2 marks a radical and liberating departure from the repressive Jewish practice of the time in that women are now encouraged to study the word ("to learn in silence").²⁷ After issuing this liberating command Paul introduces his prohi-

²³ R. C. Kroeger and C. C. Kroeger, "Women in the Church," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. W. A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 1184; Moo, "Rejoinder" 204 n. 10.

²⁴ Payne, "Libertarian."

²⁵ Concerning the well-known uncertainties of 1 Tim 2:15, a text on which Payne bases much of his argument, cf. Moo, "Rejoinder" 204–206.

²⁶ Cf. e.g. *ibid.* 202–204; R. Nicole, "Biblical Authority and Feminist Aspirations," *Women* (ed. Mickelsen) 46.

²⁷ A. B. Spencer, "Eve At Ephesus (Should Women Be Ordained as Pastors According to the First Letter to Timothy 2:11–15?)," *JETS* (1974) 215–222.

bition of women teaching with the mild adversative *de* ("but"), as if to acknowledge the eventual contradiction between permission to learn but not to teach.²⁸ In addition Spencer notes that rather than using the imperative mood or even an aorist or future indicative to express that prohibition, Paul quite significantly utilizes a present indicative, perhaps best rendered "But I am not presently allowing."²⁹ This temporary prohibition, then, is based solely on the regrettable similarity between the Ephesian women and Eve in that the women of Ephesus had been deceived and as such if allowed to teach would be in danger of promoting false doctrine.³⁰ With further instruction, however, such a parallel would happily break down, and so the prohibition would be made void.³¹

As attractive as this interpretation appears, serious objections have been raised against it in recent years. First of all, some caution may need to be exercised against an overly simplistic picture of the Jewish or Greek cultural background at times assumed for our passage.³² For example, Eunice and Lois (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15) appear to have known the Scriptures better than might be inferred from the Jewish practice adduced by Spencer, although Spencer acknowledges the possibility that women could learn privately.

Most seriously, S. T. Foh has argued that the women of 1 Tim 2:9-15 do not appear to be one and the same as the false teachers elsewhere.³³ She notes that these women are treated in a radically different manner from the false teachers since they are urged to "continue in faith, love, holiness, and sobriety," while the women mentioned in 2 Tim 3:6-7, for example, "can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth."

Moreover, as Foh points out, there is no Scriptural warrant for the underlying assumption that Eve taught Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. Certainly she "gave him to eat," although Paul does not allude to the fact, but had she also instructed him in a more formal manner, then Adam would

²⁸ Under normal circumstances one might expect that the acquisition of knowledge would bring with it a commensurate responsibility to share with others what has been learned. As Spencer notes (*Beyond* 85-86), the rabbis saw teaching and learning as inextricably intertwined. One "learns in order to teach and . . . learns in order to practice" (*m. Abot* 6:60).

²⁹ Spencer, "Eve" 219; *Beyond* 84.

³⁰ 1 Tim 4:7; 5:13, 15; 2 Tim 3:6-7 allude to women who had been deceived.

³¹ Similar interpretations are offered by D. M. Scholer, "Exegesis: 1 Tim 2:8-15," *Daughters of Sarah* 1/4 (May 1975) 7-8; E. M. Howe, *Women and Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982). Mention should be made here of a number of scholars who consider Paul's use of Genesis 2-3 to be merely rhetorical or illustrative but whose views nevertheless resemble the present approach in interpreting Paul's admonitions in 1 Tim 2:9-12 as a culturally relative application of a higher, abidingly valid principle—in this case Paul's concern to avoid undue offense to the moral sensibilities of the unbelieving world. Cf. e.g. D. M. Scholer, "1 Tim 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church's Ministry," *Women* (ed. Mickelsen) 211; A. Padgett, "The Pauline Rationale for Submission: Biblical Feminism and the *hina* Clauses of Titus 2:1-10," *EvQ* 59/1 (1987) 39-52; "Wealthy Women at Ephesus: 1 Tim 2:8-15 in Social Context," *Int* 41/1 (1987) 19-31.

³² Cf. R. Forsyth, "On Dispensing With Paul: Can We Do Without the Texts Where Sex Makes a Difference?," *Interchange* 20 (1976) 237; cf. also Boucher, "Unexplored" 50-58; Barth, *Ephesians* 655-662.

³³ Foh, *Women* 122-129.

have been "deceived" in much the same way as was Eve, which Paul implies was in fact not the case.

Furthermore it is by no means clear that even if women were prominent among the deceived at Ephesus they were also prominent among the false teachers.³⁴ Indeed, if Paul's underlying concern is to prohibit false teaching, one may wonder why he does not prohibit all false teachers and not just those who happened to be women.³⁵

Finally, this view fails to explain why Paul stresses the temporal priority of Adam rather than merely mentioning Eve's deception.³⁶

III. A FIFTH OPTION: AN ALTERNATIVE EXEGESIS OF 1 TIM 2:8-15

A fifth approach, the one being advocated here, differs from the preceding four in that it begins by contesting the often assumed but perhaps inadequately defended premise that 1 Tim 2:8-15 has to do with men and women in general rather than husbands and wives in particular.³⁷

Such an approach to 1 Timothy 2, which would limit Paul's advice to married persons in a domestic context, is by no means novel even if presently it is being largely overlooked. Already Luther in his exposition of 1 Tim 2:11-12 urged that what Paul was concerned to prohibit was a wife teaching or having authority over her husband.³⁸

Since the time of Luther, a similar exegesis of this text has been offered, according to J. E. Huther, both by the sixteenth-century Dutch exegete Gulielmus Estius and the seventeenth-century German theologian Abraham Calovius, among others.³⁹ In the last century Konrad S. Mathies and C. S. Garratt continued to favor a marital reference for our text, with essentially the same view finding support in the early part of this

³⁴ So Moo, "Meaning" 82.

³⁵ So wonders Moo, "Rejoinder" 203.

³⁶ Cf. *ibid.* 204; Foh, *Women* 123. In part Spencer has responded to these objections in *Beyond* 71-95, as well as, very kindly, by private correspondence. While her responses have merit, it goes beyond the scope of the present essay to explore these more fully. In any case, given the *ad hoc* nature of every one of Paul's letters, it is not easy to see how the acknowledged occasional nature of this epistle, including the present indicative *epitrepō*, "I do (not) permit," with which v. 12 begins, should automatically qualify the normative intent of its admonition. Cf. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 101-102; Moo, "Rejoinder" 199-200.

³⁷ A similar problem obtains in the other "subordination passages" (i.e. 1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:22-26).

³⁸ *Luther's Works: Commentaries on 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 15, Lectures on 1 Timothy* (ed. H. C. Oswald; St. Louis: Concordia, 1973) 28.276. It should be noted, however, that Luther differs from the present study by interpreting Paul's prohibition exclusively in terms of public ministry or the public assembly.

³⁹ J. E. Hunter, *Kritisch Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament* (ed. H. A. W. Meyer; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1876), *in loc.*, who cites G. Estius, *Epistolae D. Pauli. I et II. ad Timotheum* (8 vols.; ed. Sausen; Paris: Moguntiae, 1841); A. Calovius, *Biblia illustrata* (4 vols., 1672-76). The reason for indicating something of the earlier pedigree of this approach is to help safeguard it against the charge that it is merely an accommodation to late-twentieth-century societal pressures in favor of "women's liberation."

century among commentators like C. R. Erdman, A. E. Burn and H. L. Goudge.⁴⁰ Reflecting this stream of scholarly opinion the once-popular version of C. B. Williams, for example, renders 1 Tim 2:11–12: “A married woman must learn in quiet and perfect submission. I do not permit a married woman to practice teaching or domineering over a husband. She must keep quiet.”⁴¹

More recently C. K. Barrett has renewed the suggestion that “not domineer over her husband” may be a better rendering for 1 Tim 2:12 than the NEB base text of his commentary.⁴² Likewise M. Griffiths has appealed for a closer study of this passage, which he is convinced admits a “more positive exegesis.”⁴³ Griffiths suggests that the terms rendered “man”/“men” and “woman”/“women” in the RSV, namely forms of *anēr* and *gynē*, can as easily be rendered “husband”/“husbands” and “wife”/“wives” throughout these verses—renderings entirely suited to the present passage.⁴⁴

When discussing the “traditional” exegesis of our text we listed five arguments in support of a more general reference for *anēr* and *gynē* in 1 Timothy 2 (“man” and “woman” rather than “husband” and “wife”). Here we will first answer those objections and then consider additional arguments that may weigh in favor of this proposed exclusively marital reference.

The RSV, which seemed to exclude our interpretation by its rendering of v. 12 (“I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men”), in fact only does so by its unwarranted plural translation of “men.” The Greek genitive singular *andros* ought to be rendered either “a man” or, as I suggest, “her husband.”

The second objection against a marital reference is the observation that Paul would surely not intend to limit his command for prayer only to husbands or the requirement of modest adornment only to wives. But such an argument is purely speculative and fails to note that this is precisely

⁴⁰ K. S. Matthies, *Erklärung der Pastoralbriefe* (Griefswald, 1840), in *loc.*; S. Garratt, “The Ministry of Women,” as cited by A. J. Gordon, “The Ministry of Women,” *Eternity* (July–August 1980 [1894]) 910–921; C. R. Erdman, *The Pastoral Epistles of Paul: An Exposition* (Westminster, 1923), in *loc.*; A. E. Burn and H. L. Goudge, “The Pastoral Epistles,” *A New Commentary on Holy Scriptures Including the Apocrypha* (eds. C. Gore and H. L. Goudge; London: SPCK, 1928) 583. Typical of a number of earlier commentators, Erdman assumes a church setting for the text but nevertheless considers it probable that the “man” in 1 Tim 2:12 is the woman’s “husband.” Burn and Goudge argue that 1 Tim 2:12 refers to the woman’s “husband,” explaining that “the true subordination of women to men is in the family, not in the State or the Church.”

⁴¹ C. B. Williams, *The New Testament: A Translation in the Language of the People* (1937).

⁴² Barrett, *Pastoral* 55–56. Cf. also the NEB marginal reading in v. 15: “if only husband and wife continue in mutual fidelity.”

⁴³ M. Griffiths, *The Church and World Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) 196.

⁴⁴ So also R. Prohl, *Woman in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 80; N. J. Hommes, “Let Women Be Silent in Church: A Message Concerning the Worship Service and the Decorum to Be Observed by Women,” *CTJ* 4 (1969) 13; F. Zerbst, *The Office of Woman in the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955) 51. R. Nicole likewise notes that “it is not clear whether Paul is speaking in 1 Tim 2:8–15 with respect to church activities (cf. 1 Cor 14:34–35) or to relationships within the home (cf. Eph 5:22–32)” (“Authority” 47 n. 1).

what Peter does in 1 Peter 3 when he addresses the prayer life of husbands and the need for modest apparel among wives.⁴⁵

We offered six arguments for the supposed exclusive worship/church context of vv. 11–15. B. W. Powers, however, has recently argued that the widely assumed notion that 1 Tim 2:8–15 concerns behavior in public worship is far from self-evident.⁴⁶ He notes that the prayer gesture of uplifted hands mentioned in 2:8 is by no means confined elsewhere to public worship.⁴⁷ Moreover the very general expression “in every place” ought not to be identified solely with formal church gatherings. Nowhere else in the NT does the expression require such a restrictive definition, including 1 Cor 1:2; 1 Thess 1:8, passages cited by Barrett as proof for a specialized ecclesiastical meaning.⁴⁸

Powers mentions that there is no reason to restrict the reference to women’s dress to an imagined concern for proper adornment within the worshiping assembly. It appears much more likely that Paul’s concern extends to the whole of life as it may be witnessed by outsiders. Certainly the “good deeds” of v. 10 are not to be limited to some moment within the liturgy, just as the “childrearing” mentioned in v. 15 points more to the home for its proper setting than to the church.

D. Guthrie finds it difficult to imagine how Paul could command silence for wives in the home (if they cannot talk there, where can they?) and so suggests that here is persuasive evidence that 1 Tim 2:12 is concerned with public worship.⁴⁹ But such an objection rests on a false dichotomy (the choice is not between the privacy of one’s home and public worship, but between public worship and the whole of married life) and strangely overlooks a passage such as 2 Thess 3:12 where Paul similarly enjoins men to “silence” (RSV “quietness”) without thereby implying a total ban on their speech.⁵⁰

Finally, Powers notes that elsewhere when Paul appeals to the example of Adam and Eve he utilizes them as a paradigm not for male-female relations in general but specifically for the husband-wife relationship of

⁴⁵ Of course the fact that an exhortation is directed to a particular individual or class of persons does not thereby necessarily exclude its applicability to others.

⁴⁶ B. W. Powers, “Women in the Church: The Application of 1 Tim 2:8–15,” *Interchange* 17 (1975) 55–59. Cf. also *The Ethical Teaching of the New Testament and Its Bases in Relation to the Spheres of Sex and Marriage and Family Relationships* (doctoral dissertation; University of London, 1972) 227–229.

⁴⁷ Powers cites Exod 9:29; 1 Kgs 8:22; Neh 8:6; Ps 28:2; 63:4; 134:2; 141:2; Isa 1:15; Lam 2:19; 3:41; Hab 3:10; Luke 24:50; 1 Clem. 29:1 (“Women” 57).

⁴⁸ Barrett, *Pastoral* 54. The other passages in question, where “in every place” bears its customary general reference, are Luke 4:37; 10:1; 2 Cor 2:14.

⁴⁹ D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale, 1957) 77.

⁵⁰ Cf. also 1 Tim 2:2, where the related adjective *hēsychion* describes the “quiet” life for which we are all to pray. Cf. J. Nolland, who favors “peaceableness, malleability—the ability to fit in” rather than “silence” as a plausible meaning for *hēsychia* in 2:12 in the light of the use of *hēsychion* in 2:2 (“Women in the Public Life of the Church,” *Crux* 19/3 [1983] 18).

marriage.⁵¹ This we find most clearly in Eph 5:31, but it is also the case in 1 Cor 11:8–19; 2 Cor 11:2–3—although in the last passage the husband-wife relationship is a metaphor for the relationship between Christ and his Church. In 1 Timothy 2 Paul indicates his intention to use Adam and Eve as a paradigm for married couples and in that he shifts his reference to Eve, using first the proper noun and then in v. 14 substituting *hē gynē* (“his wife”)—thereby defining his use of this term (as “wife” rather than “woman”) throughout the text. Finally in v. 15 Paul shifts from a third-feminine-singular verb (“she will be saved”) to a third-plural form (“if they continue”), thereby indicating that his reference extends now to wives in general.⁵²

Moo claims that had Paul intended to address husbands and wives he would have used a possessive pronoun “her” or at least an article before the *andros* of v. 12.⁵³ While Greek allows such a use of the article or possessive pronoun, however, it by no means requires it.⁵⁴ Limiting ourselves to Biblical usage, a number of examples readily suggest themselves where *anēr* means “(her) husband” and yet appears without either the expected article or possessive pronoun:⁵⁵ Luke 1:34, “since I have not had relations with my husband (*epei andra ou ginōskō*)”,⁵⁶ 2:36, “she was of a great age, having lived with her husband (*meta andros*) seven years from her virginity”; 16:18, “and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband (*apo andros*) commits adultery”; 1 Cor 7:10, “To the married I give the charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (*gynaika apo andros*).”

⁵¹ Although commentators frequently assert that Eve is set forth in Genesis 2–3 not simply as a paradigm for wives but as a paradigm for all women, such an assumption is not so easily defended from the text.

⁵² So J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1963) 69. Cf. A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1966) 38. Others have taken the subject of this verb to be the children just alluded to, or wives together with their husbands.

⁵³ Moo, “Meaning” 64.

⁵⁴ Cf. M. Zerwick and M. Grosvenor, who remark without further comment that *andros* in 1 Tim 2:12 is to be rendered “her husband, though anarthrous” (*A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* [Rome: Biblical Institute, 1979] 630). Cf. also BDF §254 for a similar anarthrous use of other terms designating persons.

⁵⁵ These particular examples can of course be explained alternatively as instances of the occasional use of an anarthrous noun in a prepositional phrase (as noted by A. Spencer in private correspondence); cf. e.g. BDF §255. Not every example, however, involves a prepositional phrase; cf. e.g. Prov 12:4: “A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, but as a worm in wool so an evil woman destroys her husband (*houtōs andra apollysin gynē kakopoiōs*).”

⁵⁶ RSV “since I have no husband” is misleading, since there is little reason to suppose that Mary would have denied her inchoate marriage to Joseph in this manner. Mary’s statement could be rendered “since I have not known a man,” intending a quite general reference to her virginity. But since Mary is unlikely to have had in mind any promiscuous intercourse, the “man” in view must surely have been her “husband.” Cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1981) 348.

In these last two examples, of course, what allows the reader to interpret *anēr* as referring unambiguously to a "husband" rather than simply a "man" is its proximity and semantic relation to *gynē*. Following an unpublished suggestion made by G. K. Beale we may turn this principle around and note that within Paul's writings, apart from 1 Timothy 2, *anēr* occurs 50 times and *gynē* occurs 54 times in close proximity within eleven distinct contexts, and in each case these terms bear the meanings "husband" and "wife" rather than "man" and "woman."⁵⁷ Indeed it may be argued that had Paul intended to speak about man in relation to woman, rather than a husband in relation to his wife, Paul would have employed *anthrōpos* rather than *anēr*, in opposition to *gynē*, as he does in 1 Cor 7:1.⁵⁸ Alternatively Paul could have used the very terms that most stress gender—*arsēn* ("man") in opposition to *thēlys* ("woman")—as he does in Rom 1:26–27.⁵⁹

The comparison suggested by Dibelius and Conzelmann between 1 Timothy 2–3 and the *Didache* is simply not close enough to be decisive for our interpretation of 1 Tim 2:8–15.⁶⁰ While *Did.* 14 may offer a parallel to v. 8, there is nothing corresponding to vv. 9–15 and so nothing that might help in establishing either the traditional rendering of "man" and "woman" for *anēr* and *gynē* or "husband" and "wife" as is being argued here.

This is not to suggest that there are no illuminating parallels to be offered for our text. Far from this being the case, truly impressive comparisons may be offered between 1 Timothy 2 and Titus, 1 Timothy 2 and household codes elsewhere in Paul, and especially 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Peter 3.

There are various parallels to 1 Timothy found throughout Titus, but most pertinent to our present concern is Titus 2:4–5, which parallels both 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Pet 3:1–7.⁶¹ In Titus Paul urges young wives to be

⁵⁷ The following are the passages in question: Rom 7:2–3; 1 Cor 7:2–4, 10–14, 16, 27, 29, 33–34, 39; 11:3–15 (in keeping with Paul's use of "headship" in Eph 5:23, we assume that these instructions are directed to married persons); 14:34–35; Eph 5:22–25, 28, 31, 33; Col 3:18–19; 1 Tim 3:2, 3:11–12; 5:9; Titus 1:6. Outside the Pauline corpus we may add further examples of *anēr* and *gynē* in close proximity with the meanings "husband" and "wife" rather than "man" and "woman": Matt 1:16, 19–20; Mark 10:2; 10:11–12; Luke 1:27; 16:18; Acts 5:1–10; 1 Pet 3:1–7; Rev 21:2, 9. Besides these there are a number of cases where these terms (generally in the plural) occur together, often along with "children," where they are used to express either a listing or enumeration of individuals, stressing the mixed nature of the group in question: Matt 14:21; 15:38; Acts 5:14; 8:3, 12; 9:2; 17:12, 34; 22:4. A possible exception where *anēr* bears the meaning "husband" while *gynē* may mean "woman" is John 4:16–19. Even here, however, *gynē* may have been chosen precisely for its aptness as a designation for a married woman. Cases of coincidental juxtaposition (generally where the terms occur in separate pericopes and so are semantically unrelated) are Mark 6:17–18, 20; Luke 23:49–50; Acts 17:4–5. In summary, besides the use of *anēr* and *gynē* in lists (where the terms are generally found in the plural) there are no examples where *anēr* and *gynē* bear the meanings "man" and "woman" when the terms are found in close proximity.

⁵⁸ Cf. also Matt 19:5; Eph 5:31. Even this opposition may not be entirely free of ambiguity in that *anthrōpou* in Matt 19:10 refers to a husband. But its use, rather than *anēr*, may merely reflect the antecedent use of *anthrōpos* in a marriage formula in Matt 19:5.

⁵⁹ Or, conceivably, Paul might have chosen to utilize these same adjectives in the neuter, again as substantives, as he does in Gal 3:28, setting "male" over against "female."

⁶⁰ Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral* 5 ff.

⁶¹ Cf. also Titus 1:7–9 || 1 Timothy 3; Titus 2:9–10 || 1 Tim 6:1 ff.

"chaste" as does 1 Pet 3:2, and in Titus 2:5 Paul urges that wives "be submissive to their own husbands" (*hypotassomenas tois idiois andrasin*) as in 1 Pet 3:5; 1 Tim 2:11 (*hypotagē*).⁶² In Titus Paul's use of the language of submission of a *gynē* to an *anēr* comports precisely with his practice in Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:18–19 where in each case Paul urges not that women in general should be submissive to men in general but that wives should be submissive to their own husbands. In the face of this established pattern of usage only the most compelling evidence should be allowed to overturn the presumption that *hypotagē* ("submission") in 1 Timothy 2 has to do with a requirement specifically for wives rather than women in general.⁶³

But it is the extensive verbal and conceptual parallels between 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Peter 3 that must be determinative for our exegesis of 1 Timothy 2. These parallels are so impressive that Selwyn, among others, assumes "dependence of both on a common source."⁶⁴ Dibelius and Conzelmann likewise acknowledge their existence and even add an exclamation point to indicate their astonishment that Peter would have this same material in a household code.⁶⁵ But rather than adjusting their theory to the facts—that is, rather than concluding that 1 Timothy 2 is also a household code—they prefer to assume what needs to be proven: that 1 Timothy 2 is concerned solely with worship. For this reason they conclude that "the regulations in 1 Tim are not a uniform piece, but rather represent a collection of various [disparate] materials."⁶⁶

The following comparison of 1 Tim 2:8–15 and 1 Pet 4:1–7 is offered to demonstrate the extensive nature of the parallels between these passages.

1 TIMOTHY 2:8–15

⁸Therefore I want *husbands* (*tous andras*) everywhere to *pray* (*proseuchesthai*), lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing [with their wives].

⁹Likewise, I want *wives* (*gynaikas*) to *adorn* (*kosmein*) themselves with proper *dress* (*kosmiō*), with decency and propriety, not with *braided* (*plegmasin*) hair or *gold* (*chrysiō*) or pearls or expensive

1 PETER 3:7, 1–6

⁷*Husbands* (*hoi andres*), in the same way live considerately with your wives, showing them honor as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your *prayers* (*proseuchas*).

¹In the same way, *wives* (*gynaikes*), be *submissive* (*hypotassomenai*) to your *husbands* (*andrasin*) so that, if any of them do not

⁶² *Hagnos*, "chaste," is found only eight times in the NT.

⁶³ While noting that 1 Tim 2:11–15 is concerned with conduct at church meetings, W. Lock notes that "the word *hypotagē* suggests a reference to the whole relation of wife to husband, cf. Eph 5:23" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924] 32).

⁶⁴ E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (2d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1946) 432–435. Cf. also Lock, who makes the alternative suggestion that 1 Peter depends on 1 Timothy (*Pastoral* 31).

⁶⁵ Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral* 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

clothes (himatismō), ¹⁰but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship *God (theosebeian)*. ¹¹A wife should learn in *quietness (hēsychiā)* and full *submission (hypotagē)*. ¹²I do not permit a *wife (gynaiki)* to teach—that is, to boss her *husband (andros)*; she must be *quiet (hēsychiā)*.

¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴And Adam was not deceived, but his wife was deceived and became a sinner. ¹⁵But she will be saved even through [the seemingly mundane work of] childrearing—that is, if they continue in faith, love and *holiness (hagiasmō)* with propriety.

obey the word, they may be won over without a word by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the reverence and purity of your lives. ³Your *adornment (kosmos)* should not be merely outward—*braiding (emplokēs)* your hair, wearing *gold (chrysiōn)* and putting on *clothes (himatiōn)*. ⁴Instead it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and *quiet (hēsychiou)* spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

⁵For this is the way the *holy wives (hagai gynaikēs)* of the past who put their hope in *God (theon)* used to *adorn (ekosmoun)* themselves. They were *submissive (hypotassomenai)* to their own *husbands (andrasin)*, ⁶like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

In assessing these two passages, in addition to the close correspondence between the italicized words the following additional points may be made.⁶⁷

Although neglected by Selwyn, the similarity of these passages goes beyond the concern for wifely submission to include a shared warning to husbands against domestic strife that would undermine their prayer life (which matter Peter addresses only after first dealing with the wives, while Paul simply chooses the reverse order). Very few passages elsewhere in the NT concern themselves with problems that may hinder one's prayer life, and hence the comparison offered here appears all the more striking.

The cognate terms for "braided" hair (*plegmasin, emplokēs*) are found nowhere else in the entire NT besides these two passages. The terms rendered "quiet" (*hēsychiā, hēsychiou*) are found in only three other verses (one of which is 1 Tim 2:2).⁶⁸ And the terms for "adorn" (*kosmiq̄, kosmein, kosmos*) are found in only nine other passages.

Paul's appeal to Adam and Eve as a paradigm for marriage functions in a parallel manner to Peter's appeal to Abraham and Sarah. Of course

⁶⁷ The presence of synonyms may further link these passages. Note in particular how the troublesome *hōsautōs*, "likewise," in 1 Tim 2:9 corresponds to *hōmoiōs* found in 1 Pet 3:1, 7. Cf. Nicole, "Authority" 47 n. 1.

⁶⁸ If the cognate verb *hēsychazō* is included, this adds only five further occurrences.

Abraham and Sarah are an especially attractive paradigm for marriage for those who would share Peter's Jewish heritage (whether they are ethnic Jews to whom he was possibly writing [so 1 Pet 1:1] or all believers who are now Jews "inwardly" and so have come to share this common heritage [cf. 1 Pet 2:9–10]). But Paul, writing to Timothy with his mixed Jewish and Gentile parentage (see Acts 16:10), appropriately reaches all the way back in Biblical history to choose the one couple whose marriage is clearly paradigmatic for both Jews and Gentiles—namely, Adam and Eve.

A family/home setting for 1 Tim 2:8–15 comports entirely with the rather flexible and informal outline of 1 Timothy. It appears that 1 Timothy 2–3 comprises a partial "household code" as Paul considers in turn first the "governmental" needs of society (roughly 2:1–7), then of the home (2:8–15), and finally of the church (roughly 1 Timothy 3).

Apart from an interpretation that recognizes that our text is concerned with the proper ordering of family life, one is otherwise left with virtually no treatment of this vital issue in a letter that admits that there was a dire need precisely in this area (1 Tim 4:3).⁶⁹

As against those who would disparage marriage and the homemaking role as unspiritual (4:3; 5:14), Paul concludes our passage by urging that childbearing/childrearing need not be a detriment to salvation, provided that such a wife "continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty."⁷⁰

In such a context, what precisely is Paul forbidding when he prohibits wives from "teaching" their husbands? First of all it should be noted that the grammar of 1 Tim 2:12 admits several possible ways of construing "to teach" (*didaskein*). If we disregard Paul's customary use of the connective *oude* (RSV "or"), perhaps the simplest way of interpreting the first clause is to read it as a general prohibition of a wife teaching anything to anyone (since the clause includes no explicit object that might limit the reference of the verb). But this is an unlikely interpretation of the verse since Paul elsewhere not only implies his approval of mothers teaching their children (2 Tim 3:14–15; cf. 1:5) but quite explicitly encourages older women to teach (Titus 2:3–4).

A second way of interpreting the first clause of 1 Tim 2:12 is to assume that "her husband" (*andros*), which is the object of the second verb ("to have authority"), also serves as an implied object for the first verb. In this case Paul intends to prohibit wives from "teaching" only their own husbands. Furthermore, although in the past the grammar of 2:12 has often been construed as though Paul intended to prohibit two distinct things—a wife "teaching" her husband, a wife "exercising authority over" her husband—P. B. Payne has recently argued that such an interpretation of the

⁶⁹ Cf. also 1 Tim 3:11; 5:13–15; 2 Tim 3:6.

⁷⁰ A particular strength of this interpretation of 2:15 is that it understands "save" as bearing its customary Pauline soteriological sense without introducing a notion of "works righteousness." Cf. Scholer, "Place" 195–197. Likewise Jeremias has argued that the duty of childbearing here is stressed to offset the encouragement of the false teachers to an unnatural abstention. But alternative interpretations for "save" have been proposed that are equally attractive. It is not possible to consider the merits of these within the present study.

conjunction *oude* finds no close parallel among any of its 34 other occurrences in Paul's writings.⁷¹ Rather, everywhere else *oude* joins closely interrelated concepts that reinforce each other or express a single coherent idea. Even if some of the examples cited by Payne admit an alternative explanation where the concepts being conjoined are not so clearly interrelated, as applied to 1 Tim 2:12 this evidence does suggest that the second clause ("to have authority over her husband") may well be appositional and explanatory of the first ("to teach"), not only supplying the first with its required object but also more precisely defining the sort of "teaching" that Paul has in view.

Understood in this way, Paul's concern is to prohibit only the sort of teaching that would constitute a failure of the requisite wifely "submission" to her husband (the very concern with which v. 11 concludes). In other words, juxtaposed as it is to the prohibition against "exercising authority over her husband," however we are to understand the problematic term *authentēin* the term "teach" in this context acquires a strident or pejorative connotation.⁷²

A special advantage of this interpretation is that it yields yet one more comparison between 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Peter 3. In 1 Pet 3:1 Peter prohibits wives from teaching the gospel to their unbelieving husbands.⁷³ It is not that Peter is unconcerned for evangelism or is unaware that a wife may know some things that her husband does not. Rather, Peter appears alert to the very real danger of a wife vaunting herself over her husband with her superior knowledge, and so he expresses his desire that husbands be won "without a word by the behavior of their wives."

As a final point, to limit the context of this exhortation to the domestic sphere, as is being argued here, is not to say that wifely submission can be

⁷¹ Payne, "Oude." He regards the following examples as bearing the greatest similarity to 1 Tim 2:12: Rom 3:10; 9:16; 1 Cor 2:6; 5:1; 11:16; Gal 1:17; 2 Thess 3:8; 1 Tim 6:16.

⁷² Here we may compare the use of "teach," for example, in Matt 28:15. There the soldiers were "taught" by the chief priests and elders what to say concerning the missing body of our Lord. In Matthew and in 1 Timothy we should not be thinking so much of teachers pulling out a chalkboard as pulling out a gun. "Teach" has become an approximate synonym of "tell," "order" or "boss." Payne considers the following three options to be most likely: "to teach a man autonomously," "to teach a man in a contentious manner," "to teach a man in a domineering manner" ("Oude" 9-10). For a fuller discussion of *authentēin*, cf. n. 9 above. Lock suggests that "to lord it over," "to dictate to," is the antithesis of *autos sou kyrieusei* ("he shall rule over you"), Gen 3:16^a (Pastoral 32). Cf. also Powers, "Ethical" 228. In deciding between the various alternative interpretations of *authentēin* it may help to note that Paul's citation of Adam and Eve in 1 Tim 2:13 ff. is introduced with an apparently explanatory *gar* ("for"). From this it appears quite plausible, as Lock suggests, that Paul may have had Gen 3:16 in mind when he wrote v. 12. In Gen 3:16 Eve is told that while she will seek to usurp her husband's authority, God's remedy for this anticipated discord is for the husband to "rule over" her. The close parallel to Gen 3:16 found in 4:7 suggests that Eve's "desire" for her husband, like sin's "desire" for Cain, is one of illicit mastery over her husband. Cf. S. T. Foh, "What Is the Woman's Desire?", *WTJ* 37 (1975) 376-383.

⁷³ Although Peter does not employ *didaskō*.

safely set aside the moment a couple walks out of their home. Familial responsibilities in general, and the marriage order in particular, continue to take precedence whether a married couple is out shopping, at work, or in church. The point is, rather, that a wife's responsibility to be submissive is precisely limited to familial concerns and as such would not necessarily prohibit her from being the president of the company where her husband is employed or of the country where her husband resides.⁷⁴ R. Nicole makes the analogous observation that it would constitute no necessary violation of Biblically mandatory parental authority for a son to become a general of the army in which his father serves or the president of their country.⁷⁵

Of course even if we acknowledge this distinction of possible spheres of authority and accept the posited restriction of 1 Tim 2:8–15 to familial concerns we have not thereby established the right of women, including wives, to exercise ecclesiastical authority. Besides requiring a closer exegesis of 1 Cor 11:2–16; 14:33–35⁷⁶ this larger, more difficult question will rest finally on one's assessment of the precarious evidence of a handful of NT examples of women in authority (e.g. Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia, Euodia, Syntyche), some accounting for the notable lack of female apostles in the ministry of our Lord,⁷⁷ and, perhaps most crucially, a determination of whether the NT eldership is modeled on the ministry of the OT priests

⁷⁴ See the helpful distinction between political-societal and domestic spheres in Foh's discussion of the Biblical requirement of submission (*Women*). Reflecting such a distinction, presumably Deborah was a submissive wife to her husband Lappidoth in terms of their domestic life, while in the political sphere she was a judge over Israel, including her husband. In a similar manner it may be that a requirement to be submissive in the familial sphere would not necessarily require submission in the ecclesiastical sphere (a man's slave could conceivably be his elder at church, etc.). For example, although Rom 13:1–2 exhorts believers to "be subject (*hypotassesthō*) to the governing authorities," using the same terminology as Paul applies to wifely submission, it is doubtful that this command would prohibit a believer from being an elder of a church where a senator, president or king might be in attendance. Naturally, special wisdom and care would be required by such an elder not to allow his rightful ecclesiastical authority to tempt him to challenge or compromise the rightful political authority of his church member (such as by threatening excommunication unless taxes are reduced, etc.).

⁷⁵ R. Nicole, "Woman, Biblical Concept of," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Ellwell) 1178. Cf. e.g. Joseph, who ruled over his father in his capacity as vice-regent of Egypt (Gen 37:10; 47:11–12).

⁷⁶ In spite of the ecclesiastical setting envisioned in these texts it appears probable that Paul intends a reference specifically to the husband-wife relationship, as in 1 Tim 2:8–15, rather than male-female relationships in general (cf. 1 Cor 14:35). For a useful introduction to these texts cf. W. L. Liefeld, "Women, Submission and Ministry in 1 Corinthians," *Women* (ed. Mickelsen) 134–154; A. F. Johnson, "Response," *ibid.* 154–160, who favor the right of women to exercise ecclesiastical authority; W. Grudem, "Prophecy—Yes, But Teaching—No: Paul's Consistent Advocacy of Women's Participation without Governing Authority," *JETS* 30/1 (1987) 11–23, who opposes this right.

⁷⁷ Possibly due to the same motive that determined our Lord's choice of precisely twelve apostles—namely, a symbolic interest in pointing to his Church as the New Israel.

(which was restricted to men) or alternatively modeled on the OT eldership,⁷⁸ which appears—at least in the case of Deborah—to have permitted women among its ranks.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ In support of the supposition that the “judges” of the book of Judges, including Deborah, were in fact elders, cf. Deuteronomy 1, which melds together Exodus 18 (the appointment of the judges) and Numbers 11 (the appointment of the seventy elders) with the implication that these two chapters record the same event. While important in their own right, the so-called “equality texts” (e.g. Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:11–12; 1 Pet 3:7), considered by some scholars to favor the right of women to hold church office, are not so decisive in our judgment. Cf. R. W. Pierce, “Male/Female Leadership and Korah’s Revolt: An Analogy?”, *JETS* 30/1 (1987) 3–10. Also indecisive, in our judgment, is an appeal to the masculine orientation of the requirements for overseers and deacons in 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1 (e.g. that a candidate should be “the husband of but one wife,” etc.), as if this by itself would necessarily prohibit women from consideration. As is widely recognized, it is the common practice of the Bible to express legal norms from the male vantage point, perhaps as much to achieve an economy of expression as a reflection of circumstances that would have been culturally typical. The Tenth Commandment, for example, states: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant, etc.” The fact that this text mentions “your neighbor’s wife” rather than “your neighbor’s husband” and that all the references to “you” and “your” throughout the verse are masculine (in Hebrew) rather than feminine ought not to be misinterpreted as if this commandment applies only to men. In the absence of other constraints, norms that utilize male-oriented terminology ought to be construed in general as including both sexes in their purview. Appropriately, at least according to one interpretation of Mark 10:12, it appears that Jesus recognized this principle with respect to the male-oriented divorce law of Deut 24:1–4 when he applied its provision to a divorce initiated by a wife. Likewise, even though the male-oriented language of 1 Tim 3:8–13 would seem to allow only male deacons (assuming *gynaiikas* in 3:11 refers to the wives of deacons), in Rom 16:1 Paul may intend to identify Phoebe as a “deacon.” Cf. e.g. C. E. B. Cranfield, who regards the identification as “virtually certain” (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979] 2.781).

⁷⁹ Without implying their agreement, the author would like to thank the following for taking the trouble to read and interact with this essay: Peter L. Aberle, Gregory K. Beale, L. David Green, Aida B. Spencer, and Gordon J. Wenham.