

The Role of Women in Church: Responding to Claims of Some Egalitarians

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Those who contend it is God's will that there be no difference in roles between men and women in the church and between husbands and wives in the home ("egalitarians") make many claims with which I disagree. I have addressed most of them in prior writings,¹ but perhaps itemizing some of the claims and my responses will make the material more accessible. The list is not exhaustive, and not all egalitarians make all these claims. More could be said, but I hope I have said enough to be helpful.

¹ My most extensive discussion is "[An Assessment of Hicks's *Women Serving God*](#)."

1. A right of male leadership means female inferiority.

Some egalitarians attempt to bias the discussion of male leadership by casting it as a claim of female inferiority, but that falsely equates differences in roles or functions with differences in status or worth. The fact men are to lead and women are to be helping partners in the joint enterprise of glorifying God does not mean women are inferior in character, intellect, value, or capability. It means only that God in his sovereignty and for his purpose has chosen to place the responsibility of leadership on men. As God made clear in Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16), he has the right to choose select groups for specific roles. He has a right to limit roles to people based on the state of their birth. He is not obligated to grant everyone equal access to roles based on their ability. One may just as well challenge his right to give the tribe of Levi the exclusive responsibility to care for the Tabernacle (Num. 1:50-51; 1 Chron. 6:47, 23:26) or to give the family of Aaron the exclusive responsibility of serving as priests (Ex. 28:1, 29:4-9).

That a submissive or nonleading role does not mean an inferior status is evident in the case of Jesus. He is God; he is one in nature, being, and essence with God the Father. So the Son is not inferior to or less worthy than the Father, yet he is functionally subordinate to the Father; he willingly submits to the Father's authority. This is made explicit in 1 Cor. 11:3 and is demonstrated in many ways in the NT. The difference between the Father and the Son is one of role or function. The Son freely embraces the leadership of the Father.

If Jesus, being in very nature God, can submit to the Father's authority, then certainly women can submit to the leadership of men without denying their equal dignity or value. In doing so, they are acting like Christ. Thomas Schreiner states:

A difference in role or function in no way implies that women are inferior to men. Even the Son submits to the Father (1 Cor. 15:28), and yet he is equal to the Father in essence, dignity, and personhood. It is a modern, democratic, Western notion that diverse functions suggest distinctions in worth between men and women. Paul believed that men and women were equal in personhood, dignity, and value but also taught that women had distinct roles from men.²

2. The Genesis creation account does not support a right of male leadership.

Egalitarians insist that nothing in the Genesis creation account supports the idea of male leadership. They assure their audience that Adam being created first implies nothing about leadership, but Paul says expressly in 1 Tim. 2:13 that the creation of Adam before the creation of Eve is the reason for the restriction on women stated in 1 Tim. 2:11-12. He states: *Let a woman learn in quietness with full submission.*¹² *I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; rather, she is to be in quietness.*¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

² Thomas R. Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:9-15" in Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 201-202.

Paul does not explain how Adam's priority in creation 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.³ The leadership right of the firstborn is all over the OT and was taken for granted.⁴ 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."⁵

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 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 undeceived in every respect."⁶ 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

³ 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."

⁴ Gen. 25:29-33, 27:1-40, 43:33; Deut. 21:15-17; 1 Chron. 5:1. See, James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 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 δικαίων 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.

⁵ Schreiner (2016), 203.

⁶ Schreiner (2016), 215.

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.⁷

Paul also makes clear in 1 Cor. 11:7-10 that Genesis 2 posits role differences between men and women: 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.* ⁸*For man is not from woman but woman from man;* ⁹*for neither was the man created on account of the woman but the woman on account of the man.* ¹⁰*For this reason, the woman ought to have authority on [her] head, on account of the angels.*

He explains that the fact God made Eve from Adam's body, not independently from the ground as he did with Adam, and did so "on account of the man" (Gen. 2:20-23), means that woman's existence glorifies man whereas man's existence glorifies only God and not the woman. This 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. As the glory of man, the woman ought not cast off the sign of authority on her head that is the covering⁸ because however glorious man may be, he remains under the authority of God. In other words, the head covering, which as a culturally expected piece of female attire functions as a sign of authority over the wearer,⁹ 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 end of verse 10 gives yet another reason that a woman should have a sign of authority on her head.¹⁰ 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. As Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner note, "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."¹¹

⁷ Schreiner (2016), 215-216.

⁸ Some insist 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. 8-10). 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).

⁹ The head cover functions as a sign of authority precisely because it was a distinctly female piece of attire. 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.

¹⁰ E.g., Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 529.

¹¹ Ciampa and Rosner, 530.

The fact the woman is described in Gen. 2:18, 20 as a helper fit or suitable for Adam is a further indication in the creation account of male leadership. 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."¹² John Piper and Wayne 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.¹³

In 1 Cor. 14:34 Paul states that the women in Christian assemblies are obligated to be in submission "as even the law says." In commenting on this clause, Schreiner lists some additional pointers to male leadership in the creation account:

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).¹⁴

Beyond that, Paul informs us in Eph. 5:28-33 that marriage was instituted in part to serve as a type for Christ's relationship with the church (esp. vv. 31-32). It is because ("For this reason," v. 31a) we are members of Christ's body ("for we are members of his body," v. 30) that men and women were called *from the beginning of creation* to unite in the one-flesh relationship of marriage ("a man will leave father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh," v. 31b-c, quoting Gen. 2:24). As Christ sacrificially loves the church (5:25b,

¹² 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).

¹³ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, "Clarity, Charity, and Hope: The Controversy and the Cause of Christ" in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Womanhood & Manhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 408-409. As I indicated, 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*.

¹⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 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; Hurley, 191-192.

29b), his body, husbands are called to sacrificially love their wives as their own bodies (5:25a, 29-29). And as Christ is the head, the leader, of the church, a husband is the head, the leader, of his wife (5:22-23). (See the discussions under claims 6 and 11.) This is how marriage was intended to serve as a type for Christ's relationship with the church. And since marriage was intended to serve that way from the beginning of creation, the institution of marriage in Gen. 2:24 also supports male leadership.

3. Male leadership is a post-fall distortion of God's intention.

Having convinced themselves, against the evidence noted above, that the creation account does not support the claim that God initially placed the responsibility of leadership on men, egalitarians conclude that male leadership is a sinful, post-fall distortion of God's original intention. Some point to Gen. 3:16 as support for that claim, but in that verse 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 control her husband (see the use of "desire" in Gen. 4:7), contrary to God's created order. He adds that this fallen desire generally will go unsatisfied because the husband has the leadership role ("but he will rule over you").¹⁵ Therefore, in claiming that male leadership is a sinful corruption of God's intention, egalitarians unwittingly are aiding and abetting women in their rebellion against God's true intention.

4. A creation-based male leadership means women cannot lead men in any sphere.

Egalitarians sometimes attempt a *reductio ad absurdum* arguing that men cannot have a leadership right based on creation because such a right necessarily would prohibit women having authority over men in any sphere, including business, education, and politics. 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 women from exercising authority over men in all ways in all spheres. The fact Deborah was a judge to whom people came to "have their disputes settled/decided" (NET, NIV; also, CSB) (Judg. 4:5) means she had some civil or administrative authority within the society.

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 and home 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

¹⁵ 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 the phrase, "You will want to control your husband."

their religious assemblies, so one must be sensitive to differing situations and circumstances. As explained in the responses to other claims, Scripture reveals that God intends Christian women to acknowledge and honor the creation-based leadership of men by being submissive to their husbands, by not teaching in the assembly, and by not exercising authority over men in the church.

5. Gal. 3:28 means there are no gender-based role distinctions in the church.

Paul states in Gal. 3:26-29: *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷for as many as were baptized into Christ, clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.*

The inapplicability of the Mosaic law ("For"), the passing of the period of the trainer, is confirmed by the fact *all* the baptized believers in Galatia, Jew and Gentile, are sons (and daughters) of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Faith in Christ was the criterion of their adoption, the basis of their sonship, not submission to the Mosaic law, so clearly that law no longer defines God's people. Rather, in Christ all enjoy the full status of God's people. In terms of a relationship with God, there is no distinction between Jewish and Greek Christians, slave and free Christians, and male and female Christians. By faith, they all as one have been reconciled to God in Christ Jesus; they are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. So clearly the Judaizers' attempt to maintain a salvific Jew-Gentile distinction among those who have put their faith in Christ is wrong.

Paul does not here rule out differing functions and roles among Christians. Grudem explains:

[A]s Richard Hove has demonstrated in detail elsewhere in this volume, when the Bible says that several things are "one," it never joins things that are exactly the same. Rather, it says things that are different, things that are diverse, share some kind of unity. So in Romans 12:4-5 we read:

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (emphasis added)

Paul does not mean to say that all the members of the body are the same, for, as anyone can see, a body has hands and feet and eyes and ears, and all the "members" are different, and they have different functions, though they are "one body."

Similarly, using the same construction, Hove found that Paul can say, "Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own

reward according to his own labor" (1 Cor. 3:8, NASB). Now planting and watering are two different activities done by different persons in Paul's example. Those persons are not reduced to sameness, nor are they required to act in exactly the same way; but they are still "one" because they have a kind of unity of purpose and goal.

And so Galatians 3:28 simply says that we have a special kind of unity in the body of Christ. Our differences as male and female are not obliterated by this unity; rather, the unity is beautiful in God's sight particularly because it is a unity of different kinds of people.¹⁶

Schreiner states:

Paul affirms the oneness of males and females in Christ, but he does not claim that maleness and femaleness are irrelevant in every respect. If one were to draw such a conclusion, then Paul would not object to homosexuality, but it is clear that he thinks homosexuality is sinful (Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10). In the same way, the equality of men and women in Christ does not cancel out, in Paul's mind, the distinct roles of men and women in marriage (Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19; Titus 2:4-5) or in ministry contexts (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-36; 1 Tim 2:9-15).¹⁷

6. Eph. 5:21 means husbands do not have a unique leadership role.

Egalitarians sometimes claim that Paul's command in Eph. 5:21 that Christians are to submit *to one another* is a command for a mutual or two-way submission, a command for person A to submit to person B and for person B likewise to submit to person A. That claim then becomes the basis for denying that a husband has leadership authority, a unique leadership role, and that a wife has a unique or distinctive duty to submit to her husband. I think that is a serious misunderstanding of Paul's meaning.

"Mutual submission" is an oxymoron. In the context of personal relations, the Greek word rendered "submit" *always is one-directional*, always describes a hierarchical ordering in which one person has the leadership right, has authority over another, so by its very nature it cannot be mutual. As Peter O'Brien states:

¹⁶ Wayne Grudem, "The Key Issues in the Manhood-Womanhood Controversy, and the Way Forward" in Wayne Grudem, ed., *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 43. The reference is to 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. See also, 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; Jack Cottrell, *Gender Roles & the Bible: Creation, Fall, & Redemption* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), 217-236; 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.

¹⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 259.

[It] regularly functions to describe the submission of someone in an ordered array to another who was above the first, that is, in authority over that person. Further, none of the relationships where this verb appears is reversed: husbands are not told to be subject to their wives, nor parents to children, nor the government to citizens, nor disciples to demons. The word does not describe a 'symmetrical' relationship since it always has to do with an ordered relationship in which one person is 'over' and another 'under'. In this sense the term is not mutual in its force. . . . v. 21 is not calling 'for [the] mutual submission of all Christians to each other'. This is to misunderstand the semantic range of the term. Instead, believers are urged to be submissive to those who are in authority over them.¹⁸

Grudem writes:

Although some have claimed that the word [*hypotassō*] 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

¹⁸ Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 401-402.

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.¹⁹

John Elliott states:

When the verb *hypotassō* and noun *hypotagē* are used in ethical contexts, they denote recognition of and respect for authority and order, which involve submission, deference to, subjection to, and obedience to superiors, namely God and humans in positions of recognized authority. . . . The meaning and use of the verb *hypotassō* in 1 Peter are consonant with its other NT occurrences and entail a recognition of and respect for order manifested in the acknowledgement of one's subordinate position in relation to those in authority, in showing proper deference, or in "placing oneself at the disposal of others" (Cervantes Gabarrón 1991a, 134-38).²⁰

Despite the fact submission implies an authority, it is claimed by some that the phrase "to one another" requires that the submission be mutual, which means that *hypotassō* must here have a meaning it nowhere else has. Here, instead of meaning to yield to the leadership right of another, *hypotassō* supposedly refers to a two-way duty to be humble toward or to act in a thoughtful, considerate, or serving way toward another. But the phrase "to one another" does not require that the submission be mutual and thus does not require imposing on the word a definition it nowhere else has.

Just as in English, the Greek word rendered "to one another" (*allēlois*) can mean some within the group submitting to others within the group. Consider these statements, all of which are from articles on the internet:

- The comics at [the Comedy Club] unabashedly **stole material from one another**.
- Gang members are **killing one another** every day.
- They found his dogs so malnourished that they were **eating one another**.

Certainly no one thinks the writers meant to convey (a) that each comedian who had material stolen from him turned around and stole material from the one who stole from him, or (b) that gang members who were killed rose up and killed those who had killed them, or (c) dogs who were being eaten turned around and ate those who were eating them. In those cases, "one

¹⁹ Wayne Grudem, "The Myth of 'Mutual Submission,'" *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 1 (October 1996), 1, 3. He later wrote in Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 191: "When we look at the word Paul used when he said 'submitting to one another' in Ephesians 5:21, we find that this word (Greek *hypotassō*) is always used of submission to an authority. No one has yet produced any examples in ancient Greek literature (either inside or outside the New Testament) where *hypotassō* is applied to a relationship between persons, and where it does not carry this sense of being subject to an authority."

²⁰ John H. Elliott, *1 Peter*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 487.

another" clearly means that *some* comedians, *some* gang members, and *some* dogs, were stealing from, killing, and eating *other* comedians, gang members, and dogs, respectively.

You see that same usage of "one another" in the New Testament. Luke 2:15 reports that "the shepherds said to *one another*, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened.'" That means that some of the shepherds suggested this to the others, not that each said the same thing to the other. Luke 12:1 tells of a crowd that was so large that "they were trampling on *one another*." That means that some in the crowd trampled on others in the crowd, not that each person who was trampled on also trampled on the one who trampled on him. Paul's command in Gal. 6:2 to "bear *one another's* burdens" does not mean that a person whose burdens were born by another must then bear the burdens of that person. Rather, it means that *some* who were more able should help bear the burdens of *others* who were less able. When James commanded in Jas. 4:11 that they not "speak against *one another*" he was not forbidding *mutual* slander but evil speech by any one of them against any other. Revelation 6:4 says "men slay *one another*," meaning that some men kill others, not that those being killed also kill those who are killing them.

This meaning of "to one another" fits neatly in the Ephesian context. As indicated in the earlier quote of O'Brien, Paul is calling the Christians to be filled with the Spirit by submitting to those to whom they owe submission, which he then spells out in the following verses. Wives are to submit to their husbands, children are to submit to their parents, and slaves are to submit to their masters. They submit "to one another" by *some* within the group (wives, children, slaves) submitting to *others* within the group (husbands, parents, masters). So the phrase "to one another" provides no warrant for imposing on the word "submit" a meaning that is not attested anywhere in Greek literature. O'Brien rightly comments: "In the present context, then, given that 'submit' is one-directional in its reference to submission to authority, and that the pronoun does not always indicate a symmetrical relationship, it is preferable to understand the clause 'submitting to one another' to refer to submission to appropriate authorities, not mutual submission."²¹

This does not mean, of course, that husbands, parents, and masters owe no duties to wives, children, and slaves, respectively. On the contrary, Paul spells out their duties after each of the duties of submission are specified. *The point is not that husbands, parents, and masters lack their own duties but that those duties are different from a duty to submit.* Husbands are never told to submit to their wives, parents are never told to submit to their children, and masters are never told to submit to their slaves.

That explains why there is no suggestion of mutuality in the other New Testament texts that declare a wife is to submit to her husband (Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1, 5-6). If the duty to submit were mutual, whatever that means, why would nothing be said about it in these other texts instructing wives to submit to their husbands? I suggest that the duty to submit is not mutual and that it is a misreading Eph. 5:21 to conclude otherwise. As James Hurley explains:

The conclusion to be reached is that when the New Testament speaks of the self-giving love of Christ and calls believers to emulate this, it does not use the verb

²¹ O'Brien, 403.

hypotassō (submit oneself). When we are called upon to bend ourselves to the needs and desires of another, *hypotassō* is not the verb because it directly implies making oneself subject to authority, rather than responsible to needs. Let me repeat myself for the sake of clarity: I am not saying that husbands should not imitate Christ's self-giving love or that they are free to forget Paul's call to spare no effort for the building up of their wives (Eph. 5:22-33). Husbands *are* to love their wives as their own selves. I *am* saying that the New Testament does not use 'submit' (*hypotassō*) to convey this idea and that submitting to one another (mutual submission) is not an appropriate term to use in describing the mutual obligations of husbands and wives, parents and children, slaves and masters.²²

One who claims Paul is imposing a new meaning on the word "submit" by commanding a mutual submission, a duty that runs two ways instead of only one way, must explain how that works in the context of the following specifics, not only of husbands and wives but also of parents and children and masters and slaves. Since everyone recognizes that parents and masters have a unique leadership authority over children and slaves, that the duties they owe each other are not the same, one who insists that parents and children *submit* to each other and that masters and slaves *submit* to each other must quickly add "but not in the same way."

In other words, they must claim that whereas children submit to parents and slaves submit to masters *by yielding to their leadership authority*, parents "submit" to children and masters "submit" to slaves simply by being humble toward them and acting in a thoughtful, considerate, or serving way. So having mistakenly stretched the word "submit" to cover mutual, two-way obligations, they must revert to the one-way meaning, the actual meaning of the word, to account for the leadership authority of parents and masters. They thus bring in the back door the very notion of leadership authority that they ushered out the front door by claiming submission was mutual, all of which is misguided.

7. The OT indicates gender is not a basis for role differences in religious service.

Egalitarians often point to Deborah and Huldah in the OT without due appreciation for the limitations of those examples. 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 Barry 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."²³ The fact Barak insisted she

²² Hurley, 144.

²³ 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,

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 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.²⁴

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)."²⁵ 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.

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.

In claiming the OT supports their vision, egalitarians often ignore or gloss over the fact gender was a basis for role differences in religious service under the old covenant. 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 only sons, not daughters, were eligible for that role (e.g., Ex. 28:41, 29:9, 29:29-30, 30:30). Women also were excluded from serving in the temple

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)."

²⁴ Grudem (2004), 134.

²⁵ 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.

as cultic functionaries in any capacity. The occasional assertion that women were part of the Levitical choir in the temple is mistaken. As David 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]."²⁶ That is why women are not mentioned among the temple singers in 1 Chron. 25:7-31; there were none.²⁷

8. Women in Jesus' ministry establish there are no gender distinctions in the church.

Egalitarians often point to the role women played in Jesus' ministry, but the fact women were among his disciples, supported him financially, and were 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. Indeed, if Jesus intended to make a complete break with the principle of male religious leadership as reflected in the Mosaic 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.²⁸ 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).

9. Phoebe held the church office of deacon.

Egalitarians routinely point to Phoebe as a woman holding the office of deacon in the church in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1). The claim that Paul was there using *diakonos* for a church office rather than in its generic sense of "servant" is highly debatable. Proponents of the translation "deacon" or "deaconess" put much stock in the fact Phoebe is identified not simply as a *diakonon* but as a *diakonon* "of the church in Cenchrea." They claim this indicates she was an officer of that church rather than an unofficial servant because those occupying the office of

²⁶ David C. Mitchell, *The Songs of Ascents* (Newton Meams, Scotland: Campbell Publications, 2015), 105.

²⁷ 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)." D. J. Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 60. See also, H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 38; Ralph W. Klein, "The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah" in Leander Keck, ed., *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 3:687; John Arthur Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 83. As for the claim that 1 Chron. 25:5-6 indicates Heman's three daughters were among the temple singers, see Martin J. Selman, *1 Chronicles*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 245; Smith, 84.

²⁸ The response that the absence of Gentiles from the twelve apostles is not thought to restrict leadership roles to Jews flounders on 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 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 (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 the fuller discussion at ["Women Are Not to Be Appointed to the Office of Deacon"](#)).

elder are described in Acts 20:17 and Jas. 5:14 as elders "of the church" and angels representing the various churches in Revelation 2-3 are described as the angel "of the church in X." But the phrase "of the church" or "of the church in X" does not define the role it modifies; it says only that the role is related to the church. As one could identify someone as an owner, coach, or fan "of the team in Phoenix" without implying they all were related to the team in some official capacity, one could identify someone as an angel, elder, or servant "of the church in X" without implying they all were officers of the church.

It is more likely that Paul describes Phoebe as a *diakonon* of the church in Cenchrea because she had been a *prostatis* of many (Rom. 16:2), meaning she had helped the church, 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."²⁹ 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*).³⁰ As James Walters rightly acknowledges, "the meaning 'servant' for *diakonos* could refer merely to Phoebe's work as a patron."³¹ Aimé Mortimort likewise states:

[I]t is possible to argue that what follows in the text provides the best clue to the nature of the service rendered by Phoebe. St. Paul specifies that for him, as for many others, she has been a helper, or protectress (*prostatis*). This term suggests activities pertaining to the established and accepted practices, recognized by all, of providing hospitality and assistance. This interpretation is especially plausible when we remember that Cenchreae was the port of Corinth facing east; it was there that the Christian brethren from Syria or Asia Minor would normally have debarked in Greece.³²

In this light, there is no adequate reason for concluding that *diakonos* in v. 1 carries the technical sense of one appointed to the church office of deacon. John 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.³³

²⁹ Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 712.

³⁰ 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).

³¹ James Walters, "'Phoebe' and 'Junia(s)' – Rom. 16:1-2, 7" in Carroll Osburn, ed., *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1999), 1:181.

³² Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses An Historical Study* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 20.

³³ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 226.

The first clear evidence for women being appointed to a church office of deaconess is the document from the middle of the third century known as the *Didascalia of the Apostles*. The alleged reference to women deacons in Pliny's letter to Emperor Trajan in the early second century is ambiguous. Pliny says (in Latin) of certain female slaves he tortured to obtain information about Christianity that they were called "*ministrae*" (plural of *ministra*), but *ministrae* has the same obscurity as the Greek word *diakonos*. As Jack Lewis points out, "They [Pliny's *ministrae*] could be servants of the church, or they could be appointees of the church. No one can know."³⁴ The text provides no information about the status and function of these women in the Christian community. Even if they held a formal position in the church, it may have been that of enrolled widows (1 Tim. 5:9-16) who served in some capacity rather than that of deacons. J. G. Davies summarizes the matter well:

When we recall that there is no convincing evidence of the existence of an order in the Apostolic Age and that the first definite reference to it is not found before the middle of the third century, the only reasonable conclusion upon the available evidence is that, whoever Pliny had examined and whatever unspecified functions they had previously performed, we cannot say with conviction that they were members of an order of deaconesses.³⁵

But, of course, even if Phoebe was a deacon, it would not mean women were permitted to fill all roles or perform all functions in the church. Indeed, the *Didascalia of the Apostles* makes clear that the roles of male and female deacons were distinguished. So Phoebe's status as a deacon is a distraction in that it does not address whether there were other restrictions on the role of women in the church.

10. Junia was a female apostle.

The assertion 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)³⁶ because the accusative singular form of both names is identical (*Iounian*) except for the accent marks, which were not added until centuries later. This uncertainty is reflected in the translations.³⁷ 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

³⁴ Jack P. Lewis, *Exegesis of Difficult Passages* (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 1988), 108. Ferguson likewise remarks in Ferguson, Location 859-868: "The Latin *ministrae* was a general word for women servants that in this passage could refer (1) to the feminine worshipers of a deity (Christ), (2) slaves (on this meaning, perhaps Christians chose to use this term rather than slaves for their fellow believers), (3) women especially active in service (in this context Christian service), or (4) 'deaconesses' (in view of the apparent reference to a special Christian usage)."

³⁵ J. G. Davies, "Deacons, Deaconesses and the Minor Orders in the Patristic Period," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 (April 1963), 2-3.

³⁶ Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 480; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 738.

³⁷ 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.

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."³⁸

More recently, Ng has reinforced Wolters's claim that "Ἰουνίας may have been the Hellenized transcription of the Hebrew masculine name *yhwny*."³⁹ 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.⁴⁰

Contrary to the assertion of some, it is not clear 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.⁴¹

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."⁴² 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 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.⁴³

³⁸ Michael W. Harding, "Female Apostleship in Romans 16:7," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 21 (2016), 71.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ Ng, 531.

⁴¹ 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.

⁴² Grudem (2004), 225 (fn. 13).

⁴³ Ng, 524.

It is not true that no one questioned that *Iounian* in Rom. 16:7 referred to a woman until Giles of Rome (d. 1316). 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."⁴⁴ 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")."⁴⁵ So at least in the ninth century, *Iounian* was largely understood to be a man.

It also is not certain that the phrase *episēmoi en tois apostolois* means "well known among the apostles" rather than "well known to the apostles." The work of Daniel Wallace and Michael Burer,⁴⁶ and Burer's further defense and new evidence,⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸

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 on female ministry. Those subjects would require a lengthy treatment by themselves; yet, they all point in the opposite direction of an inclusive interpretation.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Grudem (2004), 225-226.

⁴⁵ Fitzmyer (1992), 738.

⁴⁶ Daniel Wallace and Mike Burer, "Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16.7," *New Testament Studies* 47 (2001): 76-91.

⁴⁷ 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.

⁴⁸ David Huttar, "Did Paul Call Andronicus An Apostle in Romans 16:7?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52:4 (Dec. 2009), 778.

⁴⁹ Harding, 79.

The claim 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.⁵⁰

Huttar concludes regarding Ambrosiaster that his comments "are, on balance, more supportive of the non-inclusive interpretation than of the inclusive interpretation."⁵¹ 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."⁵² And he says of Pelagius, "if his remarks lean in any particular direction, it seems they are more conducive to the non-inclusive interpretation."⁵³

But 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.⁵⁴

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."⁵⁵ The non-inclusive interpretation is reflected in HCSB, NET, ESV, and CSB and is given as an alternative in a footnote in the NIV.

⁵⁰ Huttar, 761.

⁵¹ Huttar, 763.

⁵² Huttar, 771.

⁵³ Huttar 771.

⁵⁴ Grudem (2004), 226-227.

⁵⁵ Grudem (2004), 227.

11. Paul's use of "head" in 1 Cor. 11:3 and Eph. 5:23 does not imply male leadership.

Paul says in 1 Cor. 11:3, "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"⁵⁶ and in Eph. 5:23, "for a *husband is head of the wife* as Christ also [is] head of the church." Paul Gardner observes, "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."⁵⁷ For example, the standard Greek lexicon states, "in the case of living beings, to denote superior rank," citing both 1 Cor. 11:3 and Eph. 5:23.⁵⁸ Louw & Nida's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* likewise includes 1 Cor. 11:3 under the definition of *kephalē* as "one who is of supreme or pre-eminent status, in view of authority to order or command."⁵⁹ Ciampa and Rosner state with reference to 1 Cor. 11:3, "In this context the word almost certainly refers to one with authority over the other."⁶⁰

As Kevin DeYoung notes, "we have other examples in Paul's writings where *kephale* must mean something like 'authority over.'" He continues:

In Ephesians 1, Paul says that Christ has been seated at God's right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and all things have been placed under his feet, and he has been made head (*kephale*) over all things for the church (1:20-22). The context demands that *kephale* refer to Christ's authority over the church, not merely that the church had its origin in Christ. Likewise, in Ephesians 5 Paul says wives are to submit to their husbands, for the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church (5:22-23). Citing the headship of the husband as a reason for the wife's submission makes little sense if headship implies only source or origin without any reference to male leadership. *Kephale*, in at least these two instances in Ephesians, must mean "authority over." And there are no grammatical or contextual reasons to think Paul is using *kephale* in a different way in 1 Corinthians 11.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Regarding the translation "woman" and "man" instead of "wife" and "husband," Anthony Thiselton notes in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 822, "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." This is why the vast majority of the standard English versions opt for "man" and "woman" (KJV, ERV, ASV, NAS, NJB, NEB, NKJV, REB, NASU, HCSB, NIV, NET, CSB).

⁵⁷ Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 480.

⁵⁸ BDAG, 542.

⁵⁹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 1:739.

⁶⁰ Ciampa and Rosner, 509. Ben Witherington III similarly remarks in *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 237-238, that, "since the context has to do with authority, authorization, and order in worship, it would seem more probable that *kephalē* has the metaphorical sense demonstrated by Fitzmyer" (i.e., that of leader).

⁶¹ Kevin DeYoung, *Men and Women in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 51.

Despite its repetition, it is not true that the lexical data suggest "head" (*kephalē*) means "origin" or "source" with no connotation of authority. Moisés Silva, for example, states, "The view that κεφαλή here means 'source/origin' rather than 'chief/ruler' is not supported by the lexicographical evidence" (citations omitted).⁶² 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.

The fact Paul makes clear in 1 Cor. 7:3-4 that husbands and wives each have a duty not to deprive the other of sexual relations does not negate the husband's leadership role. Being the leader does not mean the husband is free from obligations toward his wife, any more than being the leader means parents or slave owners are free from obligations to their children or slaves. The responsibility of leadership is distinct from the ethical duties of leaders.

12. 1 Cor. 11:2-16 proves that women prophesied in Christian worship assemblies.

Paul in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 was addressing a problem of certain women who were speaking (or claiming a right to speak) in the worship assembly without the culturally required female head covering.⁶³ By indicating the speech would be acceptable if the women wore the covering,

⁶² Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 2:672.

⁶³ Ben Witherington III concludes in *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 82: "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." Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones marshals evidence in *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2003), 315, establishing that "veiling was a habitual female practice in the Greek world." He states (p. 315), "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." William Baker states in Philip W. Comfort, ed., *Cornerstone Bible Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2009), 15:157, "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* 30b; *m. Bava Qamma* 8:6; *m. Ketubbot* 7:6; Plutarch *Moralia* 232C, 267A)." Benjamin A. Edsall similarly notes in "Greco-Roman Costume and Paul's Fraught Argument in 1 Corinthians 11.2-16," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 9 (2013), 139, that "the practice of a woman covering her head in public is widely attested in Greco-Roman and Jewish antiquity," citing Léon Heuzey, *Histoire du costume antique* (Paris: Librairie ancienne honoré Campion, 1922), 168-74, 191-96; Georges Losfeld, *Essai sur le costume grec* (Paris: Editions de Boccard, 1991), 275-78; Lucille

he implicitly approved that form of female speech in the assembly. Though many assume the speech in question was both praying and prophesying, Paul does not say that. Rather, when Paul in 11:13 identifies by a rhetorical question the specific issue at hand, he says simply, "Judge among yourselves: Is it proper that a woman *pray* to God uncovered?" Prophesying is not mentioned.

Indeed, Paul in 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 reminds the Corinthians that in all the churches women are prohibited from participating in the prophetic process in the assembly,⁶⁴ which is consistent with the prohibition on women teaching in the assembly that he gives in 1 Tim. 2:11-14. 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.

This restriction on female prophesying was recognized in the early church. After surveying the relevant evidence (Tertullian, Firmilian, Origen, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus), the renowned church historian Everett Ferguson concludes (emphasis supplied):

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.⁶⁵

A. Roussin, 'Costume in Roman Palestine: Archaeological Remains and the Evidence from the Mishnah,' in Sebesta and Bonfante, eds., *World of Roman Costume*, 182-90; Ursula Scharf, *Straßenkleidung der römischen Frau* (Europäische Hochschulschriften, 3.585; New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 96-103; Sebesta, 'Symbolism,' 48-50; Fantham, 'Covering'; Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise*. He contends (p. 141) that "female head-coverings were the norm in Greek and Roman society" and says (p. 143), "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."

⁶⁴ Paul regulates the exercise of the gift of tongues in the assembly in 1 Cor. 14:27-28 and then turns to the exercise of the gift of prophecy in v. 29. Verses 39-40 make clear that his command for female silence is part of his continuing regulation of tongues and prophesying, and since he concluded the discussion of tongues in v. 28 and gave no indication of a return to that topic, the context strongly indicates that the instructions about the women relate to the matter of prophesying. That is why many evangelical commentators recognize that the prohibited speech relates in some way to prophesying. 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; D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 129-131; Thiselton, 1158; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, BTCP (Nashville: Holman, 2017), 116; Gardner, 637.

⁶⁵ Everett Ferguson, *Women in the Church: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (Abilene, TX: Desert Willow Publishing, 2015), Kindle edition (Location 964).

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."⁶⁶ 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)."⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸

Esther Yue L. 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.⁶⁹

Given that the immediate problem Paul was addressing was women seeking to pray uncovered in the assembly, the question is why he says in 11:5 that "every woman who prays or prophesies uncovered as to the head disgraces her head." I think he mentions women prophesying, despite the fact that speech was permitted only outside the assembly, 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 of Christian women to engage in the traditionally male activity of public speech justifies their 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. The

⁶⁶ Ferguson, Location 912.

⁶⁷ Ferguson, Location 912.

⁶⁸ Ferguson, Location 912-922.

⁶⁹ 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), 530.

Corinthians would have known that both activities did not take place in the assembly. That would have been part of the traditions that Paul previously had delivered to them (11:2).⁷⁰

13. 1 Cor. 11:2-16 addresses problems with both sexes regarding head coverings.

It is doubtful that Paul's statement in 11:4 ("Every man who prays or prophesies having [the covering] upon the head disgraces his head") means that men in the Corinthian church were covering their heads in the disgraceful way to which he refers. The issue Paul is addressing is women praying in the assembly without the culturally required female head covering. His arguments are directed toward the women. Note how in vv. 5-6 and 8-10 he gives reasons why the women are to be covered, but he provides no reason for his remark about men. The only imperative verbs in the section are addressed to the women (vv. 6, 13), and when he specifies the matter at hand in 11:13, he declares, "Judge among yourselves: Is it proper that *a woman* pray to God uncovered?"

Joseph Fitzmyer states: "The problem is not that Corinthian men were praying or prophesying with covered heads, even though Paul's rhetorical comparison leads him to formulate it so in order to make his point by contrast. It is important not to confuse rhetoric with the substance of the argument."⁷¹ In other words, Paul is setting up his argument that being in Christ does not justify women jettisoning the distinctive female covering when exercising their authority in Christ to engage in the traditionally male activity of public speaking by giving a reverse example that everyone would agree was improper. In Gordon Fee's words, "Paul seems to be setting up his argument with the women by means of a hypothetical situation for the man that would be equally shameful to his relationship to his 'head' as what the women are doing is to theirs."⁷² Just as it would be disgraceful for a Christian man to wear the female covering when speaking publicly to or on God's behalf, so it is disgraceful for a Christian woman to speak publicly to or on behalf of God attired as a man, i.e., without wearing the cultural mark of femaleness.

Some strongly oppose the suggestion that men covering their heads was not an actual problem being addressed because there is good evidence that Roman men pulled a toga over

⁷⁰ 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 passe 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.

⁷¹ Fitzmyer (2008), 405. He cites many modern commentators who agree with this assessment: Bruce, Conzelmann, Delobel, Garland, Grosheide, Kremer, Lietzmann, D. B. Martin, Perriman, Robertson-Plummer, Schrage, Senft, J. Weiss. To this list one could add Edsall, Fee, and William Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 371-372.

⁷² Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 557.

their heads in the context of prayer and prophecy.⁷³ They claim that Paul is forbidding the men from following that Roman cultural practice, presumably because of its affiliation with pagan worship, while at the same time commanding the women to cover their heads, presumably in a way different from the Roman cultural practice that smacked of paganism. In other words, they envision two distinct practices: a covering that is prohibited for men despite being culturally acceptable and a covering that is mandated for women to conform to cultural expectations. But the text suggests Paul is speaking of a single covering that would be shameful for a man to wear and shameful for a woman not to wear.

Verses 4-5 give no hint that there is a shift in the practice being contrasted. Rather, the parallel language focuses the contrast on the gender of those engaging in the practice. This impression is reinforced by the fact v. 7 begins with "For," meaning it functions as an explanation of why the man is an inappropriate candidate for *the female covering* described in v. 6. And the cultural analogy Paul draws in vv. 14-15 between long hair and the head covering depends solely on the effect of gender on the propriety of the condition. Paul's point is that the head covering functions like long hair in that it too was culturally assigned as a female covering and is therefore inappropriate on a man. 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.⁷⁴

As I explained under claim 2, Paul says in 11:7-10 that a woman is to have a sign of authority on her head because she is the glory of man. However glorious man may be, he remains under the authority of God. The head covering, which as a culturally expected piece of female attire functions as a sign of authority over the wearer, 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 female covering which functions as a sign of authority and therefore is proper on the woman who is the glory of man is the same covering Paul says is improper on the man who is the glory of God. Distinguishing the coverings plays havoc with Paul's argument.

14. The church in the second century abandoned apostolic teaching about women.

⁷³ Richard Oster, "When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11.4," *New Testament Studies* 34 (October 1988), 481-505.

⁷⁴ S. Donald Fortson III and Rollin G. Grams, *Unchanging Witness* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 327.

As noted under claim 12, the post-apostolic church understood from the New Testament documents that women were not permitted to serve in the church in the same way as men. 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." See above for Ferguson's conclusion of the relevant evidence from the second to fourth centuries. William Weinrich's study of women in church history emphasized the patristic and medieval periods. He concludes:

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.⁷⁵

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 criticism and debate. The hypothesized reversal certainly would leave a trail of dissenters within the orthodox church, but that does not exist. Proponents of women prophesying and teaching in the assembly were limited to heretical groups. If the historical shoe were on the other foot, egalitarians undoubtedly would tout it as powerful support for their proposed understanding.

15. 1 Cor. 14:34-35 was not originally written by Paul but was inserted later.

Some later, chiefly Western manuscripts, have vv. 34-35 after v. 40, but all manuscripts have the verses in one location or the other. The earliest manuscript (p⁴⁶, around AD 200), the great fourth-century manuscripts Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, the fifth-century manuscript Alexandrinus, the Vulgate, Old Syriac, and most other manuscripts "read these verses in their normal, accepted place."⁷⁶ The UBS 4th ed. *Greek New Testament* classifies vv. 34-35 as "B," which reflects the editors' judgment that "the text is almost certain." The verses also are included in their normal location in *The Greek New Testament* produced at Tyndale House. It is far more likely that the dislocation of the verses in some later manuscripts was due to a scribe who mistakenly thought they did not fit after v. 33b. 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).

⁷⁵ 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.

⁷⁶ Thiselton, 1148.

Curt Niccum concludes in his detailed and meticulous study: "No extant MS offers evidence for an original omission of 1 Cor 14:34-35. . . . No other reading has claim to being 'original' other than that of preserving the traditional sequence of verses."⁷⁷ Thiselton comments, "Niccum's pages are packed with powerful and succinct arguments which prove convincing."⁷⁸ In a footnote, he labels the article "overwhelmingly convincing."

16. 1 Cor. 14:33b-35 only prohibits women from speaking disruptively.

Paul states in 1 Cor. 14:33b-36: *As in all the churches of the saints,*³⁴ *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.*³⁵ *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.*³⁶ *Or did the word of God go out from you or reach only to you?*

As a preliminary matter, some contend that 14:33b ("As in all the *ekklēsia*s of the saints") should be connected with v. 33a ("for God is not [a God] of disorder but of peace") instead of with v. 34 ("let the women be silent in the *ekklēsia*s"). But many commentators (e.g., Grosheide, Conzelmann, Orr and Walther, Carson, Kistemaker, Blomberg, Collins, Soards, Thiselton, Garland, Verbrugge, Gardner, and Schreiner)⁷⁹ 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:

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

⁷⁷ 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), 254-255. See also, Thomas R. Schreiner, "Philip Payne on Familiar Ground," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 15 (Spring 2010), 38-40.

⁷⁸ Thiselton, 1149.

⁷⁹ 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; Carson (1987), 122; Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 511; Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 279; Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, SP (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 520; Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 304-305; Thiselton, 1131, 1148; 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; Gardner, 629-631; Schreiner (2018), 296.

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 34.⁸⁰

The fact Paul singled out women 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 – means the problem he was addressing was gender specific; it was unique to women. But in claiming the problem was that they were speaking *disruptively* one denies that the problem was gender specific, unless one makes the sexist assertion that women were unique in engaging in disruptive speech, and not only in Corinth but in all the churches!

And notice that Paul does not address his command to *disruptive* women, to a problematic subset, but to women generally. So the one claiming Paul is prohibiting only female disruptive speech is left to claim not only that women were unique in engaging in disruptive speech in Corinth and all the churches but that it was a practice to which all the women succumbed. That is a counterintuitive notion that cannot be accepted without compelling evidence.

In addition, Paul indicates in v. 34c that the speech is prohibited because it is contrary to a submission that women uniquely are required to manifest in the assembly, a submission that is spoken of even in the law. Paul does not cite a specific text, but he almost certainly is referring to the principle of male leadership that is indicated in the law. Schreiner states in the quote given above:

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).⁸¹

One could add to Schreiner's remarks that 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. Women are called to manifest this submission in the assembly by refraining from authoritative speech, which here precludes them from directing and correcting men by prophesying or judging the prophets. In 1 Tim. 2:11-14, the same principle precludes them from teaching.

Paul 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

⁸⁰ Carson (1987), 122.

⁸¹ Schreiner (2018), 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; Hurley (1981), 191-192.

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),⁸² but there is nothing in the context of 1 Cor. 14:34 to indicate the silence commanded pertains to a disruptive manner of speaking. On the contrary, the gender-specific nature of the prohibition that is based on a submission testified to in the law says otherwise.

Paul explains in 14:32 that the prophetic etiquette imposed in 14:30-31, where one who is prophesying yields the floor to another prophet who received a revelation, is possible because the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. He then makes clear in 14:33a that such prophetic discipline, being able to refrain from prophesying when required to do so, is not unspiritual, as some in Corinth no doubt thought, but is in keeping with the very nature of God: "for God is not [a God] of disorder but of peace" (harmony and smooth working).

Though Paul defends his mandate for the sequential delivery of prophecy by appeal to the fact God is not a God of disorder but a God of peace, he grounds his command for female silence in 14:34-35 on the obligation of women to be in submission as even the law says. It is *shameful* for a woman to speak authoritatively in the assembly precisely because God has assigned to her from creation a nonleading role. He calls her to acknowledge that fact in that venue by refraining from directing or correcting men through prophesying or judging the prophets (or teaching).

As I pointed out under claim 12, Paul in 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 reminds the Corinthians that in all the churches women are prohibited from participating in the prophetic process in the assembly, which is consistent with the prohibition on women teaching in the assembly that he gives in 1 Tim. 2:11-14. He regulates the exercise of the gift of tongues in 1 Cor. 14:27-28 and then turns to the exercise of the gift of prophecy in v. 29. Verses 39-40 make clear that his command for female silence is part of his continuing regulation of tongues and prophesying, and since he concluded the discussion of tongues in v. 28 and gave no indication of a return to that topic, the context strongly indicates that the instructions about the women relate to the matter of prophesying. That is why many evangelical commentators recognize that the prohibited speech relates in some way to prophesying.⁸³

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 prohibited in v. 34 was disruptive speech. His regulation of tongues and directions for the sequential delivery and weighing of prophecies may account for the comment. But he also may have had in mind that speaking contrary to a gender-based restriction would be "improper and not according to order," not in the sense of being rowdy or unruly, but in the sense of violating the divine plan for how the assembly was to be conducted.

⁸² Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 242-244.

⁸³ E.g., Hurley (1973), 217-18; Wayne Grudem (1988), 220-224; Carson (1987), 129-131; Thiselton, 1158; Köstenberger (2017), 116; Gardner, 637.

17. "Each one" in 1 Cor. 14:26b and "all" in 14:31 prove women prophesied in the assembly.

Paul says in 1 Cor. 14:26b, "When you gather together, *each one* has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation" and in 14:31, "For you can *all* prophesy one by one." He, of course, does not mean that every person in the church was endowed with the speaking gifts he mentions. He already made clear in 12:27-30 that individual members of the church have different roles and gifts. Not all are apostles, not all are prophets, not all are teachers, not all are workers of miracles, not all have gifts of healings, not all speak in tongues, and not all interpret tongues. Rather, he means that within the gathered community there are multiple people endowed with speaking gifts. Thiselton agrees with Conzelmann's assessment that "[Each one] naturally must not be pressed to the effect that every single individual has one of the gifts mentioned, but means: one has this – another has that."⁸⁴

The fact gifted brothers and sisters are present says nothing about whether and how those gifts are to be exercised in the assembly. In stating that all things are to be for upbuilding (14:26c), Paul implies there are regulations regarding the exercise of the gifts, the violation of which would be a bar or hindrance to edification. Any practice or ministry that is contrary to the will of God cannot truly edify because it is an expression of disrespect for God, which is inherently unedifying. The edifying potential of any such practice is negated. Some of those regulations would have been part of the traditions that Paul previously delivered to them (11:2), and some were given, by way of reminder or for the first time, in his subsequent instruction in response to their current situation.

Paul's statement "For you can *all* prophesy one by one" is intended to be understood within the limitations he previously passed on to them (11:2). Lest there be any confusion about the matter, he immediately gives (vv. 33b-36) a pointed reminder that nothing he is saying changes or contradicts the practice in all the "churches" (congregations) that women are prohibited from participating in the prophetic process in the "churches" (assemblies) because of the obligation to manifest their submission.⁸⁵ The fact it was a universal practice ensures it would have been among the traditions he previously delivered to them.

He is removing the potential for misunderstanding or abusing his remarks. "All" 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 overrealized eschatology of the Corinthians,⁸⁶ 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

⁸⁴ Thiselton, 1134.

⁸⁵ The plural of *ekklēsia* is used in v. 33b and 34 in its different senses of "congregations" and "assemblies" (see BDAG, 303-304).

⁸⁶ 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.

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.

18. The use of "brothers" in 1 Cor. 14:39 proves women prophesied in the assembly.

Paul says in 1 Cor. 14:39, "So then, [my] brothers, be enthusiastic about the prophesying, and do not forbid the speaking in tongues."⁸⁷ The plural "brothers" (*adelphoi*) can refer exclusively to males or inclusively to males and females ("brothers and sisters").⁸⁸ How a writer intended it in a particular case can be difficult if not impossible to know with confidence because we are removed from the historical situation and circumstances that would have made the intent clear to the original readers. This ambiguity makes the word an unreliable foundation for constructing one's view of the role of women in the church.

If, as I contend, it was understood by the Corinthians and all the churches and reiterated by Paul in 14:33b-36 that women are prohibited from participating in the prophetic process in the assembly, his use of "brothers" in 14:39 may well have focused on males. Indeed, the literary context supports that reading in that his command not to forbid speaking in tongues is addressed to the governing authorities in the church, those in the position to implement the command, who would have been exclusively male.

But even if "brothers" in this verse was intended to be inclusive, it does not establish that women were authorized to prophesy in the assembly. It simply would be an appeal to the community at large to be enthusiastic about the exercise of the gift of prophecy pursuant to the conditions stated, which include the prohibition of female prophesying. In other words, they are to be fans of the prophesying, to appreciate and be fully supportive of the practice, conducted in the manner intended by God, as he just laid out.

19. 1 Tim. 2:11-12 only prohibits women from teaching false doctrine.

Not only is there no indication that the Christian women in Ephesus were *teaching* false doctrine,⁸⁹ the claim badly misses the flow of Paul's thought. To establish that, I must take the space to explain.

⁸⁷ For the rendering of the articular infinitives as "the prophesying" and "the speaking in tongues," see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 234. The verb *zēloō* literally means "to be zealous," and though the context may imply a desire for the thing for which one is zealous, the word itself "expresses attitude (zeal) rather than action (to seek)." Thomas R. Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 42. Edgar says (p. 43) the normal meaning is "be zealous or enthusiastic." BDAG, 427, defines it as "be positively and intensely interested in something."

⁸⁸ BDAG, 18.

⁸⁹ 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?"

In 1 Tim. 1:18-20, Paul renews the charge he gave to Timothy in 1:3-4 to oppose the false teachers in Ephesus. In light of that charge ("Therefore"), he 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 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,² for kings and all those in high places, so that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and respectability.³ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all men – the testimony given at the right time.⁷ 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 I. Howard Marshall observes, "This universalistic thrust is most probably a corrective response to an exclusive elitist understanding of salvation connected with the false teaching."⁹⁰ Philip 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."⁹¹ Gordon 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.⁹²

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

⁹⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 420.

⁹¹ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2006), 167.

⁹² Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 62.

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 lives and thus the usual practice of their religion, which is living *within the society* lives of godliness and respectability (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 2:8-15:⁹³

⁸ I want, therefore, the men in every place to pray, lifting holy hands, without anger or argument. ⁹ 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 ¹⁰ but [with] what is fitting for women who profess reverence for God by good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn in quietness with full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; rather, she is to be in quietness. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, by being deceived, came to be in transgression. ¹⁵ 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 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.

⁹³ Implying both "I want" and "to pray" in v. 9 is grammatically acceptable and is favored (in meaning if not in actual translation) by many scholars. Marshall remarks (p. 447), "[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." See, Korinna Zamfir and Joseph Verheyden state in "Text-Critical and Intertextual Remarks on 1 Tim 2:8-10," *Novum Testamentum* 50 (2008), 404; 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; Witherington (1991), 263 (fn. 203); Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 102-103; Quinn and Wacker, 215-216; Walter L. Liefeld, *I & 2 Timothy/Titus*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 93-95; Marshall, 446-447; Köstenberger (2017), 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.

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).⁹⁴ This extravagant ornamentation – elaborate hairstyles, probably to the point of being decorated with gold or pearls,⁹⁵ 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.⁹⁶ 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).⁹⁷ The latter ("have authority over") includes 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. 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."⁹⁸

⁹⁴ The praying in which women engaged may have been with the congregation repeating 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). Or perhaps there was "open praying" in which all were invited to pray personally without any connotation of leading, that is, without appointment or designation to speak for the assembly.

⁹⁵ 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*, 3rd 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."

⁹⁶ 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.

⁹⁷ 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 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.

⁹⁸ Schreiner (2016), 186. As previously noted, 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.

Women are not to be outspoken and argumentative about the teaching but are to "hold their peace," as we might say.

So the relevance of the false teaching to 1 Tim. 2:8-15 is not that the women were engaging in it but that it made correction of exclusivist praying a matter of first importance, which resulted in instructions to both men and women about attitudinal hindrances to effective prayer. And having given instructions about the *praying* he assumes women are doing in the assembly, Paul immediately makes clear that praying is a different kind of speech than teaching. Perhaps this reminder about submission was necessary because of the overrealized eschatology aspect of the false teachers' doctrine,⁹⁹ which could lead to belief that the distinctions of the old age in terms of sex roles were no longer significant. This coupling of overrealized eschatology and ignoring of sex distinctions is evident in 1 Corinthians.

Restricting 1 Tim. 2:11-12 to a prohibition of teaching false doctrine not only isolates it from its context, but it renders inexplicable the limitation of the command to women. 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). Therefore, it makes no sense to think Paul would single out the women for a prohibition of false teaching, as though they were its unique purveyors. And notice that Paul does not address his prohibition to female false teachers, to a heretical subset of women, but to women generally ("a woman"). So the one claiming that Paul's prohibition is restricted to false teaching is left not only without an explanation for its limitation to women but also without an explanation for its being directed to all women. 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."¹⁰⁰

Instead, Paul ties the prohibition to the responsibility of the women to learn "in quietness with full submission" (note the repetition of "quietness" in v. 12), which submission derives expressly from the fact Adam was created before Eve: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." As explained under claim 2, the leadership right of the firstborn is all over the OT and was taken for granted in the Greco-Roman world. The restriction is not based on a local circumstance but on God's sovereign choice, reflected in the creation order, to have men lead.

The attempt to turn the younger widows in 5:11-13 into false teachers is convincing only to those desperate to find female false teachers. The description of them in 5:13 as *phluaroi* and *periergoi* does not mean they were engaging in "meaningless talk" or "profane chatter" like the false teachers in 1:6 and 6:20.

The word *phluaros*, an adjective, is defined in BDAG as "gossipy,"¹⁰¹ which when used substantively yields "gossipy ones," or more elegantly "gossips." This definition is also given in

⁹⁹ See, e.g., 2 Tim. 2:16-18; Towner (1987), 98-101; Dillon T. Thornton, "Hostility in the House of God: An 'Interested' Investigation of the Opponents in 1 and 2 Timothy" (Ph.D. diss., University of Otago 2014), 90-92, 224-225.

¹⁰⁰ Schreiner (2016), 205.

¹⁰¹ BDAG, 1060.

Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament.¹⁰² 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)."¹⁰³ 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."¹⁰⁴ *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. . .'"¹⁰⁵ 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. Schreiner remarks:

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.¹⁰⁶

20. 1 Tim. 2:11-12 only prohibits women from teaching in an authoritarian manner.

¹⁰² Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 3:429.

¹⁰³ Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. by James D. Ernst (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 3:466.

¹⁰⁴ BDAG, 800.

¹⁰⁵ EDNT, 3:73.

¹⁰⁶ Schreiner (2016), 172-173.

In 1 Tim. 2:12a Paul states, "I do not permit a woman to teach [*didaskēin*] or [*oude*] to have authority over [*authentein*] a man [*andros*]." The claim that this only prohibits women from teaching in an authoritarian and domineering matter contains two errors. First, it fuses the two infinitives (*didaskēin*, to teach; *authentein*, to have authority) into a single prohibition so that the second defines the manner of the first. 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."¹⁰⁷ Schreiner concurs: "Two things are forbidden for a woman: teaching and exercising authority over a man."¹⁰⁸ Köstenberger concludes:

To sum up this point, it is important to keep in mind that οὐδέ functions as a coordinating conjunction in 1 Timothy 2:12, and as such – particularly as a *negative* conjunction – it does not combine two separate elements in the sense that it excludes any consideration of those elements individually. While the elements may overlap conceptually and a larger "single idea" may legitimately be posited that *encompasses* or *includes* both elements, they retain a certain degree of distinctiveness.¹⁰⁹

Second, it mistakenly assigns to the second infinitive (*authentein*) a negative or pejorative sense of exercising authority in an improper or abusive manner rather than simply exercising authority. Wolters surveys the four possible uses of that verb prior to 1 Timothy. He 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."¹¹⁰ He says of his overall study, "For our purposes, it is also significant to note that neither ἀθηνῆς/'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."¹¹¹ BDAG defines the word simply as "to assume a stance of independent authority."¹¹² 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

¹⁰⁷ Moo (1991), 187.

¹⁰⁸ Schreiner (2016), 190.

¹⁰⁹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, "A Complex Sentence: The Syntax of 1 Timothy 2:12," in Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 149.

¹¹⁰ Al Wolters, "The Meaning of ἀθεντέω" in Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 83.

¹¹¹ Wolters, 69, 113.

¹¹² BDAG, 150.

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. 11.¹¹³

This is confirmed by Köstenberger's careful study establishing that when two activities are connected by *oude*, they are either both viewed positively or both viewed negatively.¹¹⁴ Since "the term *didaskein* . . . is consistently viewed positively in the New Testament, including the Pastorals, when used absolutely, that is, unaccompanied by contextual qualifiers such as those denoting the content of someone's teaching,"¹¹⁵ *authentein* cannot be given a negative or pejorative connotation. So it cannot serve to limit *didaskein* to an erroneous or domineering teaching.

¹¹³ Schreiner (2016), 194-195.

¹¹⁴ 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.

¹¹⁵ Köstenberger (2016), 159 (fn. 85) (see also pp. 131-135).