

# AN ASSESSMENT OF HICKS'S WOMEN SERVING GOD

By Ashby L. Camp

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In *Women Serving God: My Journey in Understanding Their Story in the Bible* (n.p.: John Mark Hicks, 2020), John Mark Hicks, Professor of Theology at Lipscomb University, uses an autobiographical format to argue that God desires women in "mixed" worship assemblies (where both men and women are present) to participate in the same way as men, including preaching and teaching the word of God. He was led to his current view by what he believes is a more sophisticated and culturally sensitive reading of the relevant texts.

Of course, not all shifts in understanding constitute progress in the truth; some are moves away from it, which is what I think has happened here. I respect Dr. Hicks's knowledge and devotion, have benefited from some of his work, and remain grateful for the fact he was willing decades ago to provide a blurb for a book I wrote despite never having met me. (We thereafter met briefly, though he may not remember.) I simply disagree with him and am concerned his book will be received in some quarters uncritically because it conforms to a powerful political and cultural current with which many in our fellowship are desperate to make peace.

Unlike Hicks I was not raised in the Church of Christ, but like him I have spent much time wrestling with what Scripture says about the role of women in church. If nothing else, I hope this engagement with his book will show that one need not be theologically or hermeneutically stunted to conclude that God expects women to refrain from teaching men in Christian assemblies. Indeed, that is how Scripture was consistently understood from the early church through the Reformation. It is not an artifact of a faulty Restoration hermeneutic.

## EARLY HICKS

In the late 1970s, Hicks thoroughly studied the role of women in Christian assemblies in preparation for writing a book on the subject. He concluded at that time that 1 Cor. 11:2-16 is an implicit *prohibition* of women praying or prophesying in the assembly. As he summarized the view in a later paper, "It would be inconsistent for women to lead the public assembly while covered since they would be exercising authority and symbolizing submission at one and the same time. Thus, when Paul forbids them to pray and prophesy uncovered, he implicitly forbids them to pray and prophesy at all."<sup>1</sup> He read 1 Cor. 14:34-35 as prohibiting all *authoritative* speech, which he understood to include tongues, prophesying, teaching, and praying but not singing or confessing one's faith at baptism.

Hicks reports that in preparing a manuscript for a lectureship in 1990 he changed his understanding of the role of women in mixed worship assemblies. He went from believing women could participate audibly in the assembly only by singing and confessing their faith at baptism to believing they also could pray, read Scripture, and exhort people (but not preach or teach). This shift was motivated by a change in his understanding of 1 Cor. 11:2-16. He came to believe that Paul in that text *permitted* women to pray and prophesy in the assembly, so his prior

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<sup>1</sup> See John Mark Hicks, "[Women in the Assembly: Issues and Options \(1 Cor. 14:34-35\)](#)" (December 1990).

view that 1 Cor. 14:34-35 prohibited all female vocalizing except singing and confessing was no longer tenable. He concluded:

Paul prohibits women from involving themselves in the teaching functions of the mixed, public assemblies of the church. Paul does prohibit something significant in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. It is a universal rule among the churches. It is rooted in the principle of submission that is taught in the Old Testament. It is probably best to understand his prohibition in the light of the evaluating or judging the prophets. Women are not to take upon themselves a teaching role in the mixed, public assemblies of the church gathered for worship.

In other words, Hicks at that time understood Paul to teach that women could prophesy in the assembly (per chapter 11) but could not evaluate the prophecies delivered by others (per chapter 14). The latter would be a prohibited form of teaching, whereas the former would not.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 14:33b-36

Hicks no longer understands 1 Cor. 14:34-35 to prohibit women from evaluating the prophecies of others. Rather, he now believes it means "something like":

The wives [of the prophets?] should silence themselves and stop interrupting their husbands with questions out of respect [submission] for order within the worship assembly. If they want to learn something, instead of asking while their husbands (or others) are speaking, they should ask at home because when a woman speaks in this way in the assembly, she disgraces herself before the assembly. Wives are not permitted to speak in such a disorderly and disrespectful manner.

He believes the evidence favors connecting 14:33b ("As in all the churches of the saints") with v. 33a ("for God is not [a God] of disorder but of peace") instead of with v. 34 ("let the *gunaiques* be silent in the *ekklēsiais*"), but he acknowledges that this issue is not material because under either option the speech in question is prohibited in all assemblies. For what it is worth, many commentators (e.g., Grosheide, Conzelmann, Orr and Walther, Carson, Kistemaker, Blomberg, Soards, Thiselton, Garland, Verbrugge, Gardner, and Schreiner)<sup>2</sup> and most standard English versions (ASV, RSV, NJB, NEB, NRSV, REB, NAB, HCSB, ESV, CSB, NET) connect v. 33b with v. 34 rather than with v. 33a. D. A. Carson says about the issue:

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<sup>2</sup> F. W. Grosheide, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 341; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 246; William E. Orr and James Arthur Walther, *1 Corinthians*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 311-312; D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 122; Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 511; Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 279; Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 304-305; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1131, 1146; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 655, 664; Verlyn D. Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians" in Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 11:387; Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 629-631; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 296.

Do we read, "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the congregations of the saints"; or "As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches"? The latter is stylistically inelegant, in that in Greek the words rendered "congregations" and "churches" by the New International Version are the same word: that is, "As in all the churches of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches." On the other hand, what some see as stylistic inelegance, others see as powerful emphasis. Moreover, if verse 33b is linked with what precedes, it is difficult to see what the line of thought is. The sentence "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the congregations of the saints" is either trite (Of course God will be the same God everywhere!) or meaningless (Exactly what is being compared? God and the congregations of the saints? God's peaceful order with what is in all the congregations of the saints?). On the whole, it seems best to take verse 33b with what follows. But even if someone prefers the other option, little is changed in the interpretation of verses 34-36, since the phrase in the churches (in the plural) is found in verse 34.<sup>3</sup>

1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 states: *As in all the churches of the saints,* <sup>34</sup>*let the women be silent in the churches [assemblies], for it is not permitted for them to speak, but let them be in submission as even the Law says.* <sup>35</sup>*And if they want to learn something, let them question their own husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.* <sup>36</sup>*Or did the word of God go out from you or reach only to you?* Hicks's current understanding of vv. 34-35 depends significantly on the inferences he draws from v. 35a. He claims the command of v. 34 is directed only to wives because v. 35a says of those addressed in v. 34 that if they want to learn something they are to question their own husbands at home rather than do so in the assembly. He further claims that the wives were not merely asking questions in the assembly to learn, which would be unobjectionable, but were doing so in such a persistent manner that they were disrupting the assembly. The offense was that in their zeal to learn they got carried away and crossed from permissible inquiry into disruption. There are major problems with this interpretation.

It is true, of course, that *gunē* can mean "woman" or "wife," depending on the context, but it is also true that *anēr* can mean "man" or "husband." If *andras* in v. 35 is rendered "men" instead of "husbands," there is no arguable implication the women in question were married. According to Claire Smith, "γυναῖκες is probably best translated 'women' not 'wives', given the further command 'let them ask their own men at home' can refer to the male head of a household and not just husbands (cf. 14:35 ἐν οἴκῳ τοῦς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν)."<sup>4</sup> However, all the standard English versions opt for "husbands" in v. 35, and I think that is probably correct.

If, as Hicks assumes, the motivation for asking questions in the assembly was to learn and if doing so was permissible, as Hicks accepts, there is no reason to think the questioning would be done only by married women. They certainly would not be the only group of disciples interested in learning. And of the various groups that would be asking questions to learn, there is no reason to think the temptation to overzealousness would be limited to married women so that

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<sup>3</sup> Carson, 122.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Claire S. Smith, *Pauline Communities as 'Scholastic Communities'* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 89 (fn. 37).

only their questioning would become disruptive. And even if that temptation was unique to married women, it would not be something to which all the Corinthian wives succumbed, so it would make little sense to address the prohibition to all the wives ("the wives") rather than to the disruptive subset. And it would make even less sense to appeal to the rule in *all the churches* (vv. 33b, 35c), as though disruptive questioning in assemblies was a universal affliction of Christian wives. Thus, the claim that v. 34 is addressed only to married women should be rejected. There is a reason that all the standard English versions render *gunaikes* in v. 34 as "women" and not "wives" (KJV, ERV, ASV, RSV, NAS, NJB, NEB, NKJV, NRSV, REB, NASU, HCSB, NAB, NIV, ESV, CSB, NET).

A far more likely understanding of v. 35 is that the women were not remaining silent during the time of prophesying as required by the duty of submission but were participating in the process by publicly interrogating the prophets as a way of challenging or judging their messages. Questions were a common way for teaching and challenging in the ancient world.<sup>5</sup> If this practice was called out, as it would have been if the complementarian understanding of the woman's role is correct, it would not be surprising for the practice to be defended by the claim the women were only seeking to learn which, after all, was the purpose of prophecy (14:31). Paul in v. 35 exposes that claim as a pretext, a cover story, by making clear that if the women truly were interested in learning rather than teaching, they could accomplish that outside the assembly by questioning their husbands at home.<sup>6</sup>

Though Paul in v. 34 addresses women generally and not just wives, he assumes in v. 35 what would be the normal situation in that culture, that the women (and men) would be married.<sup>7</sup> The fact he does not address separately the atypical case of unmarried women does not imply that those women were not subject to the rule. If a principal instructed teachers to disallow questions on a controversial topic and to tell the students, "If you want to know more, ask your parents at home," no one would think the principal was suggesting that questions were permissible from students who were orphans. It would be understood that his instruction simply was expressed in terms of the normal case of children who have living parents.

The claim that the offensive conduct addressed in v. 34 was an overzealous questioning motivated by a desire to learn, a questioning that became disruptive in its persistence, fares no better than the attempt to restrict the prohibition to wives. Even if one reads v. 35 as a proposed solution to the misconduct of v. 34 instead of a rhetorical jab designed to expose as a pretext a defense given for that misconduct, the critical element of disruption is absent. Paul certainly is not telling the women to learn at home by asking questions of their husbands in a negative or insubordinate manner, to question them in an incessant and disruptive way, as that would hinder their learning. Thus, the "asking" Paul prescribes in v. 35 does not contextually define the speech Hicks claims Paul prohibits in v. 34; they are different activities. If it did, women would not be allowed to ask any questions in the assembly, a position Hicks rejects.

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<sup>5</sup> William Loader refers in *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 385, to Okland's observation "that the question-answer technique was widespread as a teaching device."

<sup>6</sup> Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 222.

<sup>7</sup> As Gordon Fee notes in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 789 (fn. 28), "Gk. αἱ γυναῖκες; probably all women, although the author assumes a culture in which most women are married."

In addition, the claim that the conduct prohibited in v. 34 was disruptive speech suffers from the same flaw as the attempt to restrict the prohibition to wives. If the motivation for asking questions was to learn, there is no reason to think the questioning would be done only by women. Men also would be interested in learning and therefore in asking questions. And there is no reason to think the temptation to overzealousness would be limited to women so that only their questioning, not only in Corinth but in all the churches, would become disruptive. Therefore, the fact women are singled out for the prohibition – let *the women* be silent; it is not permitted *for them* to speak; *let them* be in submission; *let them* question their own husbands; it is shameful *for a woman* to speak – shows that the problem was not a hyperactive desire for knowledge that descended into disruptive questioning. That problem would not be gender specific, whereas the problem in v. 34 involves only women. The prohibited speech was contrary to a submission the women were uniquely required to manifest in the assembly.

It is clear from v. 34c that the prohibition of v. 34a-b ("be silent" and "not permitted to speak") is an expression of a submission the women are required to manifest ("*but let them be in submission*"), a submission that is spoken of even in the Mosaic law. So, while the text does not say expressly that the law demands silence, it does say that women are required to abstain from the speech in question by the submission that the law demands.

Despite the fact women are singled out for the prohibition, Hicks contends the submission the law demands is a gender-neutral submission to "the order of the assembly." I suspect this claim is based in part on his assumption that the prohibited conduct was an overzealous attempt to learn that became disruptive in its persistence. Since the women allegedly were being disruptive and their speech clearly violated a duty of submission, he imagines that the duty of submission was a duty not to be disruptive, a duty to submit to "the order of the assembly." But as I explained, the assumption that the offensive conduct was a disruptive effort to learn is unwarranted. Therefore, it cannot legitimately inform the meaning of submission in the text.

The fact Paul in 14:40 concludes his regulation of the gifts of tongues and prophecy with the admonition that all things are to be done "properly and according to order" does not suggest that the speech of v. 34 was an attempt to learn that became disruptive through incessant questioning. In speaking contrary to a gender-based restriction, the women would be acting improperly and violating the divine order of the assembly, the divine plan for how the assembly was to be conducted. So even if it were true that the object of the submission was "the order of the assembly," it does not eliminate or even diminish the understanding that the offensive conduct was speaking contrary to a gender-based restriction.

The submission in question is one that the law demands, which is not as enigmatic as Hicks seems to think. Though Paul does not cite a specific text, he almost certainly is referring to the principle of male leadership that is indicated in the law. Schreiner comments:

The leaders in the congregation should be men since (1) man was created first (Gen. 2:20-21); (2) woman was created as man's helper (Gen. 2:18, 20); (3) the instructions about not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were

given to the man (Gen. 2:16-17); (4) the man named the woman (Gen. 2:23); (5) the serpent subverted male leadership by approaching Eve (Gen. 3:1-6); and (6) Adam was more responsible for the sin than Eve since God approached him first, even though Eve sinned first (Gen. 3:10-12; Rom. 5:12-19).<sup>8</sup>

In 1 Tim. 2:13 Paul cites the fact Adam was created first as a basis for male leadership in the church (see also, 1 Cor. 11:8-9). This is consistent with the pattern in the Old Testament that the firstborn in any generation in a human family has leadership in the family (see discussion of 1 Tim. 2:8-15 below). One could add to Schreiner's remarks that in Gen. 3:16 God tells Eve that as part of the curse her desire will be for her husband, probably meaning that woman in her fallen nature will desire to dominate her husband (see the use of "desire" in Gen. 4:7), contrary to God's created order, and that this desire generally will go unsatisfied because the husband has the leadership role.<sup>9</sup> In Gen. 18:12 Sarah referred to Abraham as "her lord," and for that reason Peter cites her in 1 Pet. 3:6 as a paragon of wifely submission. There is nothing comparable in the law about submitting to "the order of the assembly."

Paul in v. 34 does not command the women not to be *disruptive* in their speaking, which he easily could have done. Rather, he commands them to be *silent* (*sigāō*), not to speak (*lalein*). As Grudem noted decades ago, context can reveal that the silence commanded is not absolute (total silence), that it pertains only to certain times (e.g., 1 Cor. 14:30), subjects (e.g., Lk. 9:36), or modes of speaking (e.g., 1 Cor. 14:28),<sup>10</sup> but there is nothing in the context of 1 Cor. 14:34 to suggest the silence commanded pertains to a disruptive manner of asking questions. On the contrary, the gender-specific nature of the prohibition that is based on a submission testified to in the law says otherwise.

Hicks strains to construct such a context by appealing to the fact the infinitive "to speak" in vv. 34-35 is in the present tense (*lalein*) and the verb used for "question" or "ask" in v. 35b is *eperōtaō*. He says the former "suggests a continuous speaking," which he thinks indicates "they were *persistently* asking questions," and the latter refers to "a rather *insistent* sort of asking" (emphasis supplied). He concludes from these assumptions that the offensive speech of v. 34 was asking questions so incessantly as to disrupt the assembly and thus that the commanded silence relates only to that disruptive speech. He has built too much on too little.

Mark reports in Mk. 1:34 that Jesus would not allow the demons "to speak" (*lalein*) because they knew him. As 1:24 makes clear, what Jesus was prohibiting was their speaking of

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<sup>8</sup> Schreiner, 298; see also, D. A. Carson, "['Silent in the Churches': On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36](#)" in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 152; James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 191-192.

<sup>9</sup> Susan T. Foh, *Women & the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 68-69; Susan T. Foh, "[What Is the Woman's Desire?](#)" *Westminster Theological Journal* 37 (Spring 1975), 376-383; Hurley, 218-219; C. John Collins, "What Happened to Adam and Eve?" *Presbyterion* 27 (Spring 2001): 36-37; David Talley states in "תְּשׁוּקָה" in Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 341, "[Foh's] conclusion that the desire is a contention for leadership, a negative usage, seems probable for Gen 3:16." Thus, NET renders Gen. 3:16b: "You will want to control your husband, but he will dominate you."

<sup>10</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 242-244.

his identity as the Holy One of God, probably because he was orchestrating the timing of the revelation of his identity in fulfillment of the divine plan (see also, Lk. 4:41). The present tense infinitive carries no implication that Jesus was objecting to the demons speaking incessantly about the subject. Rather, it refers to their speaking about the subject at all. In Acts 4:17 the Sanhedrin decided to warn Peter and John "to speak" (*lalein*) no more to anyone in the name of Jesus. They were not barring them from speaking incessantly in Christ's name but from preaching his message at all. In Acts 5:40 the Sanhedrin charged the apostles not "to speak" (*lalein*) in the name of Jesus. Again, they were not prohibiting speaking incessantly in his name but speaking on his behalf at all. In Acts 26:1 Agrippa gave Paul permission "to speak" (*legein*, present infinitive of *legō*) for himself. He obviously was not inviting Paul to speak in a disruptive manner. When Paul says in Eph. 5:12 that it is shameful even "to speak" (*lalein*) of the things certain people do in secret, he is not suggesting it is only a problem if one does so persistently. It is clear, therefore, that the use of *lalein* in 1 Cor. 14:34-35 does not support the claim that the speech in question was an incessant form of speech that disrupted the assembly.

"For the most part, ἐρωτάω and ἐπερωτάω are used synonymously in the NT with the classical meaning 'to ask [a question], inquire.'"<sup>11</sup> For example, Mk. 9:32 reports that the disciples did not understand what Jesus was saying but were afraid "to ask" (*eperōtaō*) him. There is no implication of an insistent sort of asking. Indeed, it is difficult to understand how *eperōtaō* could imply a kind of persistent, disruptive questioning in 1 Cor. 14:35 if the verse is understood as a proposed solution to the misconduct of v. 34 instead of a rhetorical thrust designed to expose as a pretext a defense given for that misconduct. Again, if asking their husbands at home is prescribed as an alternative to seeking to learn in the assembly by asking questions, Paul would not tell them to be aggressive or disruptive about it. On the other hand, if Paul is exposing their defense as a pretext, he could be using the intensified sense of quizzing or interrogating to reflect how they were treating the prophets in the assembly.

Hicks declares that the larger context of chapter 14 (read in the light of 1 Cor. 11:2-16) establishes that 14:34-35 forbids only the disorderly speech which he alleges was the problem, but that is a skewed perspective. On the contrary, the most contextually sensitive reading of 14:33b-36 by far is that the commanded silence of women relates to the matter of prophesying, to their participation in the "prophetic process" in the assembly. That is clear from the immediately preceding text in which Paul regulates the gifts of prophecy and tongues in light of the principle of edification that he just discussed. He writes:

<sup>26</sup>What then is [the way], brothers? When you gather together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation; let all things be for upbuilding. <sup>27</sup>If anyone speaks in a tongue, [let it be] by two or at most three and one at a time, and let someone interpret; <sup>28</sup>but if there is not an interpreter, let him be silent in church, and let him speak for himself and to God. <sup>29</sup>And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others discern. <sup>30</sup>And if [something] is revealed to another who is sitting, let the first be silent. <sup>31</sup>For you

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<sup>11</sup> Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 2:288; see also, Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 362, which lists 1 Cor. 14:35 under this general meaning.

can all prophesy one by one so that all may learn and all may be encouraged.  
<sup>32</sup>And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets, <sup>33</sup>for God is not [a God] of disorder but of peace.

The exercise of tongues is regulated in vv. 27-28. Only two or three individuals are permitted to speak in tongues, and they are required to do so one at a time. If there is no one present to interpret the tongues for the congregation, the tongue-speaker is obliged to remain silent. Paul begins to regulate the exercise of prophecy in v. 29. Two or three prophets are permitted to speak, and the others are instructed to discern or carefully assess their message. The purpose was to test whether the message was in fact from God (see, 1 Thess. 5:19-21; 1 Jn. 4:1), and it probably included an oral examination of the prophets.

If a revelation is received by a prophet while another is delivering a prophecy, the one speaking is required to yield the floor. As explained in v. 31, this procedure allows all to prophesy in turn so that all may learn and be encouraged. Verse 32 indicates that such etiquette is possible because the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. In other words, even though a prophet is in the process of delivering a message from the Spirit, it is not necessary that he continue delivering that message. Even prophets being given revelations rightfully can control when they speak, which leads right into the restriction of vv. 33b-36.

Verses 39-40 are crucial to a proper understanding of Paul's instructions about women because they reveal that he has not changed subjects: "So then, [my] brothers, be enthusiastic about the prophesying, and do not forbid the speaking in tongues, <sup>40</sup>but let all things be done properly and according to order." He is still discussing the exercise of tongues and prophecy in the assembly, so his instructions about women speaking must be understood as part of that discussion, not as a new and unrelated topic.

Since the discussion of tongues concluded at v. 28, no reader or hearer would think Paul had returned to that subject without some clear indication of an intent to do so. Therefore, the context strongly indicates that the silence Paul demands relates to the matter of prophesying. Right in the midst of explaining how prophesying is to be done in the assembly, a process that includes a sifting of the delivered messages, he declares pointedly, "As in all the churches of the saints, let the women be silent in the assemblies, for it is not permitted for them to speak, but let them be in submission as even the Law says." The women are not allowed to participate in the prophetic process – they are to be silent *in that regard* – because, like teaching, prophesying and challenging the prophets involve directing and correcting men, which is contrary to the submission God calls women to manifest in the assembly in honor of his sovereign choice to put the leadership responsibility on males. (See the discussion of 1 Cor. 11:2-16 below.)

It will not do to agree the forbidden speech is related to prophesying as indicated by the context and then claim the silence commanded involved only disruptive questions being asked of the prophets in a desire to learn. Asking questions to learn is neither prophesying nor weighing the prophecies, which is the speech being discussed immediately before the command for silence, so there is nothing to signal the reader or hearer that the intended silence pertains to an overzealous seeking of information. The recipients would not know to take it that way. And as I



have stressed, a prohibition of disruptive questions would not be gender specific, whereas the command for silence relates only to women.

Given the immediate context of 14:33b-36, it is not surprising that "a growing consensus" of evangelical commentators connects the commanded silence to the prophetic process.<sup>12</sup> That is the immediate subject under discussion. Though these scholars limit the prohibition to weighing or orally challenging the prophecies delivered by others because they believe Paul in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 acknowledges implicitly that women are permitted to prophesy in the assembly as long as they wear the appropriate covering when doing so,<sup>13</sup> *they all recognize that the context indicates the speech relates to prophesying.*<sup>14</sup>

Because they recognize the context indicates the speech referred to in v. 34 relates to prophesying but mistakenly believe 11:2-16 authorizes women prophesying in the assembly, these scholars are forced into the odd claim that Paul allows women to *prophesy* in the assembly but forbids them from *challenging* the prophecies of others. In other words, they assert that prophesying is a lesser exercise of authority than the weighing of prophecies delivered by others and thus is not contrary to the divinely ordered submission, whereas weighing prophecies (and teaching – 1 Tim. 2:11-14) is contrary to it. As James Greenbury observes:

One of the tenets of the interpretation we are considering is that women may not evaluate prophecy or teach but may prophesy. However, as Chrysostom observes, because prophecy was entirely from the Spirit, and teaching only partly so, prophecy was invested with a greater authority than teaching. For the same reason prophecy possesses superior authority to evaluation. Therefore it is unlikely that Paul would allow women to voice prophecies in church but forbid them from evaluating prophecy or teaching when the former is a more authoritative ministry.<sup>15</sup>

The claim that prophesying is less authoritative than weighing the prophecies of others leads these scholars to claim that New Testament prophesying differs from Old Testament prophesying in that the former is fallible whereas the latter was not. (This fallible/infallible distinction is also used by those who claim the gift of prophecy has continued. It allows them not to take alleged prophecies as authoritative.) With numerous scholars, I do not believe that distinction is valid. Schreiner states, "To sum up, there is no compelling evidence that New Testament prophets spoke both truth and

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<sup>12</sup> This assessment of the evangelical landscape is shared by Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, NAC (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014), 360 and Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 721 ("conservative evangelical commentators").

<sup>13</sup> Ciampa and Rosner (p. 721) express succinctly the motive for excluding prophesying from the scope of the prohibition: "Despite the fact that the most recent reference to 'speaking' had to do with prophesying, it does not seem possible that prophecy is the specific form of speech from which Paul is prohibiting female participation, given his discussion of it in chapter 11 (which indicates that women may prophesy as long as they do so with their heads covered)."

<sup>14</sup> E.g., James B. Hurley, "Did Paul Require Veils or the Silence of Women?," *Westminster Theological Journal* 35 (1973), 217-18; Wayne Grudem (1988), 220-224; Carson (1987), 129-131; Thiselton, 1158; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, BTCP (Nashville: Holman, 2017), 116; Gardner, 637.

<sup>15</sup> James Greenbury, "1 Corinthians 14:34-35: Evaluation of Prophecy Revisited," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51 (Dec. 2008), 726.

error. Like the Old Testament prophets, they spoke the word of the Lord accurately."<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Paul says in Eph. 2:20 that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, which suggests that the attempt to distinguish apostles from prophets in terms of infallibility is off base.

Despite the fact the immediate context strongly indicates that the silence commanded in v. 34 relates to prophesying, Hicks asserts that Paul's statement in v. 31 "For you can *all* prophesy" means he intends for the women prophets in Corinth to exercise their gift in the assembly. But clearly the "all" here is not universal; it is limited, at the very least, to those having the gift of prophecy.<sup>17</sup> The question is whether there is an additional limitation on "all" that Paul intends his original readers to understand based on their knowledge of church order as previously passed on to them (1 Cor. 11:2).

The placement of vv. 33b-36 is best explained as an anticipatory response to precisely the kind of claim Hicks is making. It is a pointed reminder that nothing he is saying changes or contradicts the practice in all the churches, the practice he previously delivered to them, that women are prohibited from participating in the prophetic process in the assembly. He is heading off a potential misunderstanding or abuse of his remarks, including the statement they can "all" prophesy. It means all for whom such prophesying is permissible in keeping with the known and uniform rule in the churches. If there is any resistance to that truth, as there may have been given the over-realized eschatology of the Corinthians,<sup>18</sup> he declares in the next verse (v. 37), "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or is spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord." In acknowledging that Paul's words are a command of the Lord, the women who think they are prophets are thus bound to control the exercise of their gift, as v. 32 shows may be required and proper, by refraining from using it in the assembly.<sup>19</sup>

Whatever difficulties there may be in defining what gatherings qualify as an assembly for purpose of the prohibition, they are thrust upon us by the fact Paul ties the prohibition to "the *ekklēsia*" (14:28, 35b). The fact he distinguishes that assembly from the home (14:35; cf. 14:19) and refers to the "whole church" coming together (14:23; cf. 11:18) indicates it has a formal or official sense, that there is a public and congregational dimension to the gathering in contrast to private and personal meetings of individual Christians, however significant and valuable those meetings may be. Difficulties of application do not negate the teaching to be applied. That is true with questions about disfellowshipping and divorce and remarriage, and it is true here. One starts with the indisputable locus of application, the church's gathering for worship on the Lord's Day, and moves out by analogy to other gatherings, increasing the room for disagreement as the distance widens.

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 363. For a fuller discussion, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts: What They Are and Why They Matter* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2018), 101-122.

<sup>17</sup> Note that the rhetorical question "Are all prophets?" (1 Cor. 12:29) expects a negative answer.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Black, 1968), 109; Anthony C. Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology at Corinth," *New Testament Studies* 24 (1978), 510-26; Philip H. Towner, "Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus (of the Pastoral Epistles) and the Corinthian Enthusiasm," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (1987), 98-101.

<sup>19</sup> So, contrary to Hicks's assertion, having a revelation from God in the assembly does not mean it cannot be insubordinate to deliver it there. There is a distinction between revelation and delivery, and the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.

One may wonder why God would silence the women prophets in the assembly when prophesying edifies the community, but it is apparently more important to him that his sovereign right to bestow leadership responsibility on men be acknowledged and honored in the assembly in the manner specified. Women may exercise their prophetic gift in other contexts, so the community would not be deprived of their revelations, but "in the churches," meaning in the congregational assemblies, they are called to honor God by manifesting publicly through their silence their acceptance of his right to choose men as the leaders. It is part of the gathered community's testimony of its submission to him.

Hicks objects to the idea that Paul in 1 Cor. 14:34-35 is prohibiting "authoritative speech" by listing some questions that position raises. He wants to know, "Why does he specifically name wives as the speakers he silences in 14:35?" As I explained, he does not limit the prohibition of v. 34 to wives. He asks, "How does 'asking' their husbands at home address the situation he is silencing?" It exposes as a pretext the claim made by or on behalf of the insubordinate women that their quizzing of the prophets was not designed to judge their messages but only to learn. If they truly were interested in learning rather than teaching, they could ask their own husbands (or men) at home. The fact they eschew that option puts the lie to their defense.

Hicks says the notion of authority is alien to the context, but on the contrary, it is implied in the headship of men noted in 1 Cor. 11:3 (see below) and in the submission Paul imposes on the women (*hupotassethōsan*). That verb commonly, if not invariably, includes the notion of authority, as is evident from its uses in the New Testament. Grudem writes:

Although some have claimed that the word [*hupotassō*] can mean "be thoughtful and considerate; act in love" (toward another), there is no hard evidence to show that any first-century Greek speaker would have understood it that way, for the term always implies a relationship of submission to an authority.

Look at how this word is used elsewhere in the New Testament:

- Jesus is subject to the authority of his parents (Luke 2:51)
- demons are subject to the disciples (Luke 10:17: clearly the meaning "act in love, be considerate" cannot fit here!)
- citizens are to be subject to government authorities (Rom. 13:1, 5; Tit. 3:1, 1 Pet. 2:13)
- the universe is subject to Christ (1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:22)
- unseen spiritual powers are subject to Christ (1 Pet. 3:22)
- Christ is subject to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:28)
- church members are to be subject to church leaders (1 Cor. 16:15–16 [cf. 1 Clement 42:4]; 1 Pet. 5:5)
- wives are to be subject to their husbands (Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:5; compare Eph. 5:22, 24)
- the church is subject to Christ (Eph. 5:24)
- servants are to be subject to their masters (Tit. 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18)

- Christians are subject to God (Heb. 12:9; Jas. 4:7)

*Here is the point:* None of these relationships are ever reversed. Husbands are never told to be subject (*hypotassō*) to wives, nor the government to citizens, nor masters to servants, nor the disciples to demons. Clearly parents are never told to be subject to their children! In fact, the term *hypotassō* is used outside the NT to describe the submission and obedience of soldiers in an army to those of superior rank (see, for example, Josephus, *War* 2.566, 578; 5.309; compare the adverb in 1 Clement 37:2). The *Liddell-Scott-Jones Lexicon* even defines *hypotassō* [passive] to mean "be obedient" (p. 1897). . . .

But in spite of all these different forms of submission, one thing remains constant in every use of the word: it is never "mutual" in its force; it is always one-directional in its reference to submission to an authority.<sup>20</sup>

Hicks wonders how Paul can be understood to be silencing authoritative speech in 14:34, which he assumes includes praying, without also being understood to be silencing singing. As he notes, Paul parallels praying and singing in 14:15. But Paul in 14:34 is not addressing authoritative speech generally. Rather he is specifically prohibiting female participation in the prophetic process because that is a form of speech that is contrary to the submission a woman is required to manifest in the assembly, meaning it is impermissibly authoritative in that context. He is not prohibiting praying, which, like singing, is a nondidactic expression of praise, gratitude, and devotion to God. Prophesying and judging the prophets, on the other hand, like teaching, involve directing and correcting men.<sup>21</sup>

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

As I noted, Hicks's move in 1990 from believing that women could participate audibly in the assembly only by singing and confessing their faith at baptism to believing they also could pray, read Scripture, and exhort people (but not preach or teach) was motivated by a change in his understanding of 1 Cor. 11:2-16. He came to believe that Paul in that text *permitted* rather than *prohibited* women to pray and prophesy in the assembly, so his prior view that 1 Cor.

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<sup>20</sup> Wayne Grudem, "The Myth of 'Mutual Submission,'" *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 1 (October 1996), 1, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Like prayer, singing is directed "to God" and "to the Lord" (Acts 16:25; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). As Pliny reported to Emperor Trajan in the early second century, the Christians in their meetings sang "a hymn to Christ as to a god." Those who hear the praise, gratitude, and devotion expressed to God in prayer and song are edified, built up in their understanding and appreciation of who God is and what he has done, but as indirect beneficiaries rather than direct addressees (1 Cor. 14:15-17). Ephesians 5:19 indicates that the "speaking to one another" that takes place in the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs occurs in our "singing and making music *to the Lord* with [our] hearts." The rich indwelling of the word of Christ in the community that Paul commands in Col. 3:16 involves teaching and instructing one another with all wisdom *and* singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (see RSV, REB, NJB, NEB, NRSV, CEV, NLT, HCSB). They are distinct activities. This is confirmed by the fact all are to sing but the number who teach is restricted (e.g., Jas. 3:1). If singing is viewed as directly instructive, its distinctiveness from the teaching in which women are forbidden to engage lies in the fact it is done collectively. Tongues also is speech directed to God (1 Cor. 14:2). Richard Oster, Jr. rightly remarks in *1 Corinthians*, College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 328-329, "tongue speaking is vertically directed to God rather than horizontally addressed to men."

14:34-35 prohibited all female vocalizing except singing and confessing was no longer tenable. At that time, he thought the best way to reconcile the two chapters was the popular evangelical view that 14:34-35 prohibits the weighing or challenging of prophecies but not prophesying itself. He ultimately found that option unsatisfying, for the reasons I have explained, and settled on his current view that 14:34-35 is a gender-neutral ban on disruptive efforts to learn that happened to be engaged in by the Christian wives in Corinth.

I have explained why I believe that view is fatally flawed, but for Hicks it functions to remove an argument in support of distinguishing the assembly of 1 Cor. 11:2-16 from that of 14:33b-36. By eliminating the alleged contradiction between Paul permitting women to pray and prophesy in the assembly (chapter 11) and his forbidding them to do so (chapter 14), he eliminates the argument that those chapters must refer to different assemblies because they involve incompatible activities. With that, he believes his case is largely made. As he sees it, Paul indicates it is permissible for women to pray and prophesy in the quintessential Christian assembly, the Lord's Day gathering, which means they can pray and, by analogy to prophesying, preach and teach in any Christian assembly. (That, of course, requires him to work around 1 Tim. 2:8-15, which he attempts.)

The weaknesses of Hicks's view of 14:33b-36 aside, one need not deny that 1 Cor. 11:2-16 and 14:33b-36 address the same assembly to deny that women are prohibited from participating in the prophetic process in that assembly, as Paul quite clearly indicates in 14:33b-36 is the case. Given the strong contextual support for that understanding and the corroborating practice of the early church, it behooves one to keep an open mind about alternative interpretations of 11:2-16.

Paul previously had delivered to the Corinthians instructions regarding the conduct of their assemblies (11:2), which one may reasonably assume included the prohibition of women prophesying, which he reasserts in 14:33b-36 in his discussion of prophecy. In other words, women in Christ were authorized *to pray* publicly both in and out of the worship assembly but were authorized *to prophesy* publicly only outside the assembly.<sup>22</sup> Prayer, being directed to God, is not a way of directing men and therefore is not inconsistent with the submission a woman is called to manifest in the assembly.<sup>23</sup> Acts 1:14 and 4:23-24 probably are examples of women praying publicly with the gathered church, and as indicated below, I think 1 Tim. 2:8-10 assumes women prayed in the gatherings.

The issue Paul addresses in 11:2-16 arose regarding women in the assembly who were seeking *to pray* without the covering. *Paul in 11:13 identifies the specific focus of his concern: "Judge for yourselves: Is it proper that a woman pray to God uncovered?"* Prophesying is not mentioned. Failure to pay sufficient attention to this fact has caused a reasonable interpretation of 11:2-16 that is consistent with Paul's exclusion of women prophesying in 14:33b-36 to be overlooked.

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<sup>22</sup> They would prophesy in a place open to people generally or open at the time to those not normally present, perhaps like Anna in Luke 2, but not in the congregational assembly.

<sup>23</sup> On the nature of the praying, see footnote 126.

Public speaking in that day and age was a male activity.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the fact Christian women were authorized to pray and prophesy publicly, whether in or out of the assembly, could be viewed as supporting the idea present in Corinth that gender distinctions were no longer relevant to Christians (thus making sexual intercourse in marriage, and perhaps marriage itself, *passee*, a view Paul corrects in 1 Cor. 7:1-4).<sup>25</sup> One can understand why some women in that intellectual environment would seek to discard cultural symbols of gender distinction, like the head covering, when engaging in the traditional male activity of public speaking. Being authorized in Christ to speak *as men* meant, in their minds, being authorized to do so in the manner of men, that is, without the covering.

This egalitarian rationale for jettisoning the covering in public speaking would not require the women to challenge simultaneously the gender-based restriction against prophesying in the assembly. It may have been thought that challenges to ongoing practice should be presented incrementally, proceeding one step at a time (the proverbial camel's nose in the tent). Advocates of the view that distinctions between men and women were *passee* in the age of Christ may have wanted to downplay the impact of that view on the assembly by seeking first only to discard the covering as a test case of the principle. If it were accepted that the covering was unnecessary because gender distinctions no longer pertained, the barrier to female prophesying in the assembly would fall in its wake. Or perhaps, less calculatingly, someone in the Corinthian church may have raised a question about head coverings in the context of assembly prayers, which put that specific issue front and center for Paul's response.

Though the immediate issue, as indicated in 11:13, is covering during prayer in the assembly, Paul mentions women prophesying because the argument being made to justify women praying in the assembly uncovered also would justify women prophesying outside the assembly uncovered. That is, if the right to engage in the traditionally male activity of public speech justifies doing so "as men," meaning without the culture's distinctive mark of femaleness, then it would justify doing so whether that public speech was in or out of the assembly. Any ruling on the assembly situation would by logic also be a ruling on the non-assembly situation, so for this purpose Paul addresses the two situations together ("every woman who *prays or prophesies uncovered* as to the head disgraces her head"). The Corinthians would have known that both activities did not take place in the assembly, a fact confirmed in 14:33b-36, so they would not have been confused about the matter.

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<sup>24</sup> For example, the philosopher Plutarch (45-120 A.D.) famously stated, "not only the arm of the virtuous woman but her speech as well, ought not be for the public, and she ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of outsiders, since it is an exposure of herself." Plutarch, *Moralia*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 2:323.

<sup>25</sup> Fee (p. 307) describes the Corinthians' position on the matter as something like: "Since you yourself [Paul] are unmarried and are not actively seeking marriage, and since you have denounced *porneia* in your letter to us, is it not so that one is better off not to have sexual intercourse at all? After all, in the new age which we already have entered by the Spirit, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. Why should we not 'be as the angels' now?"

Rather than explain my understanding of 1 Cor. 11:2-16 in reaction to Hicks's assertions about the passage, it will be easier and clearer if I simply lay out how I see it.<sup>26</sup> I will in footnotes comment on some of Hicks's points.<sup>27</sup>

**11:2-6:** <sup>2</sup>Now I praise you because you have remembered me in all things and hold fast the traditions, just as I delivered [them] to you. <sup>3</sup>And I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. <sup>4</sup>Every man who prays or prophesies having [a covering] upon the head disgraces his head, <sup>5</sup>and every woman who prays or prophesies uncovered as to the head disgraces her head, for she is one and the same thing with the woman who has been shaved. <sup>6</sup>For if a woman does not cover herself, let her also have her hair cut short; and if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut short or to be shaved, let her cover herself.

After praising the leaders for following the practice he had passed on to them, Paul proceeds to give them reasons for the practice, something they could use in defending their position against the current challenge. He begins by denying the notion that gender is completely irrelevant in the church. He does so by asserting that the relationship between men and women in Christ is not identical or reciprocal in terms of leadership. Rather, men are given the leadership responsibility in the church. Man is the head of woman but woman is not the head of man, and Christ is the head of man in a distinctive way, presumably because of man's leadership responsibility. Paul phrases the difference in these terms because "head" plays into the issue of head coverings. Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner state:

If some Corinthians were arguing that Christ, as head of the church, was head over men and women in the same way (since in the new creation there is no longer any "male and female") Paul seems to be affirming that the creation pattern is still significant and cannot be shrugged off. While there is tension between creation and new creation (esp. *fallen* creation and new creation), creation is the context in which Christians live out their lives and it cannot be passed off as irrelevant.<sup>28</sup>

I am aware of the claim that "head" does not here connote leadership authority and the claim that "man" and "woman" should instead be rendered "husband" and "wife," but I am in broad scholarly company in concluding that those claims do not stand up. Regarding the meaning of "head," one can consult the standard Greek lexicons and theological dictionaries.<sup>29</sup> Regarding the

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<sup>26</sup> This section is based largely on something I wrote previously.

<sup>27</sup> Hicks mentions the fact some modern scholars dismiss 14:33b-36 with the claim it was not originally written by Paul but was inserted at a later date. They base this on the fact some later manuscripts have the verses after verse 40 instead of after v. 33a. Yet, all manuscripts have the verses in one location or the other. So it makes more sense to think they were original and then relocated after v. 40 by a later scribe who mistakenly thought they did not fit after v. 33a. If the original letter did not have the text, one certainly would expect some manuscript evidence of that fact (compare, for example, the manuscripts evidence regarding Jn. 7:53-8:11). See Curt Niccum, "The Voice of the Manuscripts on the Silence of Women: The External Evidence for 1 Cor 14.34-5," *New Testament Studies* 43 (April 1997), 242-255; Thomas R. Schreiner, "Philip Payne on Familiar Ground," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 15 (Spring 2010), 38-40.

<sup>28</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, 510.

<sup>29</sup> Gardner states (p. 480), "The meaning of the word 'head' has traditionally been understood to involve a certain degree of authority or hierarchy when it is used metaphorically in v. 3 (it is used literally in v. 4). All lexicons support this metaphorical understanding of the word." For example, BDAG, 542, states, "in the case of living

translation "man" and "woman," Anthony Thiselton notes, "A few commentators defend *husband*, but the overwhelming majority of writers convincingly argue that the issue concerns gender relations as a whole, not simply those within the more restricted family circle."<sup>30</sup> This is why the vast majority of the standard English versions here render the words "man" and "woman" (KJV, ERV, ASV, NAS, NJB, NEB, NKJV, REB, NASU, HCSB, NIV, NET, CSB).

The fact man has been given the leadership role does not mean men are superior to women in character, intellect, or capabilities. They simply have been given different roles or functions. The man is to lead and the woman is to be a helping partner in the joint enterprise of glorifying God. That being "head of" need not include intrinsic superiority or greater worth is evident in the statement that "the head of Christ is God." A basic confession of the Christian faith is that the Son is one with the Father in nature; he is in no way less worthy or inferior in being. The difference between the Father and the Son is one of role or function. The Son freely embraces the leadership of the Father.

Given the continuing relevance of gender for those who are in Christ, it is inappropriate to reject cultural gender distinctions in attire, to engage in a kind of "cross dressing," when publicly speaking to or on behalf of God. The cultural expectation regarding female head coverings in Greek and Roman society of the mid-first century is debated, but such a covering for women appearing in public certainly was the traditional practice. Ben Witherington concludes: "How do we assess this evidence? It seems sufficient to show that the wearing of a head-covering by an adult woman in public (especially in a ritual context) was a traditional practice known to Jews, Greeks, and Romans."<sup>31</sup>

The practice continued during and after the time of Paul, but as a cultural norm it seems it was being "chipped at" (rebelled against) by certain classes of women in certain social contexts. That does not mean, however, that it had been displaced as a norm, especially in a public assembly in which men and women mixed together. If, for example, Hollywood rejects or rebels against some cultural norm that does not mean that doing so is no longer viewed as shameful in the larger culture

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beings, to denote superior rank." Hicks says it is unnecessary for his present purpose to argue for a particular metaphorical meaning of *kephalē* ("head"), but he gives the impression the lexical data favor the meaning of origin or source with no connotation of authority. Silva, however, states (2:672), "The view that κεφαλή here means 'source/origin' rather than 'chief/ruler' is not supported by the lexicographical evidence" (citations omitted). Those interested in the details should consult Wayne Grudem, [Does Kephale \('Head'\) Mean 'Source' Or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples](#), *Trinity Journal* 6.1 (Spring 1985): 38-59; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, ["Another Look at Kephale in 1 Corinthians 11:3"](#), *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989), 503-511; Wayne Grudem, ["The Meaning of Kephale \('Head'\): A Response to Recent Studies"](#), *Trinity Journal* 11 NS (1990), 3-72; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, ["Kephale in 1 Corinthians 11:3"](#), *Interpretation* 47.1 (Jan. 1993): 52-59; Wayne Grudem, ["The Meaning Of Kephale \('Head'\): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged"](#), *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44:1 (March 2001): 25-65; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, Anchor Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 409-411; Wayne Grudem, ["Personal Reflections on the History of CBMW and the State of the Gender Debate"](#), *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 14:1 (Spring 2009), 12-13. Because Hicks is convinced 1 Cor. 11:2-16 implicitly authorizes women to prophesy in the assembly, he concludes that male headship, whatever it means, cannot be construed as being incompatible with women prophesying in the assembly. But if, as I contend, women are not authorized to prophesy in the assembly, implicitly or otherwise, male headship may indeed be incompatible with their doing so.

<sup>30</sup> Thiselton (2000), 822.

<sup>31</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 82.



(though in our age of celebrity worship and mass communication it often does not take them long to displace cultural norms).

David Garland notes it was widely regarded as a disgrace for a Hebrew woman to go out uncovered and then states: "Paul is not imposing Palestinian customs on the Corinthians, however. The Corinthian culture also looked askance at women going out in public without a head covering."<sup>32</sup> Ciampa and Rosner state:

Perhaps more central to Paul's thinking is the need to maintain a strict distinction between the sexes, one that was traditionally associated with some type of antithetical manifestation (e.g., men were associated with public life, women with the privacy of the household, men were to be in the open and women covered, etc.). . . . In Paul's context, men and women were expected to have contrasting head styles, especially in public. Women were more commonly expected to have their heads covered while in public.<sup>33</sup>

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones marshals evidence establishing that "veiling was a habitual female practice in the Greek world."<sup>34</sup> He states, "In Greek culture from the archaic era through to the Roman period, the veiling of women was routine. An ideology of veiling which was imposed and endorsed by men was probably adhered to by most women in Greek society as a matter of daily practice, at least when they appeared out of doors or at home in the company of strange men."<sup>35</sup> William Baker states, "Covering the head with a hood or veil outside the home was standard practice for women in Roman, Greek, and Jewish culture (3 Macc. 4:6; *b. Nedarim* 30*b*; *m. Bava Qamma* 8:6; *m. Ketubbot* 7:6; Plutarch *Moralia* 232C, 267A)."<sup>36</sup> Benjamin Edsall similarly notes that "the practice of a woman covering her head in public is widely attested in Greco-Roman and Jewish antiquity."<sup>37</sup> He argues that "female head-coverings were the norm in Greek and Roman society."<sup>38</sup>

Just as it would be disgraceful for any man to pray or prophesy with a female covering on his head,<sup>39</sup> so it would be disgraceful for a woman to do so without it. It is disgraceful because it is

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<sup>32</sup> Garland, 520.

<sup>33</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, 514.

<sup>34</sup> Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2003), 315.

<sup>35</sup> Llewellyn-Jones, 315.

<sup>36</sup> William Baker, "1 Corinthians" in Philip W. Comfort, ed., *Cornerstone Bible Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2009), 15:157.

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin A. Edsall, "Greco-Roman Costume and Paul's Fraught Argument in 1 Corinthians 11.2-16," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 9 (2013), 139.

<sup>38</sup> Edsall, 141. "Roman literary sources are unanimous in their expectation that women be covered in public and Greek practice of female head covering was remarkably static from pre-classical antiquity through the Roman period." Edsall, 143.

<sup>39</sup> In "When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11.4," *New Testament Studies* 34 (October 1988), 481-505, Richard Oster showed that Roman men pulled a toga over their head in the context of prayer and prophecy, but that covering must be distinct from the covering under discussion, as the covering under discussion is *required* for women and *forbidden* for men. Men praying covered is not an actual problem Paul seeks to correct (e.g., Fitzmyer [2008], 405-406; Garland, 517; Edsall, 138-139) but something that would be recognized as inappropriate. Garland's suggestion that men pulling togas over their heads would be recognized as inappropriate

an act of rebellion against the created order and as such it brings shame both on the rebel and the rebel's leader/head.

The gender-based nature of the shame is evident in vv. 5b-6. The woman who prays or prophesies without the cover disgraces her head, "*for she is one and the same thing as the woman who has been shaved.*" Verse 6 emphasizes the closeness of the parallel. The shame of the woman who had been shaved was the shame of appearing as a man, appearing contrary to her sex. A couple of passages in the writings of Lucian, a second-century Greek satirist, clearly show that short hair on a woman was considered mannish.<sup>40</sup> De Young comments, "The shame seems related to a woman's becoming like a man in her style of hair, becoming 'mannish.' This suggests that the women at Corinth were blurring distinctions between men and women, especially sexual distinctions."<sup>41</sup> Her shame was not from the short hair itself but from the fact short hair was culturally defined as the hair of a man. In the same way, the shame of going uncovered was not from the attire itself but from the fact the lack of a cover was culturally defined as the attire of a man.

**11:7-12:** <sup>7</sup>*For a man ought not to cover [his] head, being the image and glory of God; the woman, on the other hand, is the glory of man.* <sup>8</sup>*For man is not from woman but woman from man; <sup>9</sup>for neither was the man created on account of the woman but the woman on account of the man.* <sup>10</sup>*For this reason, the woman ought to have authority on [her] head, on account of the angels.* <sup>11</sup>*Nevertheless, neither is woman apart from man nor man apart from woman, in the Lord.* <sup>12</sup>*For just as the woman is from the man, so also the man is by the woman, and all things are from God.*

Verses 7-10 provide a further reason why a man should not wear the cover *about which he is speaking* (v. 7 begins with "For") but a woman should. This kind of gender-inappropriate dressing contradicts or rebels against God's creation of mankind as two distinct sexes and therefore is contrary to the fact woman's existence glorifies man (in addition to God) whereas man's existence glorifies only God. In other words, this difference in the object of glorification has implications for who is a suitable candidate for wearing female clothing. This requires some unpacking.

Woman's existence glorifies man because man "gave birth" to woman and because woman was made to help the man, to be a nonleading partner. According to Gen. 2:20-23, God made Eve from part of Adam's body, not independently from the ground, and he did so that she might be a helper for Adam. So woman's existence redounds to the glory of man, but man's existence does not redound to the glory of woman because he was not created from her nor created to be a helper for her.

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because of its connection to pagan devotional practices stumbles on the fact women are commanded to wear the covering.

<sup>40</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor comments in *St. Paul's Corinth*, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 92, "if a woman is prepared to be unfeminine by ignoring the conventions of female hair dressing [the head covering], she should go the whole way and appear mannish." He cites Lucian: "a woman with her hair closely clipped in the Spartan manner, boyish-looking and wholly masculine" (*The Fugitives* 27) and "[Megilla's head] shaved close, just like the manliest of athletes" (*Dialogi meretrici* 5.3).

<sup>41</sup> James B. De Young, *Women in Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 26. Fee says (p. 564) the force of the statement, "If a woman does not cover herself then let her also be shorn" is "let her go the whole way to shame by having her hair like a man's." See also, Nigel Watson, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Epworth (London: Epworth Press, 1992), 112. There is no contemporary evidence for the view that short hair or a shaved head was the mark of Corinthian prostitutes.

Given that woman is the *glory of man* ("For this reason"), it is fitting that she be under a sign of authority when publicly speaking to or on behalf of God, that is, when praying or prophesying. Paul does not explain why her being the glory of man means she needs "*authority* on her head,"<sup>42</sup> but I think the reason is that however glorious *man* may be, he remains under the authority of God. And as the *glory of man*, the woman needs to reflect that truth – the fact man is still under the authority of God – when speaking publicly to or on behalf of God. In other words, the head covering symbolizes man's submission to God by way of the fact woman is the glory of man. Since man, on the other hand, is the *glory of God* in a distinctive sense, a sign of authority over him would not be appropriate because there is no authority over God.

The head cover about which Paul is speaking functions as a sign of authority precisely because it was a distinctly female piece of attire. Notice Paul does not impose that significance; he assumes it. Given that women were assigned a subordinate or nonleading role by both culture and God, clothing that was distinctly female naturally symbolized being under the leadership (authority) of another. Paul does not address how or why certain items of apparel came to be distinctly female; he simply accepts that some did.

The end of verse 10 gives yet *another reason*<sup>43</sup> that a woman should have a sign of authority on her head, meaning the female covering. She should do so "on account of the angels." The best way to understand this is to recognize that angels observe the worship assembly and are concerned that the creation order be honored in that forum. Ciampa and Rosner state, "Paul may well be referring to the angels as divinely appointed auditors of the community's worship who, like God, would be offended by any shameful displays during the worship."<sup>44</sup> Larry Hurtado writes:

[Christians] experienced their assemblies as not merely human events but as having a transcendent dimension. They sensed God as directly and really present in their meetings through his Spirit. . . . In 1 Corinthians 11:10, the curious passing reference to the angels present in the worship assembly shows how familiar the idea was. Paul's Corinthian readers apparently needed no further explanation (though we could wish for one!). As the 'holy ones' (saints) of God, believers saw their worship gatherings as attended by heavenly 'holy ones', angels, whose presence signified the heavenly significance of their humble house-church assemblies.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Hicks insists the statement "the woman ought to have authority on [her] head" means that "covered women *have the right* to pray and prophesy in the assembly" independent of any notions of male headship. But that does not fit with the fact Paul makes clear that the woman ought to wear a head covering because ("For this reason") she is the glory of man (as declared in v. 7 and explained in vv. 8-9). Her relationship to man is in some way the reason she must wear the covering. In addition, the statement is a command ("ought"), something she is obligated to do, not a declaration of a freedom or authority she has. Schreiner identifies additional weaknesses of this view in "[Head Coverings, Prophecy and the Trinity](#)" in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Womanhood & Manhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 135-136 (126-127 in linked version). It is the context that drives the vast majority of English versions to follow the traditional understanding by rendering the phrase "a sign/symbol of authority on her head" (ERV, ASV, RSV ["veil"], NAS, NJB, NEB, NKJV, NRSV, NASU, HCSB, NAB, NET, ESV, CSB).

<sup>43</sup> E.g., Ciampa and Rosner, 529.

<sup>44</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, 530.

<sup>45</sup> Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 50-51.

Verses 11-12 make clear that the gender differences about which he has been speaking and which must continue to be honored in dress are not a matter of superiority/inferiority. Men and women in Christ are mutually dependent, each needing the other that mankind may be what God intended it to be (v. 11). Evidence of this mutual dependence is that, whereas womankind initially came from Adam, all subsequent men have come from women, and all things (men and women) come from the one God.

**11:13-16:** <sup>13</sup>*Judge among yourselves: Is it proper that a woman pray to God uncovered?* <sup>14</sup>*Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a dishonor to him* <sup>15</sup>*but if a woman wears long hair it is a glory to her? For long hair has been given [to her] as a covering.* <sup>16</sup>*But if anyone is disposed to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor [do] the churches of God.*

Paul appeals to what they already recognized about long hair to make his point that women should not pray uncovered. (Again, the fact he mentions only prayer suggests the two practices of praying and prophesying were distinguished.) "Nature itself" taught them that long hair was a dishonor to men but a glory to women in that the distinction of mankind into two sexes is a fundamental aspect of the creation order. People have a natural sense from creation that "gender bending," confusing or masking sexual differentiation, is wrong. Given that sense of sexual distinction that is rooted in creation, the Corinthians would agree that if a man wore long hair it dishonored him but if a woman wore long hair it honored or exalted her. They would do so because long hair had been *culturally assigned* as a kind of female covering; it was therefore inappropriate on a man (in that cultural context).

Paul is well aware that male hair has the same capacity to grow long as female hair and he knows from Scripture that Nazirites were forbidden from cutting their hair, so he certainly is not suggesting that long hair is universally or transculturally contrary to gender distinctions. Garland remarks, "Long hair for men is unnatural for Paul because in his cultural context it conveys sexual ambiguity and hints of moral perversion."<sup>46</sup> S. Donald Fortson III and Rollin G. Grams state:

Paul is saying there is a natural distinction between men and women; if a man crosses this barrier and dons the appearance of a woman by growing his hair long, he is degrading himself. . . . Paul's point is not that long hair is impossible for a man to grow but that an effeminate appearance for a man is unnatural. In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul is saying that men should be men and women should be women, according to nature. While hairstyles are a matter of custom, in Paul's day long hair on men suggested effeminacy in Greek and Roman culture. For a man to have long hair, then, was like cross-dressing – purposefully appearing contrary to his nature.<sup>47</sup>

Paul's point is that the head covering in question functions like long hair. It too was culturally assigned as a female covering and is therefore inappropriate on a man. Regardless of

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<sup>46</sup> Garland, 531.

<sup>47</sup> S. Donald Fortson III and Rollin G. Grams, *Unchanging Witness* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 327.

whether some want to argue the point, Paul says that neither his group nor other churches of God engage in the practice of women praying or prophesying uncovered.<sup>48</sup>

### PENTECOST AND NEW CREATION

Hicks asserts that the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh in Acts 2 and the declaration of Gal. 3:28 mean that women may participate in Christian assemblies (and in the church generally) in the same way as men. Regarding Pentecost, he claims the lack of distinction between men and women in the pouring out of the Spirit means "[t]here are no barriers. Women are gifted just like men. God intends to liberate women from exploitation and cultural conventions. Unfortunately, the church, as with racism and slavery, has often perpetuated barriers of various kinds." As for Gal. 3:28, he claims the present participation in the new creation that is the blessing of all who are in Christ "means not only that inheritance is not dependent upon ethnicity, economics, or gender but that the experience of that inheritance in the present is without those same boundaries."

Hicks here simply assumes the matter in question. No one doubts that women are recipients of the Spirit and the gifts he bestows, nor does anyone dispute that women in Christ participate in the new creation that has broken into the present age. The question is whether God intends there to be gender-based role distinctions in the church in this overlap of ages, as there are role distinctions in the family between Christian husbands and wives and Christian parents and children, and those texts do not address that question. It is a mistake to read into the events of Pentecost or the words of Gal. 3:28<sup>49</sup> the notion that they rule out role differences between Christians, and that mistake is compounded by elevating that reading into a standard by which to interpret other texts. The only way to determine God's vision for the church "now" is to wrestle with the relevant texts in their own right. Neither Acts 2 nor Gal. 3:28 requires the egalitarian view, and other texts show it to be false.

According to Hicks, the entire case for limiting female participation in Christian assemblies rests on 1 Tim. 2:12. He declares "no other text explicitly identifies a gender boundary in the exercise of the Spirit's gifts," but that is only because he avoids 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 by a dubious interpretation. Of course, the truth is not conveyed only by explicit texts, but even if 1 Tim. 2:12 were the only *explicit* restriction of women's conduct in the assembly, it would need to be heeded.

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<sup>48</sup> If in characterizing women praying or prophesying without a head covering (or men doing so with one) as "disorderly" Hicks means the practice was contrary to God's will because it violated gender distinctions that are a foundational aspect of creation, we agree. But if he is suggesting it was "disorderly" in some gender-neutral sense, I think that is quite clearly at odds with Paul's meaning. Gender distinctions continue to have relevance in this overlap of ages.

<sup>49</sup> See, Hurley (1981), 125-128; S. Lewis Johnson, "Role Distinctions in the Church: Galatians 3:28" in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Womanhood & Manhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 154-164; Cottrell, 217-236; Richard Hove, "Does Galatians 3:28 Negate Gender-Specific Roles?" in Wayne Grudem, ed., *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 105-143; Peter R. Schemm, Jr., "Galatians 3:28 – Proof-text or Context?" *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8:1 (Spring 2003), 23-29; Grudem (2004), 183-187; Andreas J. Köstenberger and Margaret E. Köstenberger, *God's Design for Man and Woman* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 162-169.

## THE BALANCE OF THE BIBLE

**Creation.** Hicks contends that the plot line of the biblical story regarding men and women indicates God's intention that there to be no gender-based role distinctions in the church. Regarding creation, he notes that both men and women are created in the image of God and are partners in the human vocation of multiplying, filling the earth, and subduing it, but that does not address whether they differ in terms of leadership responsibility. Those are separate questions. Piper and Grudem comment:

[J]ust as God meant for the shared responsibility of bearing children to involve very different roles (in the process of fertilization, gestation, and nursing) so also He may mean for the shared responsibility of dominion to involve different roles. Acting "jointly" does not mean acting identically, and "sharing" responsibilities does not mean that each must bear the same ones.<sup>50</sup>

Hicks suggests the description of the woman in Gen. 2:18, 20 as *'ezer kěnegdô* (a helper fit or suitable for him) is at odds with there being a leadership right vested in the man, but that is not the case. It is true that "helper" often is used of God, but the word itself says nothing about the kind of helper intended. As Stephen Clark notes, "to focus on the word by itself, without considering its context in the phrase and in the passage, is not very helpful. The actual phrase says that God created woman to be a help for man; that is, the purpose of her creation was to be a help to the man. Taken in its context, there is clearly some sort of subordination indicated by the phrase as a whole."<sup>51</sup> Piper and Grudem elaborate:

The context must decide whether Eve is to "help" as a strong person who aids a weaker one, or as one who assists a loving leader. The context makes it very unlikely that "helper" should be read on the analogy of God's help, because in Genesis 2:19-20 Adam is caused to seek his "helper" first among the animals. But the animals will not do, because they are not "fit for him." So God makes woman "from man." Now there is a being who is "fit for him," sharing his human nature, equal to him in God-like personhood. She is infinitely different from an animal, and God highlights her value to man by showing how no animal can fill her role. Yet in passing through "helpful" animals to woman, God teaches us that the woman is a man's "helper" in the sense of a loyal and suitable assistant in the life of the garden.<sup>52</sup>

Hicks downplays the significance of the fact "woman is from man" (1 Cor. 11:8) by pointing out that both man and woman came from God and that men now come through women, such that in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman (1 Cor. 11:11-12). But, as I explained, the fact woman came from man, was made from Adam's body as reported in Gen. 2:20-23, whereas man was created without the woman, is used by Paul in 1 Cor.

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<sup>50</sup> Piper and Grudem, 408.

<sup>51</sup> Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1980), 24 (fn. 40).

<sup>52</sup> Piper and Grudem, 408-409. Paul makes clear in 1 Cor. 11:9 that this is the second element of the woman's nonreciprocal glorification of man. Not only was she created *from him* but she also was created *on account of him*.

11:7-8 to explain how woman's existence glorifies *man*, in contrast to the fact man's existence glorifies only *God* (i.e., not woman). That lack of reciprocity in the matter of glorification that is rooted in the differences in their creation is why women are suitable candidates for wearing the head covering and men are not. The leadership implication of the difference in their objects of glorification cannot be ignored.

Paul does not say, as Hicks would have it, that woman is the glory of man because she was needed for man fully to participate in God's mission. I am not convinced that even makes sense, given that it refers to the woman's glory rather than the man's, but in any event, Paul says that woman is the glory of man because she is from man: "7 For a man ought not to cover [his] head, being the image and glory of God; the woman, on the other hand, *is the glory of man*.<sup>8</sup> For man is not from woman but *woman from man*." It is the fact she was created from Adam and he was not created from her that is the basis of her nonreciprocal glorification of him.

The fact man is nowhere called the "head" of the woman in the Hebrew Bible does not detract from the fact he is called just that in 1 Cor. 11:3. Indeed, the husband is nowhere called the "head" of his wife in the Hebrew Bible, but that does not justify ignoring or rejecting the fact he is described that way in Eph. 5:23. And regardless of the fact the word "authority" is not used in Genesis 1-2 to describe the relationship of men and women, the man's leadership role is implied in multiple ways and is confirmed by Paul's teaching. The indications of male leadership in Genesis 2 include the fact the male is central in the narrative, the male was created first, the woman was created from the man, the woman was created for the man, and the man named the woman.<sup>53</sup>

As I noted previously, the probable meaning of Gen. 3:16b, where God tells Eve that as part of the curse her "desire" will be for her husband, is that woman in her fallen nature will desire to dominate her husband, contrary to God's created order, and that this desire generally will go unsatisfied because the husband has the leadership role (see footnote 9). Hicks, however, contends it is better understood as a reference to the woman's turning toward her husband in sexual desire. But as stated in the NET note:

Many interpreters conclude that it refers to sexual desire here, because the subject of the passage is the relationship between a wife and her husband, and because the word is used in a romantic sense in Song 7:11 HT (7:10 ET). However, this interpretation makes little sense in Gen 3:16. First, it does not fit well with the assertion "he will dominate you." Second, it implies that sexual desire was not part of the original creation, even though the man and the woman were told to multiply. And third, it ignores the usage of the word in Gen 4:7 where it refers to sin's desire to control and dominate Cain. (Even in Song of Songs it carries the basic idea of "control," for it describes the young man's desire to "have his way sexually" with the young woman.) In Gen 3:16 the LORD announces a struggle, a conflict between the man and the woman. She will desire to control him, but he will dominate her instead. This interpretation also fits the tone of the passage, which is a judgment oracle.

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<sup>53</sup> See the discussion in Jack Cottrell, *Gender Roles and the Bible: Creation, the Fall, and Redemption* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), 80-99 (he is ambivalent about the implication of the man having named the woman).

***The People of Israel.*** Hicks points to the story of women in Israel as support for his claim that women may participate in Christian assemblies (and in the church generally) in the same way as men. He emphasizes that no text in the Hebrew Bible silences women in the assemblies, but one cannot jump from that fact to the conclusion it was acceptable for them to instruct men in religious gatherings. That conduct may have been understood to be improper from the fact instruction of the people in the law of God and the cultic duties related to their offerings were entrusted to the all-male priesthood (Lev. 10:10-11; Deut. 31:9-11, 33:10; 2 Chron. 35:3; Neh. 8:2; Ezek. 22:26; Hag. 2:11-13; Mal. 2:6-7). The absence of women teaching in the assemblies adds weight to that possibility. In that case, there would have been no need or occasion to command them not to speak that way in the assembly.

According to Hicks, Miriam is an example of a woman leading Israel in worship. He says she sang to the men, commanding them to "Sing to the Lord," but that is by no means clear. Exodus 15:20-21 states (ESV): "Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing.<sup>21</sup> And Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.'" As Hicks notes, most people assume "to them" in v. 21a refers to the women who went out with Miriam. They do so because the context appears to demand it, but Hicks says the fact the pronominal suffix ("them") is a masculine plural makes certain that the people to whom Miriam sang included men. The imperative verb "Sing" in v. 21b is likewise in a masculine plural form. The problem with allowing these gender forms to override the clear context is that "gender incongruence is common in Hebrew."<sup>54</sup>

To pick just two examples from elsewhere in Exodus, Ex. 1:21 states (NET), "And because the *midwives* feared God, he made households *for them*." The "them" refers to the midwives, yet the pronominal suffix is masculine plural. Exodus 2:17 states (NET), "When some shepherds came and drove *them* away, Moses came up and defended them and then watered their flock." The "them" refers to the seven daughters of Midian from v. 16, yet the pronominal suffix is masculine plural.<sup>55</sup> The same phenomenon is evident in imperative verb forms.<sup>56</sup> For example, Amos 4:1a states, "*Listen* to this message, you cows of Bashan who live on Mount Samaria!" The objects of the command are women, the cows of Bashan, yet the verb is a masculine plural.

Of course, one cannot prove definitively that Ex. 15:21 is a case of gender incongruence or neutralization, but the context favors that conclusion. At the very least, it precludes making these gender forms the centerpiece of an argument. Douglas Stuart writes (emphasis supplied):

Some commentators have argued that Miriam sang the song to Moses and the men of Israel or led the women in doing so (thus singing antiphonally in response

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<sup>54</sup> William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 548.

<sup>55</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg states in "Morphology: Biblical Hebrew" in Geoffrey Khan, ed., *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 2:723: "The same gender neutralization noted above in colloquial Hebrew for the independent 2pl. and 3pl. forms occurs with the pronominal suffixes as well, with כֶּם- *-kem* and -הֶם- *-hem* (also הֵן- *-am* where appropriate) appearing for the feminine in various instances in the Bible."

<sup>56</sup> Rendsburg states (p. 728), "As was the case with the PC [prefix conjugation], also in the imperative: gender neutralization arises in colloquial Hebrew in the plural, so that שִׁמְרוּ *šimrû* comes to serve for both the masculine and the feminine (Rendsburg 1990: 60)."



to the men) because the word "them" in the verse appears to be the masculine plural pronoun (לָהֶם) and because the verb in question (עָנָה) can mean "answer" rather than "sing" [a theory complicated by the fact that עָנָה in most contexts actually does not mean "answer" at all but rather "speak up."] *But the present context clearly suggests that it was the women to whom she sang.* The old Bronze Age language that Exodus was originally written in has a variety of pronominal endings that are different from those of the later language (and specifically common "masculine" endings for either masculine or feminine), and עָנָה means "speak up" or "sing" much more often than it means "answer."<sup>57</sup>

It is also worth mentioning that in the LXX the key verb in 15:21 is rendered "Let us sing" (aorist active subjunctive first person plural – *asōmen*), which corresponds to a first person plural cohortative in Hebrew rather than the second person masculine plural imperative of the Masoretic text. The cohortative is not gender specific. This reading also is represented in the Pentateuch Targums (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, *Targum Neofiti*, and the *Paris BN Targum Fragmentary Manuscript*) and the Vulgate.<sup>58</sup>

Regarding Deborah, one cannot assume there were no gender-based differences in the roles of judges and then use that assumption to apply to Deborah everything that is said about judges in other contexts. That her role was in some way distinctive is indicated by the fact that, rather than lead Israel into battle as other judges did, God had her *tell Barak* to lead the troops and receive the victory (Judg. 4:6-7, 14). That was a task unsuitable for her despite the fact she was a judge. She was called to defer to a man in that aspect of being a judge. As Webb remarks, "She is a *prophetess*, and hence the agent by which Yahweh's word will enter the story to summon Barak to fulfill his role as savior. Hence for the first time 'judging' and 'saving' are clearly distinguished from one another."<sup>59</sup> The fact Barak insisted she accompany him (4:8, presumably in the hope of having access to God on the battlefield) rather than go on his own as God intended led to his being rebuked. Instead of receiving the glory he would have received through God delivering Sisera into his hand, that glory would now be given to a woman (4:9), who turned out to be Jael.

Though Deborah accompanied Barak as he requested, it was Barak who led the army in battle. As noted in 1 Sam. 12:11, the people cried for help, "And the LORD sent Jerubbaal and *Barak* and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety" (see also, Heb. 11:32). As Grudem observes:

The text [of Judges] says that *Barak*, not Deborah, "called out Zebulun and Naphtali," and that "10,000 men went up at *his* heels" (v. 10), not Deborah's. It

<sup>57</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 363 (fn. 116).

<sup>58</sup> Hanna Tervanotko, *Denying Her Voice: The Figure of Miriam in Ancient Jewish Literature* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 154-155, 199.

<sup>59</sup> Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 183. Dennis Olson similarly observes in "The Book of Judges" in Leander E. Keck, ed., *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 2:779, "The Hebrew word 'judge' (שֹׁפֵט *šōpēṭ*) can have the sense either of ruler and military commander (as in the preceding judge stories) or arbitrator of disputes (as in the story of Moses in Exod 18:13-16). Deborah fulfills the latter sense of judging as she sits 'under the palm of Deborah' in the hill country of Ephraim and the Israelites come to her for judgment in disputes (v. 5)."

says that *Barak* went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following *him*" (v. 14), not Deborah. It says that "the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army *before Barak* by the edge of the sword" (v. 15). . . . Deborah encouraged the male leadership of Barak, and the Bible says several times that he led Israel to victory.<sup>60</sup>

One cannot assume that the distinctiveness of Deborah's role as a judge did not include a restriction on the forums in which she could exercise authority. Grudem points out, "Deborah is never said to have taught the people in any assembled group or congregation. She gave private judgments when people came to her (Judges 4:5)."<sup>61</sup> The fact people came to her to "have their disputes settled/decided" (NET, NIV; also, CSB) means she had some civil or administrative authority within the society, but that does not translate into support for the claim that God desires women to participate in Christian assemblies in the same way as men. The issue is not whether God always forbids women from exercising any kind of authority over men in any context but whether God desires that his choice regarding the relationship of men and women that was expressed in and from creation be acknowledged and honored in the church in the manner he has indicated. He is free to define how he wants the difference between the sexes to be manifested in the world, among his people, and in their religious assemblies, so one must be sensitive to differing situations and circumstances.

No one questions that women served as prophets under both covenants, inspired messengers of God who delivered his word to men and women. The issue is whether there was a restriction on where Christian women prophets (and teachers) could deliver their messages. The New Testament makes clear there was. The example of Huldah does not advance the discussion in that regard. The only record of her prophesying is her delivering a message to the king by way of his emissaries who came to her home in Jerusalem.

"Psalm 68 has the reputation of being the most difficult psalm in the psalter,"<sup>62</sup> and Psalm 68:11-12 "are notoriously difficult to translate, as the great variation among translations demonstrates."<sup>63</sup> It is not clear that Ps. 68:11 is a case of women proclaiming the good news of an enemy king being defeated. The feminine participle need not specify that women were the speakers. As Grudem notes, "Grammatically feminine participles can be used to refer to 'titles and designations of office,' as *qōhelet* ('the preacher') in Ecclesiastes 1:1 (*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2<sup>nd</sup> English ed., sec. 122r, 4:393)."<sup>64</sup> Alternatively, the feminine "messengers" of v. 11 may refer to the "doves" (singular as collective) of v. 14, understood "to be messenger or signal doves released at the end of a victorious battle."<sup>65</sup> Tate remarks, "[This] has the merit of the

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<sup>60</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 134.

<sup>61</sup> Grudem (2004), 133. The phrase "for the judgment" (*lammišpāt*) points to a legal function as it "usually appears in contexts where formal legal activity is occurring and cases are being adjudicated (see Num. 35:12; Deut. 17:8; Josh. 20:6; 2 Sam. 15:2, 6; Ps. 9:7; Isa. 41:1; 54:17; Mal. 3:5)." Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *A Commentary on Judges and Ruth* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 224-225.

<sup>62</sup> Mark D. Futato, "The Book of Psalms" in Philip W. Comfort, ed., *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009), 7:227.

<sup>63</sup> Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobsen, Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 544 (fn. 13).

<sup>64</sup> Grudem (2004), 141 (fn. 21).

<sup>65</sup> Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 179 (following Eerdmans and Keel-Leu).

agreement of gender (fem.) between 'messengers' and 'dove.'"<sup>66</sup> Women are not specified in v. 11 in the KJV, RSV, NEB, NAB, NJB, NRSV, and NKJV. It is true, as Hicks notes, that the verb used in the LXX for *bāšar* ("bring news") is *euangelizō*, the verb often used for proclaiming the gospel, but its form in the LXX is a *masculine* plural participle. That does not help the claim that women are the specified speakers.

Beyond the uncertainty that the verse refers to women, women joyfully celebrating and declaring in the streets the God-given victory of their armies is not the same as women in a gathering of the community for worship delivering to the people the authoritative word of God. But even if one analogizes the situation to the church, women in our assemblies regularly praise and celebrate in song God's wonderful works. The suggestion that they also should preach the "good news" of Christ in that setting because the celebrants in Ps. 68:11 brought "good news" of military victory assumes the women communicated their good news in speech directed to the men rather than through songs of praise directed to God. But "Ps. 68:12(11) does not have in mind news of victory carried to a specific audience, but a joyful announcement of Yahweh's saving deeds, the 'declarative praise' of God."<sup>67</sup> In other words, *bāšar* is not limited to direct reporting of news but includes the indirect, horizontal communication that is part of singing in the community praises to God for his great deeds (e.g., Ps. 96:2; 1 Chron. 16:23). In Isa. 60:6 to come with the praises of God is to be the bearer of good news. This is more analogous to women singing in our assemblies than to their preaching or teaching in them.

Hicks is mistaken in his assertion that women were part of the Levitical choir in the temple. The male and female singers referred to in Ezra 2:65 and Neh. 7:67 were "secular musicians belonging to families, not temple singers (2:41)."<sup>68</sup> Clines states flatly, "women singers were not to be found in the temple."<sup>69</sup> Williamson concurs, "The singers here are not, of course, cultic functionaries (contrast v. 41), but rather musicians retained by the wealthy for their entertainment (cf. 2 Sam 19:35; Eccl 2:8)."<sup>70</sup> Klein likewise states, "The 200 singers (v. 65) were apparently attached to certain families as entertainers (2 Sam 19:35; Eccl 3:8), since female singers were not permitted inside the temple."<sup>71</sup> Smith explains most fully:

At the outset it may be noted that nowhere in the biblical traditions about David's institution of the Temple service is there any mention that he appointed women to any of the tasks, musical or otherwise.

The mainstay of writers who argue for the inclusion of women is a passage in Ezra 2:65, and its parallel in Nehemiah 7:67, which lists 'male and female singers' (*mēšōrērîm ûmēšōrērôt*, literally: 'male singers and female singers') among the groups who returned to Jerusalem after the exile. It has been supposed that the 'male and female singers' were Temple servants, and hence that these verses imply female participation in the choral songs of the sacrificial rites

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<sup>66</sup> Tate, 164 (fn. 12d).

<sup>67</sup> O. Schilling, "בִּשְׂרָר" in G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. by John T. Willis, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:315.

<sup>68</sup> D. J. Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 60.

<sup>69</sup> Clines, 60.

<sup>70</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 38.

<sup>71</sup> Ralph W. Klein, "The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah" in Leander Keck, ed., *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 3:687.

at the Temple. However, this supposition is false, as Roland de Vaux pointed out many years ago. In Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 the male and female singers are listed separately from Temple servants (Ezra 2:43-54; Neh. 7:46-56) and separately from Temple singers (Ezra 2:41; Neh. 7:44), the latter being characterized by words of male gender and identified as male descendants of Asaphite Levites: 'The singers [*haměšōrērīm*, masculine]: the sons [*bēnē* "descendants"; LXX *huioi* "sons"] of Asaph'. This is also the case in Josephus's version of the return from exile (*Jewish Antiquities*, book 11, 3:10). In 1 Esdras 5:27 in the LXX, which is parallel with Ezra 2:41 and Nehemiah 7:44, the Temple singers are also identified as male: 'The Temple singers [*hieropsaltai*, literally: "sacred singers"]: the descendants [*huioi*, literally: "sons"] of Asaph', and listed separately from 'temple servants' (1 Esd. 5:29-32) and 'musicians and singers' (1 Esd. 5:41(42)). Therefore the 'male and female singers' of Ezra 2:65 and Nehemiah 7:67 cannot be regarded as belonging with the Levite musicians in the musical service at the sacrificial rites at the Temple. In biblical times it was customary for wealthy households to have the services of male and female singers for secular entertainment.<sup>72</sup>

The claim that 1 Chron. 25:5-6 indicates Heman's three daughters were among the temple singers is very unlikely. The NIV, for example, understands v. 5 as a parenthetical statement and v. 6 as referring to the sons of Heman listed in v. 4. Verse 6a is therefore rendered "All these *men* were under the supervision of their father for the music of the temple of the LORD." As Selman states (emphasis supplied), "The *sons* were under the direct supervision of their father (vv. 3, 6), who was in turn responsible to the king (vv. 2, 5-6)."<sup>73</sup> Smith declares that "a close examination of the text and its narrative context shows that the passage cannot support this view," that is, the view "that Levites' daughters sang with their male relatives in the musical service at the Temple."<sup>74</sup> He explains:

Chapter 25 of 1 Chronicles is concerned with the tradition that David appointed certain families of Levites as the musicians for the sacrificial rites at the Temple. The first verse of the chapter announces that 'David and the officers of the army set apart for service the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who prophesied with lyres, harps and cymbals'. Verses 2 and 3 list the particular clans ('sons') of the families of Asaph and Jeduthun that did this work, and briefly mention their duties; the clans number four and six respectively. Verse 4 lists the pertinent clans (again 'sons') of the family of Heman; these number 14. The first half of verse 5 explains who 'all these' were and states their function. The second half of the verse ('God gave Heman ...') is parenthetical, an aside about Heman's offspring. The beginning of verse 6 ('all these ...') should be understood as taking up the narrative again after the parenthesis. In reiterating the opening words of verse 5 here, the Chronicler makes clear that it is the sons of Heman spoken of earlier who are the subject of the continuation of his narrative. Verses 5 and 6 of 1 Chronicles 25 should not be taken to imply that the tradition promoted the idea

<sup>72</sup> John Arthur Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 83.

<sup>73</sup> Martin J. Selman, *1 Chronicles*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 245.

<sup>74</sup> Smith, 84.

that David appointed Heman's daughters as well as his sons to musical service at the Temple.<sup>75</sup>

The procession to which Ps. 68:24 refers is probably a post-battle victory parade.<sup>76</sup> Young women were present and beating tambourines (v. 25), as was done in celebration of military victories (e.g., 1 Sam. 18:6), but they may have been celebrating as the procession passed by rather than being a part of it. According to Tate, "the singers and other members of the processional pass between the maidens playing tambourines."<sup>77</sup> Moreover, it is not clear the procession is headed to the temple. *Baqqōdeš* may mean "into the holy place," but it also may mean "in holiness," referring to God's "holy splendor" (NET).<sup>78</sup> And even if one could be sure the procession was headed to the temple and that the young tambourine players were part of it, nothing is said about who would then enter or how they would conduct themselves after having done so.

Mitchell observes: "From the inception of David's ministry of song, all the singers were male Levites [citing 1 Chron. 6:16]. Women might sing and dance in the royal palace or, when their youthful bloom faded, work as wailing women, but they were excluded from any part in temple worship [citing 2 Sam. 19:33-35; Eccl. 2:8; Jer. 9:17]."<sup>79</sup> That is why women are not mentioned among the temple singers in 1 Chron. 25:7-31; there were none. It is not, as Hicks alleges, "due to the emphasis on the patrilineal and genealogical character of the report." The fact women did not participate in temple worship makes clear there were gender-based role differences in religious service under the old covenant. This is contrary to the picture of women in Israel that Hicks is presenting.

But even if there were women singers in the temple as Hicks imagines, no one questions the propriety of women singing in Christian assemblies, so men and women singing together in the worship of Israel would pose no challenge to our common practice. The suggestion that 1 Chron. 25:1 means the women of Israel were prophesying when singing in the assembly is unwarranted, not only because it mistakenly assumes they sang there but also because it mistakenly infers from the fact one may prophesy by singing that all who sing are prophesying.

The fact there were wise and influential women in Israel is well known and not the least bit controversial. No one thinks wisdom is the sole province of males nor that men should refuse to avail themselves of the wisdom possessed by women. That is not the question. And the fact divine Wisdom is personified as a woman in the Book of Proverbs does not mean women may do in religious assemblies whatever acts are ascribed to Woman Wisdom. That is an abuse of the poetic symbolism.

Esther was a remarkable woman who was used by God to bless the Jewish people, but her being queen of Persia and her role in the institution of the Feast of Purim do not mean God

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<sup>75</sup> Smith, 84.

<sup>76</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Psalms*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 260.

<sup>77</sup> Tate, 167 (fn. 26a). "Singers" is a masculine plural participle (*šārīm*).

<sup>78</sup> John Goldingay in *Psalms Volume 2: Psalms 42-89* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 328, renders the verse: "People saw your journeying, God, the journeying of my God, my king, in holiness."

<sup>79</sup> David C. Mitchell, *The Songs of Ascents* (Newton Meams, Scotland: Campbell Publications, 2015), 105.

desires women in Christian worship assemblies to participate in the same way as men. The argument appears to be that Esther instituted a new religious feast for Israel, the Feast of Purim, and therefore was authorized by God to establish that religious duty on Israel.<sup>80</sup> Since she was so authorized, God has no problem with women exercising religious authority over men. Therefore, God can have no objection to women preaching in Christian assemblies. There are significant problems with this.

Observance of the Feast of Purim was mandated by Mordecai (Est. 9:20-28).<sup>81</sup> It was after the Feast had been established by Mordecai and accepted by the people pursuant to his letters that Mordecai and Esther together gave written authority confirming that establishment. Their letter apparently provided clarification and reassurance regarding the new festival. The verb *ktab* ("wrote") in v. 29 is indeed a feminine singular form, but the verse specifies that Esther wrote the letter *with Mordecai*, and v. 30 states that *he*, Mordecai, sent (masculine singular of *šālah*) letters to all the Jews. That Mordecai and Esther both wrote the letter of v. 29 is reasserted in v. 31b, and there the operative verb *qûm* ("confirmed") is masculine singular, indicating it was *Mordecai* who confirmed the duty for the Jews *with Esther*, reversing the presentation of v. 29. Therefore, one cannot conclude from the gender of the verbs that one of the writers was only "associated" with the writing whereas the other was "responsible" for it.

The statement of v. 32 cannot be read in isolation from all that has been said from v. 20. "Esther's decree" is the letter of v. 29 that confirmed the regulations about Purim that had been established by Mordecai. It is the letter she and Mordecai coauthored. One can speculate why it was given that title in v. 32, but the verse cannot be removed from its context.

In any event, even if God chose to establish a new festival through the issuance of a joint letter from Mordecai and Esther, instead of using that letter merely to confirm and assure the people regarding the new festival previously established through Mordecai, that does not mean God desires women in Christian assemblies to participate in the same way as men. The joint nature of the letter frustrates any attempt to locate religious authority in Esther, but assuming one could do so, it seems the exercise of that authority (a letter circulated via the Persian administrative state) corresponds more to prophesying outside rather than inside a worship assembly.

Hicks's stated intention in discussing the story of women in Israel is that "the church may learn about its own life through Israel's example," which example he contends supports his claim that there is no distinction in the role of men and women in Christian assemblies or in the church generally. He is aware that priests under the old covenant occupied a unique position in the religion of Israel, both as teachers and mediators between God and the people, and he is also aware that women were excluded from that priesthood. He argues in response that the exclusion was not because of male authority over women but because of ritual concerns related to women's

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<sup>80</sup> If one claims the festival was purely human in origin and the associated duty was merely a product of human consent, a kind of generation-binding vow that was ratified by God after the fact through his enshrinement of it in Scripture, then its institution does not indicate that the initiator had been given religious authority over the people.

<sup>81</sup> The earliest known reference to the festival outside of Esther is 2 Macc. 15:36, where it is called "the Day of Mordecai." This work dates from the latter part of the second century B.C. to the first part of the first century B.C.

menstrual cycle and that, in any event, all gender distinctions in religious roles have been abolished in the new covenant. Both claims are problematic.

In declaring that only sons, not daughters, were eligible for the priesthood (e.g., Ex. 28:41, 29:9, 29:29-30, 30:30), the expressed criterion of exclusion was gender. One cannot speculate about the rationale for that criterion and then use that speculation to transform the criterion into something other than was stated, e.g., to change it from gender per se to menstruation, a specific aspect of gender.<sup>82</sup> Whether or not the exclusion was because of "male authority," the given criterion establishes that gender itself was a basis for role differences in religious service under the old covenant, which is, once again, contrary to the picture of women in Israel that Hicks is painting.

Whether all gender distinctions in religious roles have been eliminated in the new covenant is the question in dispute. The fact all believers are priests in the new covenant does not answer that question because it is possible God intends there to be a gender-based difference in the roles of new-covenant priests. One cannot simply assume that is not the case. Rather, it must be investigated by examining the texts that bear on the question. It is clear to many,<sup>83</sup> as it has been to the church throughout history, that God does indeed intend such a difference.

***The Ministry of Jesus.*** Hicks highlights four aspects of Jesus' ministry in Luke that he believes supports the claim that men and women are to serve in the church without any distinction in roles. He first discusses Jesus' birth and notes that Mary was the Lord's mother and an obedient disciple. He then cites Zechariah's prophecy in Lk. 1:71 that God's redemptive work "rescues the people of God from their oppressive enemies." I assume Hicks thinks this points to God rescuing women in Christ from their oppressive Christian brothers by removing all distinctions in their roles in the church. If so, let me just say there is quite a gap between the factual assertion and the conclusion.

The godly prophetess Anna recognized Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah and spoke about him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem (Lk. 2:38), but the details of that speaking are lacking. Assuming her insight did not alter her affinity for the temple, she would have told the news to people at that location. But speaking to people at the location where Israel gathered for worship is different from speaking to Israel gathered for worship. The "assembly" has a spiritual significance. If her speech was prophecy (it is not expressly identified as such), it is the kind of non-assembly prophesying that is contemplated in 1 Corinthians.

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<sup>82</sup> Not only is there no hint that menstruation is the reason for the exclusion, it makes little sense to think it was. It is true that a menstrual flow rendered a woman ritually unclean for seven days (Lev. 12:2, 15:19), but according to Hicks, being subject to such flows did not preclude a woman from serving as a singer in the temple. Moreover, every discharge of semen from a man, whether during copulation or a nocturnal emission, rendered him ritually unclean (Lev. 15:16-18), so why would the less frequent and more predictable menstrual cycle of a woman bar her from service? As E. Margaret Howe observed in *Women in Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 100, "Indeed, the male emission of semen can occur with more frequency and less predictability than the menstrual flow in a woman. As priestly service was, in any case, intermittent, it is not clear why menstruation in itself would disqualify a woman from priesthood."

<sup>83</sup> See, e.g., [The Danvers Statement](#).

Hicks notes that Mary, the sister of Martha, was commended for her interest in learning and then criticizes the church for seldomly valuing that attribute in women. My experience is that all Christians are encouraged to learn the word of God. Being convinced women are prohibited from teaching in Christian assemblies does not mean there is no value in their learning or that they should be discouraged from doing so.

In his comments about the Lord's Supper, Hicks again simply assumes the matter at issue. He declares that the servanthood of the Christ who is remembered in the Supper prohibits any gender-based distinction in the administration of that ritual meal. Otherwise, he says, the Supper "becomes a symbol of hierarchy that denies [women's] status as servants in the kingdom of God." But if God has in fact called his people to acknowledge and honor the relationship of male and female as expressed in and from creation, then women not instructing the assembled church during the Supper is a manifestation of everyone's status as servants in the kingdom of God. Having women preside over the table would be an act of rebellion that says neither the women nor the men are submissive to God. Indeed, it would be a challenge to God's sovereign right to bestow specific responsibilities on specific groups, a challenge that smacks of Korah's rebellion.<sup>84</sup>

The fact women were disciples of Christ and the first witnesses to his resurrection does not mean God intends for there to be no gender distinctions in roles in Christian assemblies or in the church generally. And, contrary to Hicks's opinion, it is unlikely that Cleopas was accompanied by his wife, Mary, on the road to Emmaus in Lk. 24:13-35. Given that Cleopas's wife appears to be the same woman identified elsewhere as "the other Mary" and "the mother of James (and Joseph)," she was a witness of the resurrection and one of the women who "told these things to the apostles."<sup>85</sup> Therefore, if she was the other disciple on the road to Emmaus, Cleopas would not say "some women" found the tomb empty without indicating she was among them. Nor would the Lord say to her (with Cleopas) "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" It was not the women witnesses who did not believe but the men who would not believe their report.

If, as Hicks suggests, Jesus intended to make a complete break with the principle of male religious leadership, as reflected in the fact women were not cultic functionaries in the temple and only men were priests in the old covenant, there was no better way for him to signal that intention than to include women among his twelve apostles. And yet, he chose only males. And when it was time to fill the apostolic position vacated by Judas, the pool of potential replacements was expressly restricted to males (Acts 1:21-23). The candidates to be put in charge of the daily distribution among the saints likewise were restricted to males (Acts 6:1-7, esp. v. 3).

Hicks attempts to avoid the force of Jesus choosing only men as apostles by noting that the absence of Gentiles from the twelve apostles is not thought to restrict leadership roles to only Jews. But that response ignores the fact the church began as an exclusively Jewish institution, so there were no Gentiles among the disciples when Jesus chose the twelve. There were, however, women disciples, all of whom were passed over in the initial selection and in the replacement of

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<sup>84</sup> Numbers 16:1-35.

<sup>85</sup> See, e.g., John Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 36-39, 68-71, 81-85, 99-102.



Judas. That gender has implications for leadership which ethnicity does not is corroborated by the fact Scripture elsewhere indicates that Gentiles were eligible for the offices of elder and deacon whereas women were not.<sup>86</sup>

**Early Church.** Hicks asserts that the spiritual gifts of Rom. 12:6-8 are given to Christians without regard to gender and then concludes there can be no conditions on the exercise of those gifts because Paul emphasizes mutuality in their exercise through his "one another" statements in Romans 12-16. But spiritual gifts are not self-defining in terms of their exercise. That is, having a gift does not mean it is always proper to exercise it. As tongues-speakers and prophets must refrain from exercising their gifts at certain times for the sake of edification, so women may be required to refrain from exercising their gifts at certain times for the sake of honoring the relationship of male and female that was expressed in and from creation. One cannot simply assume that such a limitation would be contrary to the giving of the gift or the call to serve one another and then use that assumption to dismiss texts imposing the limitation. On the contrary, the fact the Spirit indicates quite clearly in 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 and 1 Tim. 2:8-15 that female speech in the assembly is restricted disproves the assumption.

Hicks claims the "one another" command to sing in Eph. 5:19 constitutes an exception to the female silence mandated by 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 and then argues that the "one another" statement about instruction in Rom. 15:14 must likewise constitute an exception. In other words, if, despite 1 Cor. 14:33b-36, women can sing in the assembly based on Eph. 5:19, then women also can teach in the assembly based on Rom. 15:14. This is misguided.

Singing is not an exception to the silence commanded in 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 because, as I have explained, 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 does not impose absolute silence on women. In context, it imposes silence only regarding their participation in the prophetic process (prophesying and challenging the prophecies of others) because that particular speech is contrary to the submission a woman is required to manifest in that context. Singing is not within the scope of that prohibition because, like prayer, it is nondidactic speech directed "to God" and "to the Lord" (Acts 16:25; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The community is edified in hearing prayers and songs to God, built up in their understanding and appreciation of who God is and what he has done, but that is different from the direct instruction from which women are to abstain.<sup>87</sup>

In addition, Rom. 15:14 is a reassuring statement by Paul that he is confident they are competent to admonish one another. Nothing is said about how or when he envisions that admonishing taking place, so it cannot fairly be cited as approval of women preaching in Christian assemblies.

Hicks notes that Paul's commendation of Phoebe in Rom. 16:1-2 "suggests" she was the courier of the letter. Phoebe may have carried the letter on Paul's behalf, but Paul nowhere says that, so we cannot be sure. Assuming she was the carrier, it is not helpful to speculate that as the

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<sup>86</sup> Being male is among the qualifications for those offices but being Jewish is not (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9; see also, Acts 14:23). The exclusion of women from the office of deacon is more controversial, but I am convinced that is the correct understanding (see [Women Are Not to Be Appointed to the Office of Deacon](#)).

<sup>87</sup> As previously noted, if singing is viewed as directly instructive, its distinctiveness from the teaching in which women are forbidden to engage lies in the fact it is done collectively.

carrier she read the letter in the house churches and explained its meaning, as though her gender could have no effect on her role, and then use that speculation as evidence for women teaching in the assemblies. Bird, whom Hicks cites, candidly admits, "She may have just handed it [the letter] on to Priscilla and Aquila and then headed back to Rome the next day. No one knows for sure."<sup>88</sup>

On the claim that Phoebe was a formal church officer, see the paper cited in footnote 86. It is unlikely in my judgment that the word *diakonos* in Rom. 16:1 carries the technical sense of one appointed to the church office of deacon. I think Murray's words still stand:

It is common to give to Phoebe the title of "deaconess" and regard her as having performed an office in the church corresponding to that which belonged to men who exercised the office of deacon (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). Though the word for "servant" is the same as is used for deacon in the instances cited, yet the word is also used to denote the person performing any type of ministry. If Phoebe ministered to the saints, as is evident from verse 2, then she would be a servant of the church and there is neither need nor warrant to suppose that she occupied or exercised what amounted to an ecclesiastical office comparable to that of the diaconate.<sup>89</sup>

But even if Phoebe was a deacon, there is no reason to believe she delivered the word of God to the assembled congregation. That does not appear to have been the role of deacons generally, and there may have been differences in the roles of male and female deacons. We know from the document known as the *Didascalia of the Apostles* that the roles were distinguished in the third century, which is the first clear evidence we have for women being appointed to a church office of deaconess.

The word *prostatis* in Rom. 16:2 refers to a female patron or benefactor,<sup>90</sup> one who helped people or institutions, especially financially. "It is easy to imagine Phoebe as a woman of wealth and high social status . . . who accommodated the assembly of Christians in Cenchreae in her house and provided practical help to Paul and his coworkers during their ministry in the area."<sup>91</sup> That role would explain why Paul describes her as a "servant" (*diakonos*) of the church in v. 1. The saints, the church, in Cenchrea were primary beneficiaries of her generosity, and sharing of material blessings was understood as an act of "service" (*diakonia* – 2 Cor. 9:1, 12-13) thus making the sharer a "servant" (*diakonos*).<sup>92</sup> Contrary to Hicks, this does not make her "a recognized, even official (as we typically understand that), leader in the congregation."

Hicks notes that in Rom. 16:3 Paul includes Prisca/Priscilla among his "fellow workers in Christ Jesus," as he does with Euodia and Syntyche in Phil. 4:2. He then claims that Paul in 1 Cor. 16:16 "instructs those in the house of Stephanus to submit to *every*, yes, 'every fellow

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<sup>88</sup> Michael F. Bird, *Romans*, SOGBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 527 (fn. 29).

<sup>89</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 226.

<sup>90</sup> BDAG, 885.

<sup>91</sup> Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 712.

<sup>92</sup> Similarly, the statement in Mat. 27:55 that certain women had followed Jesus from Galilee "to serve" (*diakoneō*) him seems to refer to their providing for him from their own resources (Lk. 8:3).

worker (*panti sunergounti*) and laborer (*kopionti*)."<sup>93</sup> Assuming there would be female "fellow workers" in Corinth as there were in Rome and Philippi, he concludes that Paul was commanding the members of "the house church" (presumably he is referring to Stephanas's house) to submit to those female coworkers. The argument is specious.

Priscilla and Euodia and Syntyche were *Paul's* ("my") "fellow workers," meaning they had served *with him* in some unspecified capacity. Nothing in the term implies they served in all the same ways as Paul's male fellow workers. Hicks complains that when we see men described as Paul's coworkers "we tend to think evangelist, missionary, or church leader but dismiss such designations for women," but there is a reason for that. Paul's teaching and the gender distinctions in religious service shown elsewhere in Scripture require that there be unambiguous evidence that such distinctions were not maintained regarding his coworkers. As Schreiner says, "The clear teaching of Paul elsewhere (1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33b-36; 1 Timothy 2:11-15) must be the guide for understanding the role of women rather than the appeal to terms that are too vague to support the idea of women sharing full leadership with men."<sup>93</sup>

In 1 Cor. 16:15-16 Paul is not, as Hicks indicates, instructing the household of Stephanas to submit to anyone. Rather, he is instructing the members of the church in Corinth to submit to Stephanas's household and to those who are *their* fellow workers and laborers (e.g., NJB, NAB, NRSV, HCSB, CSB).<sup>94</sup> Since Stephanas had recently visited Paul (v. 17), Paul would know the identity of those coworkers, and there is nothing to indicate that group included women. Because Paul had some female coworkers does not mean Stephanas had them at that time and place. Schreiner states:

There is no evidence in the context that any of these fellow workers and laborers in Corinth were women. In fact, the only leader mentioned, Stephanas, is clearly a man. Since the words fellow-worker and laborer are vague and can refer to men or women, there needs to be indisputable evidence that women are included here as leaders in the church, especially since such leadership is not stated elsewhere.<sup>95</sup>

Hicks's declaration that Junia was an apostle (Rom. 16:7) is fraught with uncertainty. In the first place, it is not certain whether the name is that of a woman (*Iounia* = Junia) or a man (*Iounias* = Junias, a shortened form of Junianus or Junianus)<sup>96</sup> because the accusative singular form of both names is identical (*Iounian*) except for the accent marks, which were not added

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<sup>93</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, "[The Valuable Ministries of Women](#)" in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 218.

<sup>94</sup> Grudem notes (2004, 251), "The expression 'working with' (the participle *sunergounti*, from *sunergeō*) causes the reader instinctively to ask, 'Working with whom?' and to conclude, 'Working with Stephanus and those like him who have leadership in the church.' Readers would naturally read it as, 'be subject to such as these, and to everyone *working with them* and laboring.'"

<sup>95</sup> Schreiner, "[The Valuable Ministries of Women](#)," 219. Anticipating the claim that women must be included in the "household of Stephanas," Schreiner states, "This argument, however, proves too much. Surely, no one would say that the children in Stephanas's house were church leaders, and yet they were part of the house. Those who want to prove that women held positions of authority over men must prove their case with the arguments from indisputable examples rather than from the vague wording that Paul uses here."

<sup>96</sup> BDAG, 480; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 738.

until centuries later. This uncertainty is reflected in the translations.<sup>97</sup> Harding concludes his recent examination of the issue this way: "The probability that Ἰουνία is feminine appears more likely. Nevertheless, since neither side can prove its case with certainty, to use Junias, who may be male or female, as an example of a 'woman preacher' or 'woman elder' would be unreasonable. Other more clear texts must guide our decision."<sup>98</sup>

More recently, Ng has reinforced Wolters's claim that Ἰουνίας may have been the Hellenized transcription of the Hebrew masculine name *yhwny*.<sup>99</sup> She concludes:

His arguments are persuasive and can explain the reading of the name in accented Greek manuscripts and the rendering in Latin versions. Moreover, after a detailed analysis of the database collected by Tal Ilan, I have found no incidence of Jewish women using the name of Ἰουνία or Junia in the first century. Furthermore, judging from a natural reading of 1 Cor 9:5, Paul thought of apostles as men.<sup>100</sup>

Hicks is, at the very least, overconfident in his assertion that Origen understood the name to be feminine. As Piper and Grudem note:

[Origen] says that Paul refers to "Andronicus and Junias and Herodian, all of whom he calls relatives and fellow captives (*Andronicus, et Junias, et Herodian quos omnes et cognatos suos, et concaptivos appellat*)" (Origen's commentary on Romans, preserved in a Latin translation by Rufinus, c. 345-c.410 A.D., in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 14, col. 1289). The name Junias here is a Latin masculine singular nominative, implying – if this ancient translation is reliable – that Origen (who was one of the ancient world's most proficient scholars) thought Junias was a man.<sup>101</sup>

Some dismiss this reference as an obscure textual variant, but as Grudem points out, "The transcriptional error in the text recorded in Migne, if there is one, would have to have occurred in *both places* in Origen's commentary on Romans."<sup>102</sup> That seems unlikely. In addition, as Ng points out, Origen considered it possible that the phrase "prominent among the apostles" in Rom. 16:7 meant that Andronicus and Junia were among the 70 or 72 disciples sent out by Jesus in his lifetime. This "may imply he regarded Junia(s) as a male" for the following reasons:

First, Origen evidently confined women's teaching to other women, for he cited 1 Tim 2:12 and said that it is inappropriate for women to teach men and exert authority over men. Second, he repeatedly stated that female prophets of old (such as Deborah, Huldah, and the daughters of Philip) never spoke publicly in

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<sup>97</sup> ERV, ASV, RSV, NAS, NEB, NJB, and NASU have the masculine Junias. HCSB, NRSV, REB, NET, and ESV have the feminine Junia but provide Junias as an alternative in a footnote.

<sup>98</sup> Michael W. Harding, "Female Apostleship in Romans 16:7," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 21 (2016), 71.

<sup>99</sup> Esther Yue L. Ng, "Was Junia(s) in Rom. 16:7 a Female Apostle? And So What?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 63:3 (Sept. 2020), 531.

<sup>100</sup> Ng, 531.

<sup>101</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem, "An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers" in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Womanhood & Manhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 80.

<sup>102</sup> Grudem (2004), 225 (fn. 13).

assemblies. Third, Origen regarded the apostles as the basis for church tradition and authoritative teaching. For such reasons, it is hard to imagine that Origen would regard Junia(s) as possibly one of the 70 or 72 disciples/apostles sent out by Jesus if he knew she was a woman.<sup>103</sup>

The assertion that no one questioned that *Iounian* in Rom. 16:7 referred to a woman until Giles of Rome (d. 1316) is incorrect. In addition to the Rufinus text of Origen, the fourth-century historian Epiphanius states in *Index of Disciples* 125.19-20: "Junias, of whom Paul makes mention, became bishop of Apameia of Syria."<sup>104</sup> So, if both are original texts, two of the three earliest citations to the name in Rom. 16:7 indicate it was masculine. And even if one rejects this evidence on textual grounds, "Ninth-century minuscule MSS, fitted with accents, already bear the masc. form *Iouniân*, and never the fem. form *Iounían* (see Lampe, "Iunia/Iunias")."<sup>105</sup> So at least in the ninth century, *Iounian* was largely understood to be a man.

Secondly, it is not certain the phrase *episēmoi en tois apostolois* means "well known among the apostles" rather than "well known to the apostles." The work of Burer and Wallace,<sup>106</sup> which Hicks dismisses, and Burer's further defense and new evidence,<sup>107</sup> argue strongly for the latter, known as the "non-inclusive interpretation." Huttar has highlighted the weakness of the main arguments for the "inclusive interpretation," showing how lexical-grammatical and contextual considerations as well as interpretive history make that view less likely than modern scholarship has allowed. He concludes:

In fact, it may now be possible to say that the probability has shifted in favor of the non-inclusive interpretation. The lexical-grammatical evidence makes it possible, the evidence from the context is inconclusive, and the historical evidence makes the non-inclusive interpretation more probable than heretofore commonly acknowledged.<sup>108</sup>

Harding notes that a valid case can be made for the exclusive interpretation and then states:

The Scriptures are completely silent about these "most distinguished apostles" other than this brief mention (Rom 16:7) in the middle of a long list of names. The only external information in the Scriptures available to properly interpret ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις regards the gender of the twelve apostles of Christ, the replacement of Judas with Matthias, the appointment of missionary apostles, the references to church apostles who acted as emissaries and envoys, the biblical requirements for leadership in the church, and the biblical restrictions

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<sup>103</sup> Ng, 524.

<sup>104</sup> Grudem (2004), 225-226.

<sup>105</sup> Fitzmyer (1992), 738.

<sup>106</sup> Daniel Wallace and Mike Burer, "Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16.7," *New Testament Studies* 47 (2001): 76-91.

<sup>107</sup> Michael Burer, "ΕΠΙΣΗΜΟΙ 'ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΙΣ In Rom 16:7 As 'Well Known To The Apostles': Further Defense And New Evidence," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58:4 (Dec. 2015), 731-755.

<sup>108</sup> David Huttar, "Did Paul Call Andronicus An Apostle in Romans 16:7?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52:4 (Dec. 2009), 778.

on female ministry. Those subjects would require a lengthy treatment by themselves; yet, they all point in the opposite direction of an inclusive interpretation.<sup>109</sup>

The non-inclusive interpretation is reflected in HCSB, NET, ESV, and CSB and is given as an alternative in a footnote in the NIV. It certainly is not a fatuous claim that can be summarily dismissed.

Hicks's assertion that the inclusive interpretation was the "unanimous consensus of the early church" is shown by Huttar to be incorrect. Lightfoot, who appears to have been the source of that assessment among modern commentators, based it on his reading of Origen, Chrysostom, and Theodoret, regarding which Huttar states:

Lightfoot was correct in citing Origen, Chrysostom, and Theodoret as contributing to the interpretive history. However, his statement is misleading, if not simply erroneous. His main error was in a misreading of the evidence of Origen, that is, neglecting the context of Origen's comment. But he also omits entirely the evidence of Ambrosiaster and Pelagius.<sup>110</sup>

Huttar concludes regarding Ambrosiaster that his comments "are, on balance, more supportive of the non-inclusive interpretation than of the inclusive interpretation."<sup>111</sup> As for Origen's view, he concludes "it is difficult to see how we can continue to enlist Origen, as Lightfoot did, in support of the currently prevailing opinion on the interpretation of Rom 16:7 that sees Paul calling Andronicus an apostle."<sup>112</sup> And he says of Pelagius, "if his remarks lean in any particular direction, it seems they are more conducive to the non-inclusive interpretation."<sup>113</sup>

Thirdly, even if one assumes the inclusive interpretation is correct, it is not certain that the use of "apostle" here carries connotations of leadership or authority. Grudem states:

This same term (Greek *apostolos*) is used elsewhere in the New Testament to mean "messenger, one who is sent" when it refers to people who were not apostles in the sense of the Twelve or Paul: We see this use in John 13:16, "nor is a *messenger* greater than the one who sent him"; also 2 Corinthians 8:23, referring to the men who were accompanying Paul in bringing money to Jerusalem, "they are *messengers* of the churches"; and Paul tells the Philippians that Epaphroditus, who came to him, is "your *messenger* and minister to my need" (Philippians 2:25). Since Andronicus and Junia(s) are otherwise unknown as apostles, even if someone wanted to translate "well known *among*," the sense "well known among the messengers" would be more appropriate.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Harding, 79.

<sup>110</sup> Huttar, 761.

<sup>111</sup> Huttar, 763.

<sup>112</sup> Huttar, 771.

<sup>113</sup> Huttar 771.

<sup>114</sup> Grudem (2004), 226-227.

Given the multiple levels of uncertainty surrounding the claim Rom. 16:7 speaks of a female apostle having leadership or authority in the church, it is no foundation on which to build the egalitarian case. "It carries little weight against the clear teaching of exclusive male leadership and male apostleship in the rest of the New Testament."<sup>115</sup>

*New Heaven and New Earth.* Whatever the relationship between men and women in the eschaton, one must guard against reading the "now" too much in terms of the "not yet." Indeed, this is apparently what led to some of the worship abuses in Corinth. God's will for the church now and then need not be identical, so one must wrestle with the relevant texts to see if and how he intends them to differ. And those texts are not limited to 1 Tim. 2:12, as Hicks has convinced himself.

### 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15

Hicks no longer thinks 1 Tim. 2:8-15 applies to all Christian assemblies. Rather, he now is convinced that Paul is there "addressing a local situation with a temporary prohibition for a specific problem." He says there are two primary strategies for reading this text, which he labels Option A and Option B. Option B, which he favors, includes the claims that:

Some women were involved in the spread of false teaching in the Ephesian house churches and disrupted the church through their immodesty. These women, deceived by false teachers, needed to learn and submit to the gospel rather than promote pagan myths and practices learned from the Artemis temple, Greco-Roman cults, and/or proto-Gnostic teachers. Consequently, given that situation, Paul restricted their opportunities to persuade men until they learned how to proclaim and embody the mystery of godliness, which is the gospel.

He says of Option B that it, presumably in contrast to Option A, "offers a *close reading of the text* which discerns the theological story to which the text *itself* points. It does not play fast and loose with the text but pursues a contextual and detailed exegesis." So he clearly thinks it is superior in terms of capturing Paul's intent. He indicates the various options should be weighed by (1) the context of 1 Timothy, (2) "the balance of the Bible" (Part 5 of his book discussed above), and (3) the theological story of Scripture.

Regarding the context of 1 Tim. 2:8-15, Hicks is correct that the section relates to the false teaching that Paul in the letter urges Timothy to combat, but he misses the specific aspect of that teaching under consideration. In 1 Tim. 1:18-20 Paul tells Timothy that his entrusting to him the command to silence the false teachers is in keeping with the prophecies that had earlier been made about Timothy. By recalling those prophecies, what God had said about the gift and about Timothy's use of it in ministry, Timothy may be encouraged to wage this noble war against the false teachers.

In light of the charge to oppose the false teachers ("Therefore"), Paul says in 1 Tim. 2:1-7 that Timothy's first order of business was to see that all sorts of prayers were offered in the

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<sup>115</sup> Grudem (2004), 227.

assembly for *all people*, to see that no group or class of people, including rulers and authorities, was excluded from the prayerful concern of the church, treated as being outside the scope of the gospel. The universalistic thrust is unmistakable:

*Therefore, I urge, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men,<sup>2</sup> for kings and all those in high places, so that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and respectability.<sup>3</sup> This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,<sup>4</sup> who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.<sup>5</sup> For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all men – the testimony given at the right time.<sup>7</sup> For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, not lying), a teacher of Gentiles in faith and truth.*

Given that this instruction relates to Timothy's commanded opposition to the false teachers and that Paul through his emphasis on universality is pushing back against a limitation on the scope of the gospel, it appears the false teachers had a sectarian or exclusivist theology that emphasized God's love for some people *at the expense of* his love for all mankind, perhaps most notably at the expense of his love for pagan rulers. Note how Paul emphasizes that his own sinfulness and persecution of the church did not put *him* beyond God's mercy (1:13). Their restriction of God's loving concern possibly was related to their misuse of genealogies or the law generally, finding in them a divine favoritism of Jews regarding salvation.

As Marshall observes, "This universalistic thrust is most probably a corrective response to an exclusive elitist understanding of salvation connected with the false teaching."<sup>116</sup> Towner says, "As noted, the term 'all' is intentionally universal in thrust (cf. vv. 2, 4, 6; 4:10), and probably calculated to counter a tendency toward insular thinking in the Ephesian church brought on by an elitist outlook or theology."<sup>117</sup> Fee writes:

The best explanation for this emphasis [on the universality of the gospel] lies with the false teachers, who either through the esoteric, highly speculative nature of their teaching (1:4-6) or through its "Jewishness" (1:7) or ascetic character (4:3) are promoting an elitist or exclusivist mentality among their followers. The whole paragraph attacks that narrowness.<sup>118</sup>

Correcting this exclusivist praying that was spawned by the false teaching was a matter of first importance because failing to pray for all people had a detrimental effect on evangelism in both a direct and indirect way. In a direct sense, failing to pray for all people deprived those who were not prayed for of whatever effect those prayers would have had on God's work in their lives. Praying for people changes things, even though we may not see or understand how. In an indirect sense, this elitism or exclusivity in assembly prayers, especially regarding governing authorities, could cast the church as an enemy of the society. This could *needlessly* disrupt their

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<sup>116</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 420.

<sup>117</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2006), 167.

<sup>118</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 62.



lives and thus the usual practice of their religion, which is living *within the society* lives of godliness and respectability (see, 1 Thess. 4:11-12).

Praying for *all people* is good and welcomed in God's sight, as he wants *all people* to be saved, meaning to come to a knowledge of the truth (2:3-4). For he is the God of all people, there being only one God; and Christ, who is the one mediator between God and mankind, gave himself a ransom for all people (2:5-6). So why pray inconsistently with that divine desire, especially when doing so risks hindering the spread of the gospel by disrupting the normal social context for its dissemination? Paul declares in v. 7 that because of God's desire to save all men and Christ's having given himself as a ransom for all men he was appointed (by God) a herald and an apostle, a teacher of Gentiles in faith and truth.

Paul then writes in 2:8-15:

<sup>8</sup> I want, therefore, the men in every place to pray, lifting holy hands, without anger or argument. <sup>9</sup> Likewise, [I want] women [to pray] in appropriate attire, to adorn themselves with modesty and decency, not with elaborate hairstyles and gold or pearls or expensive garments <sup>10</sup> but [with] what is fitting for women who profess reverence for God by good works. <sup>11</sup> Let a woman learn in quietness with full submission. <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; rather, she is to be in quietness. <sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve. <sup>14</sup> And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, by being deceived, came to be in transgression. <sup>15</sup> But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification, with decency.

Given the significance God places on the prayers of the church for all people ("therefore"), Paul says in 1 Tim. 2:8 that he wants the men to pray lifting *holy* hands, meaning hands that are not stained by anger and argument. Anger and argument, division and disharmony, are hindrances to effective prayer, to communion with God. This instruction is almost certainly related to the false teaching in that it produced controversy and disputes (1 Tim. 6:4-5; 2 Tim. 2:23-24).

Paul says literally in the first clause of 1 Tim. 2:9: "Likewise [also]<sup>119</sup> women<sup>120</sup> in appropriate attire with modesty and decency to adorn themselves." There is broad agreement that the verb "I want" from v. 8 is implied in v. 9: As Paul *wants* the men to pray in a certain way, he likewise *wants* the women to do something. Some translations supply "I want" in v. 9 to make that implication express (e.g., NAS, NASU, NIV), and others convey the idea by saying "women

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<sup>119</sup> The *kai* ("also") is textually suspect. It is absent in such notable manuscripts as Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus, placed in brackets in Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th ed.), and is not included in *The Greek New Testament* produced by Tyndale House (2017).

<sup>120</sup> Though some claim *gunaikas* in this section refers to wives rather than to women generally, most commentators recognize that such a limitation is highly improbable. Thomas R. Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:9-15" in Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 180. The context is rejecting the effect of the false teaching on the prayers that are offered in the assembly, and since v. 8 clearly refers to men generally rather than to husbands, there is no sound basis for limiting *gunaikas* to wives. It is noteworthy that all the standard English versions render the word in this section as "women" not "wives" (KJV, ERV, ASV, RSV, NEB, NAS, NKJV, NRSV, REB, NASU, HCSB, NAB, NIV, NET, CSB).

*should*" (RSV, NAB, NRSV, ESV), "women *are to*" (NJB, HCSB, CSB, NET), or "women *must*" (REB, NEB), but what Paul wants the women to do is debatable.

Paul could be saying in 1 Tim. 2:9, "Likewise [I want] women to adorn themselves in appropriate attire, with modesty and decency," in which case "women" serves as the subject of one infinitive ("to adorn"). That has a nice balance: I want the men *to pray* and the women *to adorn*. But that seems like an abrupt change of subject from a focus on praying to a completely unrelated focus on dress, especially with the connecting word "likewise." As Marshall puts it, "[T]he introduction of the reference to women's adornment is an unmotivated digression if it is not related to prayer in some way or other; after an injunction to the men about how they are to worship, it would be strange if something parallel was not being said to the women."<sup>121</sup>

Alternatively, Paul could be saying, "Likewise [I want] women [to pray] in appropriate attire, to adorn themselves with modesty and decency." In that case, "women" serves as the subject of two infinitives ("to pray" and "to adorn"). Either translation is grammatically acceptable,<sup>122</sup> and the latter is favored (in meaning if not in actual translation) by many scholars.<sup>123</sup> The choice is governed by the context of the passage and by the view one has from other texts of the propriety of women praying in the assembly. Given the focus on prayer throughout this section of Scripture, my understanding of 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 and 11:2-16, and the example of Acts 1:14 and 4:23-24, I am convinced that Paul here assumes the women will be praying, just as he assumes the men will be praying.

Some are persuaded that Paul's desire expressed in 2:8 for "the *men* in every place to pray" means that women are not to pray (thus eliminating the second option),<sup>124</sup> but that does not follow. He does not say he wants the men to pray; he says he wants the men to pray *without anger and argument*. He assumes they will be praying and urges them to do so with the proper attitude so that their prayers will not be hindered (e.g., 1 Pet. 3:7).<sup>125</sup> If on the brink of a recess a teacher said, "I want the boys to play without fighting," no one would think the teacher was thereby excluding girls from playing. Rather, they would conclude that the boys had a problem with fighting that the teacher did not want carried over into recess.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Marshall, 447.

<sup>122</sup> Korinna Zamfir and Joseph Verheyden state in "Text-Critical and Intertextual Remarks on 1 Tim 2:8-10," *Novum Testamentum* 50 (2008), 404, "[T]he ellipsis can be supplied with the entire clause in v. 8, with Βούλομαι or with Βούλομαι προσεύχασθαι. The latter reading does not interfere with the text, it can work grammatically, and it provides a thematic unity between w. 8 and 9-10."

<sup>123</sup> E.g., C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles*, New Clarendon Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 55; Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia, trans. by Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 45; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, TNTC, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 84; Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 263 (fn. 203); Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 102-103; Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 215-216; Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy/Titus*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 93-95; Marshall, 446-447; Köstenberger, 109; Yarbrough, 165-166; Hutson, 67. Collins does not supply "to pray" in the translation of v. 9 but clearly understands vv. 9-10 as a reference to women praying in the worship assembly. Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 64-65.

<sup>124</sup> E.g., J. W. Roberts, *Letters to Timothy* (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing, 1964), 21.

<sup>125</sup> See Fee (1988), 71.

<sup>126</sup> Whether it is permissible for women to "lead" prayers in a church gathering boils down, in my judgment, to whether female participation in that role would violate the biblical principle of male leadership, be contrary to the

Women were to pray "in appropriate attire," meaning they were to be metaphorically clothed with an attitude of modesty and decency that eschewed the over-the-top adornment he is describing in favor of modest and proper dress that is fitting for Christian women, women who profess reverence for God by good works (2:10). This extravagant ornamentation – elaborate hairstyles, probably to the point of being decorated with gold or pearls,<sup>127</sup> and luxurious garments – was contrary to the faith-based attitudes of modesty and decency because it was a flaunting of wealth and status and an abnormally seductive and sexually enticing way to dress.<sup>128</sup> As the men were to pray free of the hindrance of anger and argument, the women were to pray free of the hindrance of ostentation and carnality. Those who approach God in prayer are not to come with a spirit of superiority and self-exaltation or a heart that is trolling for sexual interest.

Having instructed the women about the attitude of modesty and decency necessary for their effective *praying* for all people, which attitude is contrary to the wearing of wealth-flaunting and seductive attire, Paul notes in 1 Tim. 2:11 what that same spirit of modesty and decency looks like with regard to *teaching* in the assembly. It includes submission to male leadership in the church, which in the assembly means women are to learn in quietness and with full submission.

1 Timothy 2:12 elaborates on what it means for women to learn in quietness with full submission: they cannot teach or have authority over a man. (Note that v. 12b confirms the link between v. 12a and v. 11: rather, she is to be *in quietness*.) The former ("teach") means they cannot instruct the assembly in the word or will of God, as it means elsewhere in 1-2 Timothy (1 Tim. 4:11, 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:22).<sup>129</sup> The latter ("have authority over") is discussed below. In this context, it includes

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submission women are required to express in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-12). I am inclined to think it would because that role has a sense of leadership that is not present in some other prayer contexts. The person who "leads" prayer in our assemblies is appointed to speak to God on behalf of the assembly. I do not think that is the kind of public praying women did. (As Hicks notes regarding men praying in 1 Tim. 2:8, "Nothing in the text *explicitly* says anything about leadership or leading prayer," so he recognizes that leading is not inherent in praying.) In an atypical context like "open praying" (i.e., where all are invited to pray without any appointment or designation to speak for the assembly) or where the congregation repeats prayers a phrase at a time after a 'precentor' (as possibly in Acts 4:23; see I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 103), which I suspect was more common in the churches of the first century, that issue of leadership would not seem to apply. In the house church I served for over a decade as an elder and preacher, men and women routinely prayed together at the end of our assemblies.

<sup>127</sup> It is clear from sculpture and literature of the period that some wealthy women had braids and curls piled high on their heads, which were decorated with gems and/or gold and/or pearls. Hurley (1981), 199, 257-259. S. M. Baugh states in "A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century" in Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 55, "[T]he adornment of the hair 'with braids and gold or with pearls' (cf. 1 Pet. 3:3-5) fits a new trend originating in Rome. Hence, Paul's teaching regarding elaborate hairstyles reflects and increasing influence of Roman empresses at Ephesus during the unfolding of the first century AD." The rendering "elaborate hairstyles" (NEB, REB, CEB, HCSB, NIV, ISV, CSB) thus seems preferable to "braided hair."

<sup>128</sup> Schreiner states (2016, 183), "In both Jewish and Greco-Roman literature, sexual seductiveness is linked with extravagant adornment." Greco-Roman writers of Paul's day commonly rebuked ostentation in wealth and criticized women for luxurious and seductive attire. Schreiner (2016), 181-182.

<sup>129</sup> Douglas J. Moo states in "[What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?](#)" in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Womanhood & Manhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 185:

The word *teach* and its cognate nouns *teaching* (*didaskalia*) and teacher (*didaskalos*) are used in the New Testament mainly to denote the careful transmission of the tradition concerning Jesus Christ and the authoritative proclamation of God's will to believers in light of that tradition (see especially 1 Timothy

correcting or challenging what was taught by a male teacher, what we might call "setting him straight" or "putting him in his place." A similar concern is expressed in 1 Cor. 14:35, where women were apparently challenging the prophets by quizzing them under the pretext of wanting simply to learn. This fits with the fact "quietness" (*hēsuchia*) refers not to complete silence but "to a quiet demeanor and spirit that is peaceable instead of argumentative."<sup>130</sup> Women are not to be outspoken and argumentative about the teaching but are to "hold their peace," as we might say.<sup>131</sup>

Paul probably addresses the prohibition of women teaching because he has just given instructions about the *praying* he assumes women are doing in the assembly. He wants to be clear that praying is a different kind of speech than teaching. It is also possible this submission was being threatened by the over-realized eschatology aspect of the false teachers' doctrine,<sup>132</sup> which led to belief that the distinctions of the old age in terms of sex roles were no longer significant. You see the same coupling of over-realized eschatology and ignoring of sex distinctions in 1 Corinthians.

Rather than understand the command for women to learn in quietness with full submission as an application to congregational teaching of the attitude of modesty and decency that was to accompany their praying, which command includes a prohibition against their teaching or having authority over a man, Hicks claims Paul is only prohibiting women from teaching false doctrine.<sup>133</sup> Not only is there no indication that women were *teaching* false doctrine, as opposed to being *influenced* by it,<sup>134</sup> but the immediate context of the prohibition in v. 12 is that women must learn in quietness with full submission. That prescription of the women's manner of learning entails their not teaching (learn in quietness) or having authority over a man (learn in full submission). Restricting it to a prohibition of teaching false doctrine isolates it from the context and renders inexplicable the

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4:11: "Command and teach these things;" 2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 2:42; Romans 12:7). . . . In the pastoral epistles, teaching always has this restricted sense of authoritative doctrinal instruction.

<sup>130</sup> Schreiner (2016), 186. Even *sigāō*, which means "to be silent," can refer contextually to refraining from a specific kind of speech (being silent with regard to). For example, in 1 Cor. 14:28 it refers to refraining *from tongues-speaking* when no interpreter is present. Grudem (1982), 242-244.

<sup>131</sup> Hicks suggests by a rhetorical question that the prohibition of women teaching and having authority over men in 2:11-12 cannot be universal and timeless because what Paul says in 2:9 about women not adorning themselves with elaborate hairstyles and gold or pearls or expensive garments is not universal and timeless. But if what is wrong with the prohibited ornamentation is not the material elements themselves but the flaunting of wealth and status that is inherent in their extravagance, the prohibition is indeed universal and timeless. In any case, Paul makes clear that the prohibition of women teaching and having authority over men is universal and timeless because he grounds it in the creation event.

<sup>132</sup> See, e.g., 2 Tim. 2:16-18.

<sup>133</sup> See the nine-point critique of this claim in William D. Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 124-125.

<sup>134</sup> Grudem states (2004, 284), "My point is simply that there is *no evidence* that women were teaching false doctrine at Ephesus. And so the claim turns out to be speculation without any hard evidence to support it. Should we base our interpretation of a passage on a claim with no supporting evidence and with substantial contrary evidence?" Schreiner remarks (2016, 172-173):

Nor is it clear that 1 Timothy 5:13 demonstrates that women were teaching the heresy. Paul does not say there that "they were *teaching* things that were not fitting," but that "they were *speaking* things that were not fitting" [*laleō* not *didaskō*]. While Paul uses teaching and speaking synonymously in at least one instance in the Pastorals (Titus 2:1, 15), it is unclear in this context that Paul responds to women spreading false teaching. In other texts, Paul directly addresses false teaching (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:3-11; 4:1-5; 6:3-10), but the false teachers specifically named in the Pastorals are all men (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; cf. 2 Tim. 4:14), and women are portrayed as being influenced by the heresy (1 Tim. 5:11-15; 2 Tim. 3:5-9) rather than as being its purveyors.

limitation of the command to women. Certainly it was not *only* women and *all* the women teaching heresy in Ephesus! As Schreiner points out, "Paul could easily have said that women were prohibited from teaching and exercising authority over men because they were spreading heresy or were uneducated. Yet he does not breathe a word about these matters."<sup>135</sup>

Hicks strains to link the women with the false teachers by claiming that vv. 9-10 show that "they were engaged in practices that promoted immodest behavior consistent with false teaching (ungodliness, 2 Timothy 2:16)." But warning the women against a prayer-hindering attitude which is contrary to the attitude of modesty and decency that is to characterize Christian women, an improper attitude that is manifested in the wearing of extravagant ornamentation, does not indicate the women were false teachers. In 2 Tim. 2:16-17a, the "linking text" cited by Hicks, Paul instructs Timothy to avoid godless chatter, the heretical nonsense of the false teachers, because failing to silence the false teachers, granting them a forum to promote their error, will only encourage them to go further in the direction of ungodliness. And in the process of doctrinal debate, their harmful word will spread to the spiritual detriment of others. It has nothing to do with what is being said in 2:9-10.

In his eagerness to find support for the claim women were included among the false teachers, Hicks asserts that Paul consistently refers to the purveyors of the false teaching with gender-neutral language, but all the false teachers in Ephesus who are identified are men: Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:19-20) and Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17-18); see also those who would arise from the eldership (Acts 20:30). What he apparently means is that Paul sometimes refers to the false teachers without specifically identifying them by using the indefinite pronoun *tis*. For example, Paul writes in 1 Tim. 1:3: "Just as I urged you when I was going to Macedonia to remain in Ephesus, [do so] that you may command *certain men* [*tisin*] not to teach a different doctrine" (see also, 1:6, 8, 19; 4:1; 6:3, 10, 21). Paul elsewhere speaks this way of opponents. Marshall states, "In some cases the author may not know the actual names, or he may be writing in the spirit of 'if the cap fits, put it on'; but probably there is also a pejorative sense to the expression."<sup>136</sup>

According to Hicks, the fact Paul also uses this indefinite pronoun to refer to widows in 1 Tim. 5:15 (For already *some* [*tines*] have turned away to follow Satan) means that women are included in the indefinite pronoun when he uses it in reference to the false teachers. But, of course, that does not follow. The word, like its indefinite English equivalents, can apply to all men, all women, or men and women depending on the group in question. So the fact "some" widows had turned away does not mean women are included in the "certain men" of 1:3 (or the other verses). In fact, the pronoun is not gender neutral in a grammatical sense; rather, the masculine and feminine forms are identical. When the context is not ambiguous, as in 1 Tim. 5:15, one can be certain of the pronoun's gender (in that case a feminine plural).<sup>137</sup> For those involved, those on the scene, none of the contexts would have been ambiguous in terms of the gender of the referents.

He next attempts to find female false teachers in the words "gossips" (*phluaroi*) and "busybodies" (*periergoi*) in 5:13 by declaring the words do not mean "gossips" and "busybodies"

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<sup>135</sup> Schreiner (2016), 205.

<sup>136</sup> Marshall (1999), 365.

<sup>137</sup> If instead Hicks is claiming that the widows having turned away to follow Satan establishes they were among the false teachers, that also does not follow. It may refer to widows who had apostatized after marrying non-Christians.

but instead mean to engage in the same kind of speech as the false teachers ("meaningless talk," "profane chatter") and perhaps to engage in practices of the Greco-Roman cults. He adds that the women's "going about from house to house . . . saying things that ought not be said" indicates they were spreading false teaching among the different house churches. These assertions are unsupported.

The word *phluaros*, an adjective, is defined in BDAG as "gossipy,"<sup>138</sup> which when used substantively yields "gossipy ones," or more elegantly "gossips." This definition is also given in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*.<sup>139</sup> The sense of "babblers" arrives at the same place, as Spicq explains: "St. Paul is making a humorous attack on the sin of speech committed by certain idle women who make endless visits 'just to chat' and make empty talk (1 Tim 5:13)."<sup>140</sup> There is no connotation of false teaching. The versions that render it "gossips" include RSV, NAS, NJB, NEB, NKJV, NRSV, REB, NASU, HCSB, NAB, NET, ESV, and CSB. Neither *phluaros* nor its cognate verb *phluareō* is used in 1 Tim. 1:6 or 6:20. The word rendered "meaningless talk" in 1:6 is *mataiologia*, and the phrase rendered "profane chatter" in 6:20 is *bebēlous kenophōnias*.

The adjective *periergos* is defined in BDAG as "pert. to paying attention to matters that do not concern one" and "pert. to undue or misdirected curiosity."<sup>141</sup> *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* says of its use in 1 Tim. 5:13, "of the 'younger widows' who are 'not only idlers, but also gossips and given to prying. . .'"<sup>142</sup> There is no connotation of false teaching. It is rendered "busybodies" in RSV, NAS, NEB, NKJV, NRSV, REB, NASU, HCSB, NAB, NIV, NET, ESV, and CSB. The NJB has the equivalent, "meddlers in other people's affairs."

1 Timothy 5:13 describes a negative consequence of enrolling younger widows on the list of widows receiving permanent church support. Paul says that in being put on the list, "they learn to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only do they learn to be idle, but also to be gossips and busybodies, saying things that ought not be said." Because they are supported, they can afford to be idle, and with that time they wind up paying social visits to homes throughout the community where they gossip and insert themselves into people's lives, saying things that ought not be said, perhaps including conversations of an unduly personal or intimate nature. Nothing is said about false teaching, and it should not be injected into the text by one's imagination.

Having transformed the women of vv. 2:9-10 into false teachers without justification, Hicks then reads v. 11 ("Let a woman learn in quietness with full submission") to mean "they must learn how to combat the agenda of the false teaching that is reflected in their own immodest behavior." But notice that Paul does not say "these women" but "a woman," thereby generalizing his instruction to all women. And the fact he does not specify what the women are to learn indicates he is not speaking of some specific, corrective teaching but is referring to the teaching that was offered in Christian assemblies generally.

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<sup>138</sup> BDAG, 1060.

<sup>139</sup> Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 3: 429.

<sup>140</sup> Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. By James D. Ernst (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 3:466.

<sup>141</sup> BDAG, 800.

<sup>142</sup> *EDNT*, 3:73.

Christian women are to receive this teaching "in quietness with full submission." Hicks comments that "women should learn in quietness and in full submission, *just as the whole church is to live peaceably and quietly* in the Ephesian culture." But the command is directed specifically to women. He adds, "In contrast to their present behavior, they should stop spreading myths from house to house and quietly submit to God's sound doctrine, which is the mystery of godliness." But there is no indication they were spreading myths from house to house – that is Hicks's unsubstantiated assertion – and the full submission that is commanded relates to the *manner* in which women are to learn. It is not a command to submit to the content ("God's sound doctrine") that is taught.

In Hicks's mind, Paul is encouraging the women to learn "so that they will no longer spread pagan myths." Whether Paul is encouraging the women to learn or simply assuming they will be learning as all Christians are expected to do, there is, to repeat, no evidence they were spreading pagan myths. And Paul is not limiting his encouragement or assumption of female learning to a female subset of hypothesized false teachers. He says, "Let *a woman* learn" not "Let *these women* learn."

Noting, however cautiously, that the present tense of "I do not permit" (*epitrepō*) in v. 12 *could mean* that Paul does not permit a woman to teach "at the moment" or "in the current situation" is not helpful in the discussion.<sup>143</sup> As Schreiner explains:

But does the present tense reflect a temporary prohibition, or is it merely Paul's personal opinion? Once again, the answer is negative on both counts. Paul gives numerous injunctions in the first singular present active indicative that are universal commands. For instance, he introduces the command to present one's body to God as a living and holy sacrifice with a first singular present active indicative (*παρακαλῶ*, "I exhort, Rom. 12:1), and this command obviously applies universally. In many other instances, such universal commands exist with present active indicatives in the first persons (e.g., Rom. 15:30; 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10; 4:16; 7:10; 2 Cor. 10:1; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 4:2; 1 Thess. 4:1, 10; 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6, 12; 1 Tim. 2:1, 8; 5:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; Titus 3:8). The point is not that the first person present active indicative form in 1 Timothy 2:12 proves that the command is universal and timeless. My point is more modest. Those who appeal to the form of the word as if it established the temporary nature of the prohibition exceed the evidence. The form does no such thing, and such a thesis must be established on other grounds.<sup>144</sup>

The question is not whether women who learn are able to teach at all. Rather, the question is whether women who learn are permitted to teach in church in the same way as men. So declaring that women "are empowered to teach once they have learned" does not address the issue.

Continuing with the figment that the women of vv. 2:9-10 were false teachers who were spreading their error from house to house, Hicks asserts that Paul in 2:12 wanted to stop them from spreading myths among the house churches. Though Paul says, "I do not permit *a woman*," Hicks

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<sup>143</sup> Not to mention, as a friend pointed out, that it seems contrary to the prior suggestion that the present tense of *lalein* in 1 Cor. 14:34-35 implies a *continuous* action. In neither case is the present tense definitive.

<sup>144</sup> Schreiner (2016), 189.

insists "The prohibition is not based on the fact that they were women but on what the women practiced." But it makes no sense that Paul would be concerned only with *female* heretics, and if he was, it makes no sense that he would rebuke them with words that indicate he was addressing women generally ("a woman") rather than the heretical subset.

In 2:12a Paul states, "I do not permit a woman to teach [*didaskhein*] or to have authority over [*authenthein*] a man [*andros*]." Hicks assures his readers that *authentēō* refers to the exercise of authority in an "abusive, overwhelming, or self-assertive" manner and thus concludes that "[w]hat Paul forbids is either (1) teaching in such a way that women take control of the situation in an authoritarian and domineering manner, (2) teaching and overpowering men in such a way that they persuade them with false teaching, or (3) both." That is not the case.

In the first place, it is a mistake to fuse the two infinitives [*didaskhein*, to teach; *authenthein*, to have authority] into a single prohibition so that the second defines the manner of the first. "Two things are forbidden for a woman: teaching and exercising authority over a man."<sup>145</sup> As Moo observes, "That teaching and having authority are 'closely related' is, of course, true, as it is true that both ministries often are carried out by the same individuals, but here and elsewhere they are nonetheless distinct, and in 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul prohibits women from conducting either activity, whether jointly or in isolation, in relation to men."<sup>146</sup> Köstenberger similarly states:

Further, a proper understanding of the function of οὐδέ and of the meanings of the infinitives διδάσκειν and αὐθεντεῖν leads the interpreter to understand Paul to be prohibiting two activities that are related yet distinct. Women are prohibited from serving in church positions that would place them in authority over men, whether by teaching them in the ecclesial context or by ruling over them in an authoritative church position.<sup>147</sup>

Hicks's discussion of *authentēō* would have benefited from a closer reading of the recent study by Wolters that is cited in his bibliography. As Wolters explains, the verb *authentēō* is derived from the noun *authentēs*, but a problem that has caused much confusion is that *authentēs* was used in two very distinct ways. It meant "murderer" and "master." These may have had different etymologies (like "ear" [of grain] and "ear" [of hearing] in English), but whether or not that is the case, "it is a serious error to assume that the meaning of the one (and the meaning of its derivatives) must be understood in light of the other. . . . It is a basic methodological mistake to assume that we should understand the verb αὐθεντέω in the light of both αὐθέντης/'murderer' and αὐθέντης/'master.'"<sup>148</sup> Hicks falls prey to this in citing Wisdom of Solomon 12:6 as a relevant usage. 3 Maccabees 3:29 is a different word, the noun *authentia* meaning restriction or status.

It is not true that every known use of *authentēō* before 1 Timothy "refers to an abusive exercise of authority." Wolters surveys the four possible uses of that verb prior to 1 Timothy. He

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<sup>145</sup> Schreiner (2016), 190.

<sup>146</sup> Moo (1991), 187.

<sup>147</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, "A Complex Sentence" in Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 160.

<sup>148</sup> Al Wolters, "The Meaning of Αὐθεντέω" in Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 68-69.



concludes the first (Philodemus, *De Rhetorica* 2.133, mid-first cent. B.C.) is unhelpful because it is doubtful the verb appears there, and even if it does, the text is too obscure and fragmentary to permit any firm conclusion as to its meaning. Regarding the remaining three, he interprets the word to mean "have authority," "be superior to," and "originate."<sup>149</sup> He says of his overall study, "For our purposes, it is also significant to note that neither ἀθέντης/'master' nor any of its derivatives had a particularly negative connotation, as though they referred to the misuse of authority." He states later, "With respect to the alleged pejorative meaning, my investigations have confirmed earlier studies' conclusions that ἀθεντέω in general is used overwhelmingly in a positive or neutral sense. . . . [E]ven the rare places where the verb is widely thought to be used pejoratively are susceptible to another interpretation."<sup>150</sup> BDAG defines the word simply as "to assume a stance of independent authority."<sup>151</sup>

This is confirmed by Köstenberger's careful study establishing that the two concepts connected by *oude* are viewed either both positively or both negatively. In other words, the choice for understanding v. 12 is either "I do not permit a woman to teach [error/wrongly] or to usurp a man's authority" or "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have (or exercise) authority over a man." Since Paul views *didaskhein* positively, *authentein* cannot be given a negative or pejorative connotation as in Hicks's interpretation.<sup>152</sup>

Schreiner states:

Scholars have vigorously debated the meaning of ἀθεντεῖν. The most likely rendering is "exercise authority." Henry Scott Baldwin argued in the first two editions of this book that the verb must be separated from the noun in constructing the definition of the term. Al Wolters demonstrates in his very careful study in this volume that the meaning "exercise authority" is almost certainly correct. It is evident reading Wolters that many scholars bypass or distort the evidence in constructing a meaning for the infinitive. Moreover, the near context also suggests ἀθεντεῖν means "exercise authority," for it functions as the antonym to "all submissiveness" in v. 11.<sup>153</sup>

Paul explains in 1 Tim. 2:13 that the reason ("For," *gar*)<sup>154</sup> women are not permitted to teach or to have authority over a man is that "Adam was formed first, then Eve."<sup>155</sup> It has nothing to do with women's intellect, character, devotion, knowledge, education, or speaking skill; it is not because they are *incapable* of teaching or leading. It is rooted in the order of creation, which as Köstenberger notes "strongly suggests that vv. 11-12 are permanently applicable."<sup>156</sup> Both here and in 1 Cor. 11:7-9, the Spirit of God through Paul makes clear that Genesis 2 posits role differences

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<sup>149</sup> Wolters, 83.

<sup>150</sup> Wolters, 69, 113.

<sup>151</sup> BDAG, 150.

<sup>152</sup> Köstenberger (2016), 117-161; see also, Andreas J. Köstenberger, "[The Syntax of 1 Timothy 2:12: A Rejoinder to Philip B. Payne](#)," *Journal for Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* 14:2 (2009), 37-40.

<sup>153</sup> Schreiner (2016), 194-195.

<sup>154</sup> See, e.g., Mounce, 131-132; Schreiner (2016), 200.

<sup>155</sup> This is undoubtedly a reference to the creation account as the verb "form" (*plassō*) is used repeatedly in the LXX of God's formation of Adam at creation (Gen. 2:7, 8, 15).

<sup>156</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, BTCP (Nashville: Holman, 2017), 117.

between men and women. For any explanation of this verse to be credible, it must make sense of the fact the creation of Adam before the creation of Eve is the reason for the restriction on women expressed in vv. 11-12.

It is true that Paul does not explain how Adam's being created first constitutes a reason for him not permitting a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but the notion of the "firstborn" being the leader required no explanation in the first century.<sup>157</sup> As previously noted, the leadership right of the firstborn is all over the OT and was taken for granted.<sup>158</sup> That is how Paul would have expected to be and would have been heard. To claim otherwise is to ignore the social context of the letter. As Schreiner observes, "When Paul said that women should not teach because Adam was created first, the readers of 1 Timothy would not have scratched their heads with perplexity and amazement. To the original readers, the priority of Adam in creation would naturally have suggested his authority over Eve."<sup>159</sup>

This raises the question of *why* God made man first instead of making woman first or making them at the same time from the dust of the ground. Ultimately the answer is that God is sovereign (Ps. 103:19; 1 Tim. 6:15) and chose to do it that way. One could just as well ask why God gave the tribe of Levi the exclusive responsibility to care for the Tabernacle (Num. 1:50-51; 1 Chron. 6:47, 23:26), or why he gave the family of Aaron the exclusive responsibility of serving as priests (Ex. 28:1, 29:4-9). Why limit those roles to people who happen to be born in a certain state rather than allowing everyone equal access to the roles?

Hicks complains that ascribing rank to the creation order is merely an inference, but it is an inference driven by the fact Adam's priority in creation is given as the reason women are not permitted to teach or to have authority over a man and the fact the firstborn had a default leadership

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<sup>157</sup> As Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker observe about v. 13 in *The First and Second Letters of Timothy*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 227, "it is notable that its argument is not expanded upon but, for all its brevity, is taken for granted as familiar and immediately intelligible."

<sup>158</sup> Gen. 25:29-33, 27:1-40, 43:33; Deut. 21:15-17; 1 Chron. 5:1. See, Hurley (1981), 207-209. Jacob Neusner states in *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 228, "The laws of primogeniture mandate for firstborn sons a special blessing and a double portion of inheritance (Deut. 21:15-17; see also, Gen. 25:29-34), regardless of the father's greater affection for another wife and/or her children. The firstborn also receives authority over other family members (Gen. 27)." As Robert Foster observes in *Renaming Abraham's Children* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 131 (fn. 49), "The tension that propels Genesis's narrative requires primogeniture as the societal 'default' setting." He explains (p. 131), "According to convention, Ishmael, as the firstborn should stand to inherit the family goods, or at least – in the formulation of Deut. 21:15-17 – a double portion thereof. Genesis presupposes a knowledge of this institution for the rhetorical effect of its subversion." Kyu Seop Kim states in *The Firstborn Son in Ancient Judaism And Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 138:

In Greco-Roman society, the eldest had a higher status than his younger brothers. In *Moralia* 486F-487A, Plutarch exhorts that the eldest brother should take primacy in every matter over his other brothers. . . .

In Demosthenes, *Against Macartatus* 43.74, the eldest son was named after his grandfather because the name was fitting for the eldest son (ὡσπερ καὶ δικάσιον ἔστιν), and it implies that the eldest son had some distinct status. The order of age contained a crucial cultural value in Greco-Roman society. Seniority was often associated with some higher status within human relationships. In *Sacr* 77, Philo states, "By 'elder' is meant he that is worthy of honour and privilege and high place." Thus, the order of age was significant in the Greco-Roman world and related to singular qualities. The older brother had a higher rank amongst his brothers, and the seniority of the older brother was respected by his younger siblings.

<sup>159</sup> Schreiner (2016), 203.

right in both Scripture and society. That is why the text has been so understood throughout the ages. It is not a misogynistic impulse.

According to Hicks, as best I understand him, Paul says that he does not permit the women in the church at Ephesus who had been deceived by the false teachers to overpower men with false teaching because Eve, who had been deceived by Satan, overpowered Adam with her false teaching.<sup>160</sup> There is much wrong with this.

First, the interpretation relies on fusing the two infinitives [*didaskēin*, to teach; *authentēin*, to have authority] into a single prohibition so that the second defines the manner of the first. That has been shown to be mistaken, as pointed out above (see especially the study by Köstenberger). Second, the interpretation relies on the belief that *authentēō* (have authority) has a negative or pejorative connotation, that it refers to an abusive exercise of authority. The studies by Wolters and Köstenberger mentioned above demonstrate that is not the case. Third, there is no basis for claiming the women addressed in 2:9-12 were false teachers. That is simply imposed on the text, as I have explained. Fourth, if the intent was to silence a group of female false teachers, there is no reason Paul would have spoken of women generally (a woman) instead of directing his remarks to a specific group (these women). Fifth, if the concern was with false teaching, it is unreasonable to think he would limit his prohibition to women given the indisputable presence of male false teachers in the church. Sixth, it is odd indeed to think a prohibition against false teaching would be based on (not merely supported or reinforced by) an historical example of an alleged false teacher. Teaching heresy is wrong because it is contrary to the gospel of Christ not because Eve misled Adam. Seventh, "The Genesis account does not say that Eve *taught* anything."<sup>161</sup> Adam listened to her voice (Gen. 3:17) but influencing one to sin does not require teaching. Eighth, Eve's conduct is nowhere described by the verb *authentēō*, and yet Hicks claims, "She *authent* him; she overpowered him with her persuasion and influence." Ninth, if Paul is addressing female false teachers, it makes no sense that he would restrict his prohibition to their teaching the false doctrine in an overpowering manner, as though spreading it with less verve would be acceptable. Tenth, the interpretation imagines away the relevance of the priority of Adam's creation, which is expressly stated as the reason for the prohibition, in favor of an overbearing teaching by Eve that is nowhere indicated. No first-century reader could be expected to understand Paul's words in the way Hicks claims. This is not a retelling of Genesis 2-3 – compressed, midrashic, or otherwise – but a rewriting of it.

The fact *authentēō* is a biblical hapax legomenon leads Hicks to claim it cannot carry a positive sense, simply "to have authority," because in that case Paul would have used his more common terminology to convey that idea. This is not only contradicted by the studies noted above which demonstrate the word carries a positive sense but is also mitigated by the fact that, for

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<sup>160</sup> He explains:

Paul's statement, "Adam was first formed, then Eve," begins the narration. Adam was created first, instructed with the task in the Garden, and then Eve was formed. However, Eve was "tricked" (deceived) by the serpent (Genesis 3:13) and followed the serpent, just like some women in Ephesus were ensnared by Satan and followed others into false doctrines (1 Timothy 5:15). She persuaded Adam who sinned with his eyes wide open. She *authent* him; she overpowered him with her persuasion and influence.

Adam followed Eve; he 'listened to the voice of his wife (Genesis 3:17). This is the progression.

<sup>161</sup> Mounce, 141.

whatever reason, "the vocabulary of the pastoral epistles is well known to be distinct from Paul's vocabulary elsewhere."<sup>162</sup> And beyond that, Schreiner explains:

Ἀὐθεντεῖν and ἐξουσιάζειν have overlapping semantic fields. A review of Baldwin's data shows that the two words are used synonymously in at least eight different contexts, and Wolters's study points in the same direction. The expression "have authority" (ἔχειν ἐξουσίαν) does not convey the same meaning as "exercise authority" since it focuses on possession of authority instead of use (cf. Rom. 9:21; 1 Cor. 7:37; 9:4, 5, 6; 11:10; 2 Thess. 3:9). And one might get the impression that Paul frequently uses the verbs ἐξουσιάζω and κυριεύω for "exercise authority," but he uses the former only three times (1 Cor. 6:12; 7:4 [twice]) and the latter on only six occasions (Rom. 6:9, 14; 7:1; 14:9; 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Tim. 6:15). The statistical significance of selecting ἀὐθεντεῖν instead of ἐξουσιάζειν or κυριεύειν, therefore, is overrated.

Moreover, ἐξουσιάζω clearly has a negative sense in Luke 22:25 but a positive one in 1 Corinthians 7:4. Thus, one cannot say that Paul had to use this verb to indicate a positive use of authority. What indicates a positive or negative use of authority is the context. The verb κυριεύω is hardly a better choice. When used of God or Christ, it has a positive meaning (Rom. 14:9; 1 Tim. 6:15), but elsewhere in Paul it bears a negative meaning (Rom. 6:9, 14; 7:1; 2 Cor. 1:24; cf. Luke 22:25). Neither ἐξουσιάζω nor κυριεύω necessarily conveys an intrinsic positive concept of exercising authority. The context determines whether the exercise of authority is positive or negative. Scholars can make too much, therefore, of the distinct verb being used in 1 Timothy 2:12.<sup>163</sup>

Hicks further objects that if male authority rooted in creation precludes women from teaching in 1 Tim. 2:11-13, then it would necessarily preclude them from praying and prophesying in the assembly. Since, as Hicks understands it, Paul in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 allows women to pray and prophesy in the assembly, 1 Tim. 2:11-13 must mean something else.

I have explained that male authority does indeed preclude women from participating in the prophetic process in the assembly, as Paul specifies in 1 Cor. 14:33b-36. It does not, however, prohibit them from praying in the assembly because that is nondidactic speech directed to God. Paul in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 does not allow women to pray and prophesy in the assembly. That is an assumption that has caused much mischief. He is addressing the specific issue of women praying uncovered in the assembly (1 Cor. 11:13) and includes prophesying in the discussion because the ruling on the covering regarding praying in the assembly would by logic also be a ruling on the covering regarding prophesying outside the assembly.

Hicks attempts a *reductio ad absurdum* arguing that men cannot have a leadership right based on the creation order because if that were the case that right necessarily would prohibit women having authority over men in any sphere, including business, education, and politics. Of course, the fact that is now a culturally intolerable option does not prove it is false, but Scripture itself indicates that God does not intend the male leadership that is rooted in creation to prohibit

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<sup>162</sup> Moo, 186.

<sup>163</sup> Schreiner (2016), 196-197.

women from exercising authority over men in all ways in all spheres. There are God-approved examples of women having authority over men in society, but contrary to Hicks's claim, there are no such examples of women leading men in worship or prophesying in the assembly. Those claims are based on dubious, or at least disputable, interpretations, as explained above. Nor are there examples of women teaching in the assembly of God's people. On the other hand, women were excluded from the old-covenant priesthood and from serving in the temple as cultic functionaries in any capacity, were not among the original or replacement apostles, were not among those given the responsibility for the daily distribution, are ineligible for the offices of elder and deacon (the latter being more controversial), and are expressly prohibited from prophesying and teaching in Christian assemblies. One need not appeal to the dreaded "blueprint hermeneutic" to conclude that God intends Christian women to acknowledge and honor the creation-based leadership of men by not teaching in the assembly and not taking positions of leadership within the church.

In 1 Tim. 2:14 Paul gives an additional reason why women are not permitted to teach or to have authority over a man. Referring to Genesis 3, he says that Adam was not deceived but the woman, by being deceived, came to be in transgression. His point is simply that Eve rather than Adam was the one deceived *by the serpent*, that qualification being understood from the Genesis account. So it is not necessary to "conclude that Adam was undecieved in every respect."<sup>164</sup> The fact the serpent went after Eve supports male leadership, the prohibition of women teaching or exercising authority over a man, not by suggesting women are innately more gullible than men and thus incompetent to teach, but by showing the harm that occurs when the divinely ordained pattern of leadership is subverted. Schreiner expresses the point well:

[Paul] wants to focus on the fact that the Serpent approached and deceived Eve, not Adam. The significance of the Serpent targeting Eve is magnified when we observe that Adam was apparently with Eve during the temptation (Gen. 3:6). In approaching Eve, then, the Serpent subverted the pattern of male leadership and interacted only with the woman. Adam was present throughout and did not intervene. The Genesis temptation, therefore, stands as the prototype of what happens when male leadership is abrogated. Eve took the initiative in responding to the serpent, and Adam let her do so. Thus, the appeal to Genesis 3 reminds readers of what happens when humans undermine God's ordained pattern.<sup>165</sup>

Hicks claims Paul says Eve rather than Adam was the one deceived because the problem he was addressing was women in Ephesus who had been deceived by false teachers and who were overpowering men with their teaching and leading them into Satanic practices and pagan myths. "She illustrated the danger of listening to deceived women," and thus serves as a warning to the church not to listen to the female false teachers. Putting aside the previously noted problem with fusing the infinitives and reading *authentēō* negatively to generate the notion of an overpowering false teaching, the text says nothing about Eve's influence on Adam, about his listening to her, which is inexplicable if that is the point. And why focus on the alleged female false teachers to the exclusion of the male false teachers who clearly were present? Moreover, if Paul simply is warning the church not to listen to the female false teachers, v. 13 ("For Adam was formed first, then Eve") is superfluous. Why not just say, "For Adam was not deceived, but the woman by being deceived,

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<sup>164</sup> Schreiner (2016), 215.

<sup>165</sup> Schreiner (2016), 215-216.

came to be in transgression"? Under the interpretation summarized by Schreiner, stressing that the serpent targeted Eve rather than Adam is related to v. 13 because it is Satan's undermining of the pattern of male leadership expressed in that verse.

The point of 1 Tim. 2:15 seems to be that, contrary to what the false teachers were claiming, women remain faithful, and thus are saved, by accepting their God-given role, which role is symbolized by the distinctly female ability of childbearing. In other words, they are not to define their faithfulness, to define their Christian calling, in terms of the male role. Their salvation is to be "worked out" (Phil. 2:12) in a somewhat different way or on a somewhat different path than the salvation of men. Schreiner comments:

This does not mean that all women must have children in order to be saved. Though the underlying principle is timeless, Paul is hardly attempting to be comprehensive here. He has elsewhere commended the single state (1 Cor. 7). He selects childbearing because it is the most notable example of the divinely intended difference in roles between men and women and because many women throughout history have had children. Thus, Paul generalizes from the experience of women by using a representative example of women maintaining their proper role. To select childbearing again indicates that the argument is transcultural, for childbearing is not limited to a particular culture but is a permanent and ongoing difference between men and women. The fact that God has ordained that women and only women bear children signifies that the differences in roles between men and women are rooted in the created order.

When Paul says that a woman will be saved by childbearing, he means, therefore, that they will be saved by adhering to their ordained role. Such a statement is apt to be misunderstood (and often has been), and thus a further comment is needed. Paul says that women will be saved "if they remain in faith and love and sanctification along with discretion." Thereby Paul shows that it is not sufficient for salvation for Christian women merely to bear children; they must also persevere in faith, love, holiness, and presumably other virtues. The reference to "discretion" (*sōphrosunēs*) hearkens back to the same word in verse 9 and also functions to tie the entire text together. Paul does not imply that all women must bear children to be saved (cf. v. 10). His purpose is to say that women will not be saved if they do not practice good works. One indication that women are doing good works is if they do not reject bearing children as evil but bear children in accord with their proper role.<sup>166</sup>

According to Hicks, v. 15 ("But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification, with decency") means, "God created; Eve was deceived; and God redeemed her through the Christ child. . . . If the women of 2:9-10 'continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty,' they too, will be saved." This is most unlikely. Guthrie says of the claim that Paul is here speaking of salvation coming through the birth of Christ that he "could hardly have

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<sup>166</sup> Schreiner (2016), 222-223.

chosen a more obscure or ambiguous way of saying it."<sup>167</sup> Mounce says, "If this is what Paul meant, he chose an extremely obscure way of saying it."<sup>168</sup>

In addition to this being a unique and opaque way to refer to the birth of Christ, the "noun *τεκνογονία* emphasizes the actual giving birth to a child, not the result or effect of childbirth."<sup>169</sup> In other words, it means "she" will be saved through childbirth not through a child to be born. The presence of the article [*the* childbearing] cannot overcome the difficulty. As Schreiner states, "The article is notoriously perplexing in Greek since it has a wide range of uses and is thereby difficult to categorize definitively. Thus, we should be wary of concluding that the presence of the article indicates particular reference to Christ's birth. The article is probably generic in any case."<sup>170</sup>

For the foregoing reasons, I reject completely the claim that Hicks's proposed interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:8-15 better captures Paul's intent and that traditional interpretations "play fast and loose with the text." In my judgment, traditional interpretations, among which I include the one presented, are superior in terms of biblical theology, context, and detailed exegesis. Hicks reads into multiple texts about women implications that are absent or doubtful and then criticizes efforts to expose that overreading by ascribing them to a flawed blueprint methodology that turns a deaf ear to the balance of the biblical story, meaning the very story he has constructed and which is in dispute. Despite the clear gender-based distinctions in religious roles indicated in both testaments, he is so convinced that his egalitarian reading of the "balance of the Bible" is correct that it exercises a controlling influence on his handling of specific texts, which he naturally considers to be insights because those new interpretations reflect back his reading of the "bigger picture" that has shaped them.

### THE VOICE OF CHURCH HISTORY

Hicks recognizes the value of church history in the exegetical task, as he occasionally appeals, one-sidedly in my view, to historical interpretations of specific passages in support of his claims. What is striking, however, is the omission of the practice of the early church regarding female speech in the assemblies. If Hicks is correct in thinking that Scripture, when read properly, reveals God's intention that there be no gender-based role differences in the church, one certainly would expect that understanding to be reflected in the practice of the early church. But it is not.

The early post-apostolic church understood that women are prohibited from teaching men in Christian assemblies. The third-century document known as the *Didascalia of the Apostles* (3.6) includes: "It is neither right nor necessary therefore that women should be teachers, and especially concerning the name of Christ and the redemption of His passion. For you have not been appointed to this, O women, and especially widows, that you should teach, but that you should pray and entreat the Lord God." As expressed in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (Book III, Ch. VI), a collection of preexisting materials on church order compiled in the fourth century, "We do not permit 'our women to teach in the church,' but only to pray and hear those that teach." After surveying the relevant evidence (Tertullian, Firmilian, Origen, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus), the renowned church historian Everett Ferguson concludes:

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<sup>167</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, TNTC, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 89.

<sup>168</sup> Mounce, 145.

<sup>169</sup> Schreiner (2016), 219 (citing Fee [1988], 75); Mounce, 145.

<sup>170</sup> Schreiner (2016), 219.

From the standpoint of history, the evidence of Christian writings of the second to fourth centuries is in continuity with the New Testament. . . . Women were not appointed as elders, nor did they take public speaking roles in the assembly as prophets, teachers, or leaders in the assembly. Where women did take these roles in heretical and schismatic groups, the practice was a basis for objection to these groups.<sup>171</sup>

The alleged female prophets of a movement known as "Montanists" or the "Phrygian heresy," which arose in the third quarter of the second century, justified their activities by appeal to the female prophets of the Bible. But the orthodox writers challenged their claims by making "a distinction between prophetesses delivering the word of the Lord in church and doing so in other circumstances. They distinguished prophecy and other speaking roles in the assembly from those outside the assembly."<sup>172</sup> Origen (c. 185-254 A.D.), a Greek-speaking Christian theologian and biblical scholar, illustrates the approach in his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 14:34-35:

If the daughters of Philip prophesied, they did not speak in church, for we do not find this in the Acts of the Apostles. Neither in the old [covenant]. [Deborah, Miriam, and Huldah] did not speak in the assembly. . . . [Anna] did not speak in church. Therefore, the prophetic sign might be given for a woman to be a prophetess, but it is not permitted to her to speak in church. . . . 'Their own men' refers not only to their spouses, but [virgins and widows have] . . . a brother, kinsman, or son.<sup>173</sup>

Ng writes:

In fact, in order to counter the female prophets and leaders in Montanism and Marcionism, a number of early Church Fathers (such as Origen, Hippolytus, Didymus the Blind, Epiphanius) appealed to Paul's words in 1 Cor 14:34-35 and/or 1 Tim 2:12 and stated that women never publicly taught men historically and should not do so at any time. Even the famous Church Father Tertullian who turned to Montanism stated that a female prophet who often saw visions in his church would only relate to the church leaders in private after the service concerning what she actually saw.<sup>174</sup>

Weinrich's study of women in church history emphasized the patristic and medieval periods. He concludes:

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<sup>171</sup> Everett Ferguson, *Women in the Church: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Abilene, TX: Desert Willow Publishing, 2015), Kindle edition (Location 964).

<sup>172</sup> Ferguson, Location 912.

<sup>173</sup> Ferguson, Location 912-922. Tertullian at the beginning of the third century "told about a Christian sister [a Montanist] who received ecstatic visions during 'the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the church' but reported them only 'after the people are dismissed at the conclusion of the sacred services' (On the Soul 9)." Ferguson, Location 912.

<sup>174</sup> Ng, 530.



The evidence shows that the Pauline statements against women speaking in the church were consistently upheld. Contrary practices were regarded as innovative and opposed to the truth and were, by ecclesiastical discipline and censure, excluded from the church. The practice of the early and medieval church was followed without question by the churches of the Reformation, both Reformed and Lutheran, and by virtually all other communions until the most recent past.<sup>175</sup>

If one claims this uniform practice of the mainstream, orthodox church was a reversal of the teaching and practice of the apostolic church, one must explain the absence of debate about the matter within that group. A uniform reversal of apostolic teaching and practice surely would leave a trail of dissenters, but there is not one. Proponents of women prophesying and teaching in the assembly were limited to heretical groups. If the historical shoe were on the other foot, egalitarians certainly would tout it as powerful support for their proposed understanding.

### INCLUSIVE ELDERSHIP

Hicks says he did not address whether women can serve as elders and that he hopes to do so in a subsequent book, but the arguments he makes in this book leave him no choice but to claim that Scripture permits women to be elders of congregations. That is a foregone conclusion. For him to acknowledge that God excludes women from that office would be to undermine his insistence that God makes no distinction between men and women in terms of religious roles. The only question is how he will get there in terms of the relevant texts. But maybe he will surprise me and find a way to incorporate an exclusively male eldership into his egalitarian vision.

### DOING WHAT IS SAFE

Hicks has no patience with the claim the egalitarian agenda should be resisted because it is "safer" to do so. He says, in essence, that it is no safer to deny a woman the right to serve as God would have her serve than to allow her to serve in ways God prohibits. Erring in either direction is serious business. That is true, which is why the matter must be judged carefully on its merits.

Because Hicks is confident he is correct – that, after all, is the burden of his book – and thus believes the complementarian understanding that he has "outgrown" is false,<sup>176</sup> he believes complementarians, however well intended, are in fact engaging in a dire and damaging abuse of women, harming the church's public witness, dishonoring God and denying him his due glory, depriving the church of blessings, deeply wounding women, bringing shame on the church in the eyes of the world, and subverting the obedience of women. For him and his fellow travelers, the cause is a righteous crusade to set straight the erring to the glory of God. The nobility of their vision demands its imposition, which people like me cannot in good conscience accept. I mourn the prospect of theological coups shattering the peace of congregations and consciences of individuals,

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<sup>175</sup> William Weinrich, "Women in the History of the Church" in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Womanhood & Manhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 279.

<sup>176</sup> Though he says of his interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:8-15, "I could be wrong," and urges that we hold our interpretations of the text "gently and cautiously" and seek to love one another in our disagreement, he hastens to add, "At the same time, *the balance of the Bible speaks loudly*." In other words, "Do not read too much into the possibility I am wrong; I have devoted a book to arguing that I am not."

but egalitarians will see it as the necessary price of truth and repentance, the price of liberating Christian women from their manmade bondage.

### CONCLUSION

Hicks seeks to popularize among churches of Christ feminist interpretations of the last fifty years that lead to the claim men and women may serve in the church in identical ways. In line with church history and with much of the modern Evangelical world, I reject those interpretations as inconsistent with Scripture. I have explained why and hope I have done so in a Christlike spirit. I do not enjoy disagreements, but there are times when I feel compelled to take issue with claims that I believe will be harmful to the body of Christ.

I have not interacted with the responses to the book that form its closing chapters. Frankly, this became a larger project than I envisioned, and I am ready to stop. I pray what I have written will be helpful.