

WOMEN'S PROHIBITION TO TEACH MEN: AN INVESTIGATION INTO ITS MEANING AND CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION

ROBERT L. SAUCY*

The impetus of this investigation into the meaning and application of Paul's prohibition for women to teach or exercise authority over men comes from the tension that seems to exist between this command as it has often been interpreted and the actual ministry of women in the NT Church. It is not my purpose in the present study to debate the basic meaning or the permanence of the apostle's words in 1 Tim 2:12. In my opinion this passage, along with a number of similar teachings concerning the relationship of man and woman in the church and in the home, is most naturally interpreted as prescribing an order between man and woman.¹ I concur with Clark Pinnock's assessment that the plainest and simplest and therefore the best interpretation of these texts leads to some form of what has been popularly known as hierarchicalism.² To this I might add the testimony of human history, which consistently reveals the reality of patriarchy—a reality that, despite its sinful conditioning, is still most easily explained as having its basis in nature.³

On the other hand, Scripture reveals a significant ministry of women among God's people, especially in the NT Church. This Biblical picture of the activity of women seems often incompatible with the actual practice of the contemporary conservative church under the observance of the Pauline prohibition. It is especially evident in speaking ministries related to the

* Robert Saucy is professor of systematic theology at Talbot School of Theology, 13800 Biola Avenue, La Mirada, CA 90639

¹ Cf also 1 Cor 11 3-12, 14 34-35, Eph 5 22-24, Col 3 18, Titus 2 5, 1 Pet 3 1, 5 In each of these texts some form of the word *hypotassō*, meaning "order under" or "subordinate," is found describing a relationship of woman to man or wife to husband

² C H Pinnock, "Biblical Authority and the Issues in Question," *Women, Authority and the Bible* (ed A Mickelsen, Downers Grove InterVarsity, 1986) 51-58 Cf also Stott's conclusion concerning Paul's teaching "All attempts to get rid of Paul's teaching on headship (on grounds that it is mistaken, confusing, culture-bound or culture-specific) must be pronounced unsuccessful It remains stubbornly there It is rooted in divine revelation, not human opinion, and in divine creation, not human culture In essence, therefore, it must be preserved as having permanent and universal authority" (J Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* [Old Tappan Revell, 1990] 269-270)

³ See S Goldberg, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* (New York Willam Morrow, 1974), D J Ayers, "The Inevitability of Failure The Assumptions and Implementations of Modern Feminism," *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (ed J Piper and W Grudem, Wheaton Crossway, 1991) 315-321

Word. For example, how often does one hear a woman speak in what might be termed the primary gathering of the church, except perhaps to make announcements for women's activities? How does one square the present limited activity in the church with the Biblical picture of women praying and prophesying? Since prophecy was an important activity in the Church of the apostle's time, does the women's part in this significant ministry have any corresponding activity in those churches that no longer have the same place for prophecy as did the Church in the apostolic era? What about the apostle's listing of women as his "co-workers" in the spread of the gospel, which no doubt involved considerable speaking of the Word (Rom 16:2; Phil 4:2-3)?⁴ Or Priscilla along with Aquila instructing Apollos in what must have been considerably advanced theology? Are such ministries compatible with the traditional understanding and implementation of Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 2?

Beyond the Biblical picture of the actual ministry of women, I would suggest that two other issues seem worthy of consideration for their pertinence to the meaning and implementation of Paul's prohibition. Scripture teaches that man and woman were created as complementary and therefore different. Now normally our created differences are taken up in God's service and no doubt are partially responsible for the fact that there are what the apostle terms "varieties of ministries" within the spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:4-5). Given the gender differences of men and women that are the result of the created complementariness,⁵ the question might be asked

⁴ Ollrog defines "co-worker" in Paul's usage as "one who labors together with Paul as commissioned by God at the shared 'work' of mission preaching" (W H Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter* [WMANT 50, Neukirche Neukirchener, 1979] 67, cited by J D G Dunn, *Romans 9-16* [WBC 38b, Dallas Word, 1988] 892) Similarly Witherington says, with regard to Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 3 2-3), "In light of what we have learned about Paul's *synergoi*, this text strongly suggests that the two women engaged in the spreading of the Gospel with Paul. An *eu angelistes* was one who preached the Good News Paul's readers were unlikely to exclude these women from such a task when Paul called Euodia and Syntyche his co-workers 'fighting with me in the spread of the Gospel'" (B Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* [Cambridge Cambridge University, 1988] 112)

⁵ Although some have sought to deny any significant differences between man and woman beyond the physical, there is considerable evidence to the contrary. The biological differences lead to distinct gender-specific psychology and actions, which is only natural given the holistic nature of the human being. For a good discussion of gender-specific behavior based on various biological distinctions in the human male and female cf G Johnson, "The Biological Basis for Gender-Specific Behavior," *Recovering* (ed Piper and Grudem) 280-293. For gender differences see also C Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge Harvard University, 1982). The empirical evidence is borne out by practical experience. Tournier concludes "Man and woman are basically different, far more so than they believe. I will go so far as to say that never can a man completely understand a woman, nor a woman a man" (P Tournier, *To Understand Each Other* [Atlanta John Knox, 1967] 38). More recently M S Peck asserted the same conclusion "Men and women are uniquely different. While anatomic differences are obvious, over the years I have come to be equally aware of the nonanatomic differences—of not only our different sexes but also our different sexualities, our different styles. The argument is endless regarding the degree to which psychological femininity and masculinity are genetically or culturally determined. But while the nature/nurture debate rages on, no one—least of all myself—can doubt the profound difference between the spirit of maleness and the spirit of femaleness. Subjectively and objectively, I, a

as to what this says, if anything, in relation to the ministry of the Word. Do women in their difference tend to focus on different elements of the many-faceted truth of God's Word that are complementary to those of men? Is this complementary ministry of the Word needed in the church body? If so, how is it incorporated?

Finally and perhaps more importantly, the Church is frequently described as the household or family of God. Is this analogous to the social family? If so, is there a place for women's ministry in the church family comparable to that of wife and mother in the social family? If the answer is positive, what would this mean especially in relation to speaking ministries?

In seeking to understand the Pauline prohibition against women teaching men and its implementation, I will first consider the specific meaning of "teach" in the passage. Does this prohibition allow for other kinds of teaching or ministering of the Word? Finally, I will seek the import of the complementary nature of man and woman and the significance of calling the Church a "family" on the question of women's ministry of the Word.

1. THE VARIETY OF SPEAKING MINISTRIES OF THE WORD

When we think of speaking ministries in most of our contemporary evangelical churches our minds go directly to some form of "teaching" or "preaching." Because the latter is viewed as including teaching, the prohibition against women's teaching frequently results in the exclusion of women from both of these activities in relation to men. Consideration of Scripture reveals a considerable variety in the use of the verb *didaskō* ("teach"). In addition there are other closely related concepts represented by other terminology.

1. *The basic meaning of "teach."* The meaning of "teach" in the NT is derived from the OT where *didaskō* is frequently used to translate Hebrew *lmd* in the LXX. Like the secular Greek concept of teaching, Jewish teaching involved the communication of knowledge. The task of the NT teacher, according to Dunn, involved the two functions of passing on tradition and interpreting it.⁶

But the Biblical concept of teaching differed quite radically from secular Greek teaching in the matter of its goal. Whereas the Greek teacher sought to impart knowledge and skills, teaching for the Jew sought to change one's entire life. Wegenast notes this difference in his explanation of the use of *didaskō* in the LXX where he says it "does not primarily denote the communication of knowledge and skills (e.g. 2 Sam 22:35), but means chiefly instruction in how to live (e.g. Deut 11:19; 20:18 and passim), the

man, am dramatically different from you, a woman" (M S Peck, *The Different Drum* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987] 175)

⁶ J D G Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 282

subject matter being the will of God.”⁷ The ministry of teaching in the OT sense that carried over to the early Church was therefore concerned “with the whole man and his education in the deepest sense.”⁸ It included the intellect, but its final goal was the will. As Filson says: “Where information was handed on, or any skill developed, this was done in order to promote the fullest possible achievement of God’s will. . . . Such teaching was directed not merely to the mind, but to the whole man, and especially to his will.”⁹ The centrality of this concept in the Biblical concept of teaching is seen when Rengstorf says that “to the Jewish ear *didaskēin* suggests the successful and total moulding of the will of another by one’s own.”¹⁰

This central concept in teaching, that of molding the will, suggests that there is considerable authority in this function. Thus Clark, for example, in his explanation of the word in the Pauline prohibition against women teaching men explains that NT teaching was “an activity involving personal direction and an exercise of authority.”¹¹ While it no doubt had this authority in some usages, we will see that there are gradations of authority among the various NT uses of the term “teach.” Moreover even in the most authoritative instances care must be taken not to make the teacher in the church the equivalent of a Jewish rabbi who drew disciples under his personal authority. For the members of the early Church, including the authoritative teachers, Jesus remained the Rabbi or Teacher preeminent and they his disciples (cf. Matt 23:8). As Dunn notes: “Where a teacher-pupil relationship, such as we find in Judaism between rabbi and pupil, developed in Corinth, Paul was quick to denounce it, and to rally the community as a whole under the one banner of Christ (1 Cor 1:10–17).”¹²

2. *The various uses of “teach” in the early Church.* The words “teach” (*didaskō*) and “teacher” (*didaskalos*) are used in a variety of ways throughout the NT.¹³ In the gospels their primary application is to Jesus as the Teacher. In fact, while the teaching function is attributed to Jesus’ disciples in the gospels, they are never termed “teachers.” Only John the Baptist (Luke 3:12), Nicodemus (John 3:10) and the scribes (Luke 2:46) are “teachers” along with Jesus in the gospel records. In the remainder of the NT dealing with the early Church, both the function of “teaching” and the title “teacher” are used to describe ministries in the Church.

Consideration of this teaching ministry in the Church shows that it took place in a variety of ways by different people. In the first instance there were those who were called “teachers.”¹⁴ Mentioned third after apos-

⁷ K Wegenast, “Teach,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed C Brown, Grand Rapids Zondervan, 1978) 3 760, for the difference between the secular Greek and Hebrew meanings of “teach” cf also K H Rengstorf, “*didaskō*,” *TDNT* 2 135–138

⁸ *Ibid* 137

⁹ F V Filson, “The Christian Teacher in the First Century,” *JBL* 60 (1941) 318

¹⁰ Rengstorf, “*didaskō*” 143

¹¹ S B Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor Servant, 1980) 196

¹² Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 283

¹³ Wegenast, “Teach” 761–765, 767–771, Rengstorf, “*didaskō*” 138–148, 152–159

¹⁴ This terminology is found in only four places (Acts 13 1, 1 Cor 12 28–29, Eph 4 11, Jas 3 1)

tles and prophets in 1 Corinthians 12, "teachers" were those who were recognized as having this regular ministry in the Church. It is perhaps not going beyond the truth to speak of them as holding the "teaching office." Their function, according to Dunn, "would involve learning and studying, and would thus more or less from the first be part or full time work or 'profession', with teachers dependent for their material support on their fellow Christians, particularly those whom they taught (Gal 6.6)." It would therefore have "more the character of 'office' than any other of the regular ministries."¹⁵ This understanding is supported by the close connection of "teacher" with "pastor" in Eph 4:11, probably signifying the same person.¹⁶ Whether all those recognized as "teachers" actually held the office of pastor or elder is not certain. Later evidence from Church history indicates that some known as "teachers" traveled from church to church and therefore probably did not hold the office of bishop or elder in a church. It is Lindsay's conclusion that "teachers" did not necessarily hold church office in the sense of elder or bishop but that they could be chosen to do so.¹⁷ Paul's reference to some "teaching things they should not teach" (Titus 1:11) and the warning against seeking "teachers" that would simply tickle ears may also indicate the possibility of teaching outside of an office. The objection against such teachers is not that they are functioning illegitimately but that they are teaching error.

The function of teaching, however, was not limited to those known as "teachers" or those holding church office. The apostle appears to conceive of many bringing a "teaching" for the edification of the gathered church (1 Cor 14:26). Even as it was possible for some to prophesy who did not do so as their regular ministry and would therefore not be known as "prophets" (cf. 14:31),¹⁸ so also the apostle thought of teaching "in terms of particular teachings given by those not necessarily regarded as teachers."¹⁹

Finally, most interpreters see the NT ascribing a teaching ministry to all church members when Paul writes to the Colossians: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom" (Col 3:16 NIV).²⁰ The exact nature of such teaching is never explained. Banks may be correct when he says that here Paul probably has in mind "the informal teaching and exhorting of one another that went on

¹⁵ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 283, cf. Wegenast, "Teach" 768, P H Davids, *The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1982) 136 J Adamson speaks of an "order of 'teachers'" within the congregations of the Jewish diaspora (*The Epistle of James* [Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1976] 140)

¹⁶ M Barth, *Ephesians 4-6* (AB 34A, Garden City Doubleday, 1974) 438 Barth translates the words in question as "teaching shepherds," adding "While sometimes in the NT 'teachers' and 'shepherds' (or the equivalent of shepherds) are mentioned separately, and at other occasions the titles 'bishop' and 'elder' occur, all these functions probably belong together" Cf also Rengstorf, "*didaskō*" 158

¹⁷ T Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries* (Minneapolis James Family, 1977) 103-106

¹⁸ C K Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York Harper, 1968) 329

¹⁹ Dunn, *Romans* 729

²⁰ P T O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (WBC 44, Waco Word, 1982) 208

throughout the Christian meetings rather than some formal exhortatory address.²¹ The picture in this text may be similar to that in 1 Cor 14:26 (discussed above) where various people were able to share a teaching. At any rate it indicates, as Knight points out, that "Paul does not restrict teaching to ministers in distinction from other Christians."²² Nor does it seem that there is any restriction here to men.

Similar reference to the general teaching function of all members of the Church is found in Heb 5:12 where the writer rebukes his readers for their lack of growth by telling them that they should by now all be "teachers." The meaning, as Hughes explains, is not that they should all be "in official teaching positions in the church." They should, however, be sufficiently knowledgeable to be able "to instruct and edify those who are still young in the faith."²³ Consideration of the NT evidence thus shows that the teaching function of the Church was carried on through various means involving not only stated teachers but also finally all members.

3. *The range of authority in teaching.* While a certain authority is probably indicated by *didaskō* in all of its uses, there appears to be quite a latitude of gradations. Christ amazed his hearers with the authority of his teaching (e.g. Matt 7:28–29; Mark 1:22). For his disciples, his teaching carried absolute authority because of his person.²⁴ The apostles as the commissioned and inspired representatives of Christ likewise claimed canonical authority for their teaching (e.g. 1 Cor 14:37).

When we move to the nonapostolic "teachers" within the Church, there is obviously some lesser degree of authority. The highest authority was probably assigned to the regular teaching of a recognized leader—that is, an elder/bishop/pastor. Teaching by those who were not elders or pastors and therefore had no authority as official leaders was no doubt somewhat less authoritative in the Church. Similarly the various "teachings" that individuals may have brought in the gathered church and the mutual teaching of all would not have functioned with the same authority as that of leaders.

Consideration of the ministry of teaching in the NT Church therefore reveals a considerable variety both in terms of its functioning and the authority of the content.

²¹ R Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1980) 127

²² G W Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1992) 141, cf Wegenast, "Teach" 765

²³ P E Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1977) 190 Bruce similarly explains "The word *didaskalos* is used here in quite an informal sense, and not of trained catechists or anything like that. It was an axiom of Stoicism that anyone who had mastered true learning was in a position to impart it to others, and it is equally a Christian axiom" (F F Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* [Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1964] 107 n 80)

²⁴ Rengstorf, "*didaskō*" 140–141, says that for early Christianity the teaching of Jesus was "in the absolute because with every word He brought His hearers into direct confrontation with the will of God as it is revealed in His Word and as it is constantly revealed in history" The teaching of the Spirit was similarly seen as carrying final authority (cf John 14 26, 1 John 2 27)

4. *Other ministries of the Word in the Church.* Contrary to the common identification all of the ministries of the Word in today's Church as essentially "teaching" or "preaching," there are many different terms used in relation to the communication of Christian truth. While in some instances the various terms are used as the equivalent of *didaskō* ("teach") they also appear to describe ministries that are not identical to that term. One such is *katēcheō*, from which we get our words "catechize" and "catechumen." In the NT it carries the sense of "tell about something" (Acts 21:21, 24) or "give instruction concerning the content of faith."²⁵ It is used twice in this latter sense in Gal 6:6: "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches." Again in 1 Cor 14:19 Paul asserts that rather than speak to the Church in tongues he would speak with his mind "that I may instruct others also." It is used again by Luke to describe Apollos as one who had "been instructed in the way of the Lord" (Acts 18:25; cf. Luke 1:4).

It may well be, as Beyer states, that such uses of *katēcheō* are the equivalent of *didaskō*.²⁶ Nevertheless *katēcheō* may indicate a certain kind of teaching that was carried on by those who were less than elders or bishops. The word became the standard term for baptismal instruction given to catechumens in the early postapostolic Church. Thus Wegenast states that it may be regarded as a "technical term for 'to instruct in the faith.'"²⁷ The postapostolic writings show that such instruction was frequently carried on by deacons, although under the authority of bishops.²⁸

Luke uses yet another term, *ektithēmi*, to describe the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila in instructing Apollos (Acts 18:26). The same word is used again in connection with Paul's explaining the truth of Christ to the Jews that came to him in Rome (28:23). The term means simply "explain, set forth,"²⁹ as is illustrated in its use in 11:4 where Luke records that "Peter began and explained everything" to those at Jerusalem concerning his experience of being directed to the house of Cornelius. Thus the term indicates something less than "teaching" in the sense of *didaskō*. Priscilla and Aquila simply explained "the way of God more accurately" to Apollos without the aim at the will and change of life that is found in Biblical teaching. A further term, *dianoigō*, which literally means "open," is also used for the explanation or interpretation of God's truth (Luke 24:32; Acts 17:3),³⁰ again probably with less weight of authority than *didaskō*.

²⁵ H W Beyer, "katēcheo," *TDNT* 3 638

²⁶ *Ibid* 639

²⁷ Wegenast, "Teach" 771

²⁸ With reference to the duties of deacons in the early Church, C E B Cranfield writes "The duty of assisting the bishop extended in some measure to the episcopal function of teaching. The *Didache* urges the congregation to appoint *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* as substitutes for the ministry of prophets and teachers. Hermas certainly links deacons with teachers, and deacons are not infrequently mentioned in connexion with catechetical teaching" ("Diakonia in the New Testament," *Service in Christ* [ed J I McCord and T H L Parker, Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1966] 58)

²⁹ BAGD 245

³⁰ *Ibid* 187

A frequent ministry that involved the communication of the Word is expressed by the word *parakaleō*. Depending on the context it can signify "be-seech," "comfort" or "exhort." Its mention in the list of spiritual gifts in Romans 12 indicates that it was a prominent ministry in the Church. Following in the list immediately after teaching, *parakaleō* here is probably best understood as exhortation but may also carry some idea of entreaty.³¹ While the activities of teaching and exhortation overlapped, they also had "certain differences of emphasis and method."³² The ministry of exhortation was no doubt a part of the teaching/preaching ministry by the leaders of the Church. But it was also to be exercised by the members of the congregation in relation to one another, although the exact form in which it was carried out is not revealed (cf. 1 Thess 4:18; 5:11, 14). A closely related term refers to the giving of admonition (*noutheteō*), which was also the responsibility of all believers (Rom 15:14; Col 3:16; 1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thess 3:15) toward each other as well as a function of the pastor.³³

Beyond these terms—and no doubt others that were used for the ministry of the Word within the Christian community—we can add the terminology used primarily in the proclamation of the truth to the world. This includes the various word groups connected with *angellō* and *kēryssō* and the concepts of witness and confession.³⁴ The great variety of terminology used for the ministry of the Word both toward believers in the Church and the outside world demonstrates a wide variety both in nature and authority in relation to the function of communicating God's truth in the early Church. There clearly were ministries beyond that of teaching and preaching.

II. THE MEANING OF "TEACH" IN 1 TIM 2:12

The variety of teaching functions expressed by the usual Greek word for teaching (*didaskō*) along with the other terms used for what we might often call "teaching" raises the question of the exact meaning of "teach" in Paul's prohibition of that function to women over men in 1 Tim 2:12. Is the apostle forbidding teaching in general, or a specifically limited concept of that function within the Church?

1. *The prominence of teaching in the pastoral epistles.*³⁵ In the consideration of "teaching" within the pastoral epistles, one is immediately struck with the prominence given to that ministry in those writings. If my

³¹ Dunn, *Romans* 730

³² C E B Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC, Edinburgh T and T Clark, 1979) 2 623

³³ J Behm, "*noutheteō, nouthesia*," *TDNT* 4 1021-1022

³⁴ On the basic meaning and use of *angellō, kēryssō*, and their derivatives cf U Becker, D Muller and L Coenen, "Proclamation, Preach, Kerygma," *New International Dictionary* (ed Brown) 3 44-57

³⁵ For a discussion of all of the terminology referring to the Christian faith in the pastorals, including both proclamation to the world and teaching within the community, cf P H Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction* (Sheffield JSOT, 1989) 121-129

counting is accurate, there are some 30 uses of words related to the basic word *didaskō*. Perhaps most significantly, out of 21 occurrences in the total NT of the word *didaskalia* ("teaching" either in the sense of the activity of teaching or that which is taught), 15 are found in the pastorals. In addition to the frequent use of the vocabulary of "teaching," many expressions are found relating to the content of teaching. The phrase *pistos ho logos* ("it is a trustworthy statement") is found five times in the pastorals (1 Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim 2:11; Titus 3:8) but nowhere else in the NT. The apostle also frequently speaks of "sound words," "the faith," and "that which has been entrusted."³⁶ Finally, the description of the Church "as the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15) underlies the importance of right teaching and opposition to false teachers in these epistles.³⁷

2. *The purpose of teaching in the pastorals.* The prominence of the teaching function in the pastorals is directly related to the great concern of the apostle evident throughout the epistles—namely, the preservation and transmission of the Christian tradition. The various expressions for the content of that which was rightly believed in the Church—for example, "the faith," "sound words," "trustworthy word," "faithful word"—reflect a definite body of teaching present in the Church.³⁸ The frequently used *didaskalia* in the singular, according to Rengstorf, was "particularly adapted to emphasise the binding character of the historical proclamation."³⁹ It is this fixed body of teaching that Paul has in view when he speaks of that which had been "entrusted" to those who were to "guard" it. The words the apostle uses (*phyllassō, parathēkē*) were technical terms for the concept of passing a commodity securely from one party to another "by entrusting it to an authorized agent." The concept was present among the Greeks, Romans and Jews but is used only three times in the NT, all in the pastorals (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:12, 14).⁴⁰ The same thought, however, is probably also to be understood in Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians "to hold the tradition" (2 Thess 2:15).

The fact that the concept of preserving and handing down the faith comes to the fore only in the pastorals is explained by the development that was taking place concerning divine revelation during the NT era. At its inception the Church received something new in the revelation of Christ. The apostles and prophets, described by the apostle as "the foundation of the church" (Eph 2:20), spoke under the direct inspiration of the Spirit. But as that manner of revelation diminished, the need to preserve the truth of Christianity rose in importance. Although his statement may

³⁶ "Sound words" (1 Tim 6:3, 2 Tim 1:13, cf 2 Tim 2:15), "the faith" (1 Tim 3:9, 4:1, 6:5, 8, 6:10, 12, 21, 2 Tim 3:8, 4:7, Titus 1:13, 2:2), "that which has been entrusted" (1 Tim 6:20, 2 Tim 1:12, 14) The word "sound" is often used with "teaching/doctrine" as well (cf 1 Tim 1:10, 2 Tim 4:3, Titus 1:9, 2:1), cf also "good teaching" (1 Tim 4:6, 16, 6:1, 3, 2 Tim 2:2, Titus 2:10)

³⁷ E Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (London SCM, 1961) 79

³⁸ A Sabatier, *The Apostle Paul* (London Hodder and Stoughton, 1903) 389

³⁹ Rengstorf, "*didaskō*" 162

⁴⁰ Towner, *Goal* 125

go too far in the contrast between the earlier and later Paul, Dunn aptly delineates this movement when he writes of the pastorals:

The finely tensed balance Paul had achieved between prophecy and teaching, that is between new revelations of the ever present eschatological Spirit and the passing on and interpretation of established tradition, seems to have gone. Wholly dominant is the concern to preserve the doctrinal statements of the past. The Spirit has become the power to guard the heritage of tradition handed on from the past (II Tim 1.14—*phylaxon dia pneumatos hagiou*). And even Paul himself is depicted more as the keeper of tradition than as its author (II Tim 1.12).⁴¹

Schweizer likewise affirms that it is "characteristic of the Pastoral Letters that all the stress is on 'guarding', which is to be ensured by the men who represent the connection with the apostle who has been entrusted with the doctrine—men who faithfully take over this teaching and hand it on unchanged."⁴²

According to the pastorals the task of keeping the tradition and faithfully passing it on is specifically related to the function of teaching. The ideas threatening the Church are described as contrary "teaching" (e.g. 1 Tim 1:3, "strange doctrines"; 4:1, "doctrine of demons") and those bringing them in are called "teachers" (e.g. 1:7, "teachers of the Law"; cf. 2 Tim 4:3; Titus 1:11). Similarly those exhorted to counter them are termed "teachers" who are to "teach" (cf. 1 Tim 4:11; 2 Tim 2:2) and so pass on the "teaching" that they have received from the apostle (3:10) who himself is pictured as a "teacher" (1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). From this total picture Wegenast thus concludes that in the pastorals "invariably 'to teach' involves passing on a tradition which is more or less fixed."⁴³

3. *The "authority" of the pastoral teachers.* The emphasis on teaching and the vital importance of its function in maintaining true Christian doctrine already suggest that considerable authority is attached to this ministry in the pastoral letters. This is further borne out by the fact that the teaching function in these letters is particularly associated with the community leaders. Along with the apostle Paul, whom we have seen identifies himself as a teacher (1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11) and refers to his teaching (3:10), that function is also to be a central part of the ministry of Timothy and Titus as apostolic delegates (1 Tim 4:11, 13; 6:2; 2 Tim 4:2, 16; cf. Titus 2:1; 2:7).⁴⁴ It is also clearly linked to the office of elder/bishop or pastor. Titus is told to appoint elders in the churches who hold fast to

⁴¹ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 348–349 Sabatier expresses the same movement toward preservation when he speaks of the pastorals as marking a new "phase of Paulinism, i.e., an era of 'conservative tradition'" (*The Apostle Paul* 263)

⁴² Schweizer, *Church Order* 79–80

⁴³ Wegenast, "Teach" 765, cf also J A Fitzmyer, "The Office of Teaching in the Christian Church According to the New Testament," *Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church* (ed P C Empie, T A Murphy and J A Burgess, Minneapolis Augsburg, 1976) 204–207

⁴⁴ D C Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles* (SBLDS 71, Chico Scholar's, 1983) 158

the "faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (1 5, 9) Apparently referring to the same office, one of the qualifications of an "overseer" or bishop is expressly stated as being "able to teach" (1 Tim 3 2) Interestingly that qualification does not appear for the deacon The ministry of teaching is also explicitly related to the office of elder in the instruction for giving double honor to those elders who work hard at "preaching and teaching" (5 17)

It is probably impossible to conclude that in the pastorals the function of teaching is limited to the official leader of the community, since as we have seen the false teachers are also given that title (cf 1 7, 4 3) Moreover the prohibition of women may only imply that there were some men other than the elders/bishops who had the right to teach Finally, there is no clear indication that the "faithful men" to whom Timothy was to entrust the teaching so that they could teach others were all elders/bishops (2 Tim 2 2)

Nevertheless, the strong association of teaching with the official leaders suggests that the primary responsibility of passing on the tradition according to the pastorals rests with the authoritative teaching of the stated leaders As Fitzmyer says

Here the function of the teacher is clearly predicated of the delegates of the apostle and of those whom they appoint as *episkopoi* It echoes, in effect, the gifts given to the Church in Eph 4 11, which may reflect something of the same tendency This does not mean, of course, that such officials are the only teachers in the (local) Christian community, but the Deutero-Pauline letters suggest that concern and wariness for sound doctrine rest with such appointees⁴⁵

The strong relationship of the function of teaching to the leaders in the pastorals clearly suggests that there is an authoritative element attached to it

Certain terminology related to the ministry of teaching also bears this out The menacing presence of heresy causes the teaching of the pastorals to take on a certain apologetic and polemical character that demands authority for the protection of the faithful⁴⁶ Thus Timothy is exhorted to "command and teach these things" (1 Tim 4 11 NIV) The Greek term translated "command" (*parangellō*) is used "of all kinds of persons in authority" and means generally to "give orders, command, instruct, direct"⁴⁷ The authority implied in this terminology, which is to characterize Timothy's teaching, is explained by Knight

⁴⁵ Fitzmyer, "Office" 206 Verner similarly says of the officers of the Church in the pastorals "Their most important functions involved the preservation, transmission and defense of the teaching This strong emphasis on the official leadership as the first line of defense against opposition to the teaching leads one to suspect that the teaching was in fact encountering significant opposition in the church" (*Household* 160)

⁴⁶ J Schlosser "La didascale et ses agents dans les epîtres pastorales," *RevScRel* 59 (April 1985) 93-94

⁴⁷ BAGD 613

The apostle of Christ (1:1) commands the servant of Christ (4:6) to continually command (*parangelle*, present imperative) that which the apostle has communicated (cf. 4:6). *Didaske* refers to the communication of the truth to which *parangelle* seeks obedience. *Tauta* indicates the content to be taught.⁴⁸

This same term expressing "command" is found in two other instances in connection with Timothy's instruction (1 Tim 5:7; 6:17).

Teaching is also associated with "exhortation" (*parakaleō*) when Paul tells Timothy: "These are the things that you are to teach and urge on them" (1 Tim 6:2 NIV; 4:13). The elder is to hold the "faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9; cf. 2:6). As this verse indicates, in addition to exhortation the leader must "refute" or "reprove" (*elenchō*; cf. also 1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 2:15) as well as "rebuke" (*epitimāō*, 2 Tim 4:2) as part of his ministry. These various terms are not the equivalent of "teaching" (*didaskō*). Nevertheless their explicit association with that function in some instances and the realization that it would be hard to exercise any of them without some teaching of truth suggests that the teaching ministry in the pastorals, being primarily associated with the community leaders, was one of authority. When it is recognized that the tradition that was to be passed on by the teacher was still primarily oral at this time, the significance of the authority attached to the teacher and his function in the pastorals may be even more readily understood.

4. *The specific "teaching" forbidden in 1 Tim 2:12.* In seeking the specific meaning of Paul's prohibition of women from teaching men in 1 Tim 2:12 it is imperative that this picture of the teaching function in the pastorals be kept in mind. When we place it in that perspective, it seems impossible to say of the passage, as Witherington does, that "the verb *didaskō* is simply a general one for teaching and does not suggest in itself a limitation to a particular kind of teaching, such as 'authoritative' preaching or teaching."⁴⁹ The teaching of the pastorals clearly suggests an authority that cannot be attributed in the same way to every use of teaching in the NT.

The authority involved in the specifically prohibited teaching is further emphasized when it is viewed in connection with the additional prohibition of "exercising authority over a man." Most probably *didaskō* ("teach") and *authentēō* ("exercise authority over") are to be understood not so much as two distinct activities but rather as two elements that "convey a single coherent idea."⁵⁰ The teaching is thus of a nature that would be the equivalent of exercising authority over those taught.

⁴⁸ Knight, *Pastoral* 204–205

⁴⁹ Witherington, *Women* 121

⁵⁰ P Payne explains "*Oude* in 1 Tim 2 12 ought to be translated in harmony with Paul's use elsewhere. Its translation should indicate that it joins together two elements in order to convey a single coherent idea, or if it convey two ideas these should be very closely interrelated" (*What Does the Scripture Teach About the Ordination of Women?* Part 2, "The Interpretation of I Timothy 2 11–15 A Surrejoinder" [Minneapolis: Evangelical Free, 1986] 104–108). Cf C L

On the basis of the entire pastoral concept of teaching and the immediate obviously authoritative context, most interpreters understand Paul as prohibiting women from the "teaching" that is done in the capacity of a leader of the church. Dunn, for example, says, "The teaching in 1 Tim 2:12 is probably envisaged as an official function."⁵¹ Similarly Blomberg concludes that "the only office or role forbidden to women in the NT is that of the highest 'authoritative teaching' position in the church."⁵² Others, while acknowledging that the prohibition excludes the official teaching as elder/bishop, nevertheless see it as more than a restriction from holding that office. Pointing out that functional rather than office language is used, Knight argues that the apostle is prohibiting "women from publicly teaching men, and thus teaching the church."⁵³

Although teaching in the pastorals is closely related to the official leaders of the community, it is probably impossible to be dogmatic in limiting Paul's prohibition to a certain office-holder. As I have noted, there may have been those who carried on a regular ministry of teaching without holding office. But it is also probable that these carried considerable authority in the community. Whether limited to office or not, what is clearly at issue in the prohibition is the relationship of man and woman. In my opinion, whatever the specific application of "teaching" it is the kind of "teaching" that gives women a position of authority over men. Perhaps it is best expressed by Clark when he says that "the passage concerns relationships of authority and subordination, and forbids a woman to hold a position of authority over men in the Christian community." Or again as he summarizes Chrysostom's understanding of the passage: "Paul in 1 Tim 2:12, does not forbid a woman all teaching. Paul is only prohibiting the headship of women in the Christian community."⁵⁴

III. THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE PAULINE PROHIBITION OF 1 TIM 2:12

That the apostle's prohibition concerning women teaching men is referring only to a particular ministry in the Church is clear to many. But exactly how this limited restriction works out in a church is not so evident. Several factors lead us to the conclusion that Scripture supports a greater participation in the ministry of the Word in the Church than is commonly found in many evangelical churches today.

Blomberg, "Not Beyond What Is Written: A Review of Aida Spencer's *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry*," *Criswell Theological Review* 2 (Spring 1988) 412, J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1963) 68, cf. also Barnett, who argues for the same conclusion based on the chiasmic structure of vv. 11-12 (P. W. Barnett, "Wives and Women's Ministry [1 Timothy 2:11-15]," *EvQ* 61 [January 1989] 232).

⁵¹ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 412-413 n. 12.

⁵² Blomberg, "Not Beyond" 418.

⁵³ Knight, *Pastoral* 141.

⁵⁴ Clark, *Man* 199, 305.

1. *Women's ministry of the Word to women.* One significant ministry of women involved the teaching of other women. While this is universally recognized, it is not frequently implemented in the contemporary Church. Clark argues that in the early Church "wherever a position for a man existed there also existed some complementary position for a woman." This is illustrated in the following statement from Clement:

The apostles, giving themselves without respite to the work of evangelism, as befitted their ministry, took with them women, not as wives but as sisters, to share in their ministry to women living at home: by their agency the teaching of the Lord reached the women's quarters without arousing suspicion.⁵⁵

This ministry of women teaching women in evangelism continued among the believers in the Church. Paul instructs the older women to teach the younger women "what is good" and in general instruct them "to be the kind of women the Lord wants them to be" (Titus 2:3-5). In other words, "the care of the younger women is entrusted to the older women."⁵⁶ The activity of teaching in the early Church thus involved men and women alike, although carried out in a different way.

2. *Women's ministry of the Word to both men and women.* Beyond the specific ministry of teaching other women, the NT also appears to teach the participation of women in a ministry related to the speaking of the Word that would involve men as well as women. Clearly prophecy was of such a nature. But aside from prophecy, which does not have the same presence in the Church today as it did in NT times, the gathered church practiced a ministry involving the Word in which any could contribute. When they came together, the apostle writes, "each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation" (1 Cor 14:26). There does not appear to be any indication that any of the ministries mentioned are restricted to men.

It is probable that something similar to this is being described in Paul's instruction to the Colossian church: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col 3:16 NIV). While "teaching" is included in both passages it is likely that the functions of exhortation and admonition were also exercised.

In the example of Priscilla we also have a woman instructing men. As Clark notes, this instruction "must have proceeded at a fairly high spiritual and intellectual level, because Apollos was a learned man and he went on to continue teaching afterwards. Therefore, Priscilla must have been well-educated as a Christian and capable of a high level of instruction."⁵⁷ The "instruction" may have been more that of "explaining" than

⁵⁵ Ibid. 132, 116 (source of Clement's words not given).

⁵⁶ Ibid. 108.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 107.

Biblical "teaching" aimed at the will. But it probably did not differ much from that which we call teaching in many situations of the Church today.

While some would see the fact that this was done in a home as an important factor,⁵⁸ the place where it was done is probably less significant than the kind of teaching or instruction that was taking place. If the authoritative teaching of the leaders of the community could be exercised in private homes as well as in the gathered community, is it not possible to conceive of the instruction of Apollos taking place in a Sunday-school room at church and with more than a single person?

Scripture thus reveals a Church that, in obedience to the Pauline prohibition of women exercising authoritative teaching over men, nevertheless had a significant participation of women in the ministry related to God's truth. Although the ministry was particularly focused on other women, it also included men.

Under the ultimate community leadership of men, the issue did not appear to be a sharp delineation of tasks that excluded women from any ministry related to the speaking of the Word. Rather, the question was the context and manner of their ministry. In general agreement with Stott and Packer, I would concur that some forms of "teaching" and the other ministries of exhortation and encouragement entailed in the broad ministry of *paraklēsis* would seem appropriate Biblically within the context of a team ministry in which the headship of man was recognized.⁵⁹ Participating as part of a team, women would minister as women. Noting that woman was created as a "suitable helper and thus a fit partner" for man, Packer describes the woman's ministry of the Word as "supporting and supplementing" that of the male leaders.⁶⁰

3. *The complementary relationship of man and woman.* The concept of a team ministry involving men and women points to the Biblical teaching of the complementary nature of man and woman. Scripture teaches that God made woman not simply as another person but as one that is different from man—and not only different but also complementary. The creation of man in such a way that he needs a partner who is described as a "helper" implies, as Westermann states, that "mutual help is an essential part of human existence."⁶¹

The need of man and woman for each other in the Church is found in the apostle's words: "In the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman" (1 Cor 11:11). These words, according to Fee, express the truth that "God has so arranged things that 'in the Lord' the one cannot exist without the other. . . . As believers man and

⁵⁸ Ibid 107-109

⁵⁹ Stott, *Decisive* 278, J I Packer, "Postscript I Believe in Women's Ministry," *Why Not? Priesthood and the Ministry of Women* (Sutton Courtenay Marcham Manor, 1976) 172-173

⁶⁰ Packer, "Postscript" 169, 172

⁶¹ C Westermann, *Genesis 1-11* (Minneapolis Augsburg, 1984) 227 Similarly F Delitzsch says, "Human beings cannot fulfil their destiny in any other way than in mutual assistance" (cited in *ibid*)

woman are mutually dependent on each other."⁶² The complementary relationship between men and women, as we have seen, existed in the early Church and especially in the ministry of women to women corresponding to the ministry of men among men.

But do the differences between men and women, which make them complementary and indispensable to each other and therefore to the wholeness of the community, also have a bearing on the ministry of the Word in the Church? Without attempting to delineate all of the distinctions between masculinity and femininity it is generally recognized that men are more likely to view "the world in terms of objects, ideas, and theories" whereas women see it "in personal, moral and aesthetic terms."⁶³ Man is more task-oriented and woman more relationally-oriented. Created as the helper and mother, woman is more supportive and nurturing whereas man is more adventurous and initiatory.⁶⁴ Emotional differences between man and woman are also generally recognized.

Now it must be acknowledged that the ministry of the Word is channeled through human personality. Even among men, the message of God's judgment on the one hand and his loving mercy on the other come through more powerfully through different individuals. We must all admit that our nature tends us toward emphasizing certain aspects of God's truth. I am not suggesting that the absence of women's participation in the ministry of the Word has caused the Church to go without certain themes of Scripture. I would ask, however, if women with their differences might not be intended by God to contribute certain emphases and dimensions of God's truth that would enrich in a complementary way the Church's hearing of the Word.

4. *The Church as a family.* The recognition of the complementary nature of man and woman, and their working as a team to accomplish the human task, is nowhere more clearly seen than in the family relationship. The many references to the Church as the family of God are surely intended to teach that the Church bears some resemblance to social family structures and practice.⁶⁵ Although limiting his discussion to the question of leadership, Poythress rightly says, "The Bible invites us to use these family teachings to draw some particular inferences about the respective roles of men and women within the church."⁶⁶ The concept of the family as providing the model for church structures is especially evident in the pastorals. According to Verner: "The author of the Pastorals conceptualizes the church as the household of God. He thus conceptualizes the social structure of the church

⁶² G D Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1987) 523

⁶³ Packer, "Postscript" 168, citing C Hutt, *Males and Females* (Harmondsworth Pelican, 1972) 132

⁶⁴ Clark, *Man* 389-390

⁶⁵ For the various expressions used in Scripture that point to the Church as God's family cf V S Poythress, "The Church as Family Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church," *Recovering* (ed Piper and Grudem) 233-236

⁶⁶ *Ibid* 233

on the model of the household ⁶⁷ The family structure also indicates the appropriate conduct of the different groups to accomplish God's goals ⁶⁸ Clark sums up the import of the Biblical teaching of the Church as a family in terms of actual practice, declaring that "the correspondence between the family and community goes to the heart of how the early Christians understood their life together If the life of the Christian people is lived as a family rather than as a social institution, the same roles are needed in both family and community" ⁶⁹

If, as Chrysostom put it, "a household is a little church" and "a church is a large household," ⁷⁰ is it possible to draw some lessons concerning the ministry of women in the church from the model of the home? Exactly how the model of the family comes over to the church is difficult to determine The evidence suggests that much of what we today associate with church ministry took place in the homes of the early Church members ⁷¹ Referring explicitly to teaching, Fletcher says

Instruction was often given collectively, in public or in private, "in the temple and at home" (Ac 5 42), in the Christian congregation (11 26), and more generally in the meeting for edification such as St Paul describes in detail (1 Co 14) Supplementary teaching was given privately "from house to house" (Ac 20 20) or to individuals (18 26) ⁷²

Based upon this evidence it is suggested that most of the women's church ministry took place in the home including the specific ministry of women teaching other women ⁷³ A rather sharp distinction is then drawn between teaching in the home, a ministry in which women shared, and public teaching, which was limited to men ⁷⁴

One wonders, however, how far such a distinction may be pressed If much of the church ministry was carried on in homes, perhaps the lines between public and private (i e home) were not so clearly drawn For example, if there had been another person along with Apollos, would Priscilla's instruction no longer have been private, or would another person have prohibited her from participating with her husband in that ministry? What takes place in some situations in our contemporary churches, such as Sunday-school classes or Bible studies, does not seem unlike what may have taken place in homes in the early Church

Since, as we have seen, Scripture does not appear to exclude women from all levels of teaching and other speaking ministries of the Word in the gathered community, the historical evidence of only men teaching in public may have reference to the particular authoritative teaching done by

⁶⁷ Verner *Household* 147

⁶⁸ Towner *Goal* 138

⁶⁹ Clark *Man* 134

⁷⁰ Chrysostom *Homily XX on Ephesians* (cited by Clark *Man* 134)

⁷¹ For a discussion of the ministry in relation to the home cf Clark *Man* 101-136

⁷² M S Fletcher "Teaching" *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* (ed J Hastings Edinburgh T and T Clark 1918) 2 551

⁷³ Clark *Man* 107

⁷⁴ *Ibid* 108-109

the community leaders. It therefore does not seem possible to sharply divide the ministry of the church family between public meetings and private homes.

Perhaps even more pertinent in relation to the Church as a family is the question of how far the analogy of the ministry of the wife and mother in the social family carries over to the place of women in the Church, specifically with regard to speaking ministries. According to Scripture, the father bore the ultimate responsibility for teaching in the household family. But the wife and mother also played a major role. Proverbs speaks of the necessity of heeding the father's instruction and the mother's teaching (cf. Prov 1:8; 6:20). The "excellent wife" of 31:26 is described as one who "opens her mouth in wisdom" and has "the teaching of kindness . . . on her tongue." The picture of this woman managing the household and family business affairs while her husband was concerned with the public business of community affairs presents the strong possibility that there would be servants, both men and women, in her household. Clark is probably correct when he says, "She instructs the household, possibly men and women alike, in how to live according to God's teaching."⁷⁵ If such is the case, does this picture of the wife instructing the household have any application to the household of the church?

Finally, observe the relationship of husband and wife expressed by Tertullian: "Together they pray, they work, they fast, teaching, exhorting, supporting one another."⁷⁶ If the Church is the family of God, does it rightfully include something of this mutuality of teaching and instruction between men and women? If the answer is positive, must that mutuality be limited to the social family in the home or does it belong to the larger family of the church? The fact that not all believers live with other believers in the context of their homes would seem to lead to the conclusion that it is also needed in the church.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Pauline prohibition of women teaching or exercising authority over men must be understood in harmony with the Biblical picture of the significant ministry of women in the Church, which includes the ministries of speaking in relation to the Word. While there is a strong emphasis on these being directed toward other women, they also include participation in the gathered community with men. Perhaps due not only to our contemporary form of church meetings that tends to restrict participation of all including men, but also to the tendency to extend Paul's prohibition to almost all kinds of speaking, the contemporary Church does not seem compatible with the Biblical picture.

The complementary nature of man and woman may also indicate that the Church could be enriched by a greater participation of the woman's

⁷⁵ *Ibid* 62

⁷⁶ Tertullian *Ad Uxorem* 2 9 (cited by Clark, *Man* 290-291)

voice in relation to the ministry of the Word. Perhaps most of all, the concept of the Church as a family seems to suggest a good model. Corresponding to the family, the headship of a church is represented by the elder/bishop. But the Biblical teaching suggests that the order of the family is represented not so much by a rigid task orientation as by the proper attitudes of man and woman toward each other. Even as the wife and mother has a significant ministry of teaching, instructing and even exhorting the family under the ultimate headship of her husband, is it not possible for women to have something of this in the Church? If a wife can at times lead family devotions even with her husband present (and we might add to his blessing and edification), is it not possible for women to have something of a corresponding ministry in the Church family?

Scripture teaches the ultimate leadership of the Church by men and therefore prohibits women from exercising teaching that has authority over men. But that prohibition must not be interpreted and implemented to the diminution of the Biblical picture of the significant ministry of women in the Church including the ministry of speaking the Word, a diminution that in my opinion is present in many churches today.