

# AGAINST THE TRADITIONAL FUNDAMENTALIST VIEW ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH:

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*[This essay was not produced for an academic audience, but for a small group of women in our church who wanted an explanation for the position that I and some other leaders at Xenos take regarding women in ministry.]*

## Introduction

Traditionally, fundamentalism has often held that women are not permitted to teach men, or to hold offices of authority over men in the church. This point of view is based on some of Paul's comments on women, which are being misunderstood, as we shall see.

Once we see that the starting point for traditional thinking on this subject is deficient on exegetical grounds we realize the need to find an alternative understanding. No complete attempt will be made here to explore all of the possible resolutions to the problem, but we will survey some solutions sufficient for the lay reader.

### **The traditional view is based on the following passages:<sup>1</sup>**

1Cor. 14:34,35 Let the women keep silent in the church for they are not permitted to speak... in church.<sup>2</sup>

1Tim. 2:12 I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self restraint.

Tit. 2:3ff Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible...

These three passages constitute the heart of the case against women teaching and/or leading anything other than the other women and children in the church. No other passages add substantively to the position. Even the Titus reference does nothing to support the idea that women may not teach men. It only tells *what* they should teach women and children.<sup>3</sup>

A closer examination of these passages will reveal that neither of the first two verses does in fact teach what the male-only theologians claim they do.

### **1Corinthians 14:34,35**

The statement "let the women be silent in the church..." does not refer to women teaching. Such an understanding disregards the context in which the statement was made.

This statement is in the midst of a prolonged discussion about the lack of decorum and order in the Corinthian church. The Corinthians evidently had a very severe problem controlling their meetings. In chapter 11 we read that the women were ignoring social convention, quite possibly because they were being caught up in ecstatic worship experiences.<sup>4</sup> When they threw off their head coverings during a meeting, they created the impression that they were "loose women." Later in the same chapter, the fact emerges that the whole church was behaving in a profoundly irreverent way during their love feasts. Ignoring the needs of others, they would slop down their own food. Some were visibly drunk!

When the meeting would begin, they were excessively taken up with the ecstatic gift of tongues. Evidence in chapters 12 and 14 indicates they were freely speaking in tongues without any interpretation, and without taking turns. This was creating a confused jumble of unintelligible gibberish. The meetings had degenerated to the point where an outsider would have said that they were "mad".<sup>5</sup>

In light of these abuses Paul finally issues a series of authoritative commands in ch. 14:26-35. First he encourages them to continue with group participation in vs. 26. However, this is tempered by his insistence that they control the input of the people in a way that preserves order and decorum in the meeting. The practice of tongues was severely restricted and controlled. There should be no more than three tongues, they had to be interpreted into the native language of the area, and they had to be done in order-- not all at once (vs. 27" each in turn").

Similar stipulations are given for the practice of prophecy. While encouraging the others to pass judgment on the content of the prophecy, Paul is insistent that "if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent." This is reinforced and emphasized in the next verse when he says, "for you can all prophesy one by one so that all may learn..." The repeated order to take turns clearly indicates the Corinthians were in the habit of interrupting the one speaking. We know from ch. 11:18 that Paul said, "I hear that when you gather together as a church, divisions exist among you..." The divisions in the church must have been openly visible in that they would heckle and argue with each other in the meeting (cf. 11:18). Possibly they were standing to shout down anyone with whom they disagreed.

Paul was certainly concerned about confused and disorderly meetings aggravated by frequent interruptions. Because everyone is jabbering away at once, the content of good theology was not being communicated. A visit to one of these meetings clearly would have been more like a visit to a milling school of fish than an orderly coherent and reverent fellowship meeting. This is why Paul supplies the theological basis for orderliness in the next verse, "...for God is not a God of confusion but of peace..."

It is in this context that Paul says "let the women keep silent..." Should we understand this as a short teaching on the normative role of women in the church? If so, it would mean that Paul has changed the subject. He would no longer be discussing how to control chaos in the church meetings, but abruptly turning aside to discuss the role of women in the church in general. Yet, this seems impossible because vss. 39,40 are still on the subject of balanced use of the gifts and order in the meetings, "let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner."

Thus it is clear that the reason for addressing the women at this point in the book is that the women were also involved in interrupting and wrangling. In the first century the women usually sat together rather than with their husbands in Jewish synagogues. Paul copied extensively in the area of structure and practice from synagogues, apparently including this practice. One source of evidence for this seating arrangement is the passage we are studying in 1Cor. 14. It seems that the women were sitting together when they heard a point being made that they did not agree with. Following the general pattern of things in Corinth, they would begin to fuss with each other about it--possibly even calling out refutations and heckling the speaker! Otherwise, how could Paul's informants have witnessed division in the meetings?<sup>6</sup>

Again, this is the context in which Paul says, "let the women be silent." Seen in this light, the statement is nothing more than a rebuke to the women for the part they were playing in the general atmosphere of confusion and hostility. "Tell the women to shut up as well!" would be the sense of what Paul is saying.

The language of vs. 34,35 supports this interpretation. When Paul says, "If they desire to learn anything let them ask their own husbands at home..." he implies that they were currently asking their questions in the church meeting. In other words, as the speaker made his points, he (or she) might be interrupted with a barrage of questions which likely included challenges to the position being taken, but were in any event, disruptive of the meeting. Therefore Paul says (so to speak), "tell them to wait until they're at home to ask their questions."<sup>7</sup>

The male-only interpretation has no adequate explanation for why this phrase is present in this text. We do not know of any major interpretive school today holding that women are not allowed to ask questions

in church at all. Interpreters usually resorted to the explanation that this refers to a **formal** church service, rather than an adult education meeting for instance. Unfortunately, since this distinction is unsupported in the Bible, it seems a little ridiculous.<sup>8</sup>

We must understand the words in this verse in a way that remains consistent with the context. This passage certainly is **not** teaching that women cannot speak **at all** in church, because of the passage mentioned earlier in ch. 11:1-16. How can a woman pray or prophesy if she is not permitted to speak? This contradiction has never been answered satisfactorily by male-only interpreters.

If we understand the phrase, "not permitted to speak" woodenly, we cannot explain how they may teach other women or children in this passage. Nevertheless, the traditional male-only interpretation allows for women to teach within this limited context. Indeed, how would any church in America operate if it completely muzzled its women?

We see here an inconsistency of the worst kind. How can anyone demand that the words be taken literally without even regarding the context on one hand, while at the same time allowing a breach of the literalistic meaning in the case of women and children? The passage says that they are not permitted to speak in church! Surely we must either enforce that rule consistently, or we should try to understand the distinctions made in the text.

It may also be significant that vs. 34 uses the present infinitive (*lalein*) for the words "to speak." The present tense in Greek not only speaks of the time of the action, but also the kind of action. In this case, the action is linear, or on-going. This allows for the impression that twittering or chattering was involved, not merely an isolated comment now and then. Thus we could read that, "it is improper for a woman to jabber in church."

#### **To summarize:**

1. Women are allowed to speak in a church meeting according to 1Cor.11.
2. They (like the men) were not permitted to disrupt the meeting by speaking out of order, or by chattering away with each other.
3. Women could prophesy, pray, and no doubt speak in other ways as well when they were recognized and had the floor.

#### **1Timothy 2:12-15**

The main, or best text for the male-only position on church leadership is from 1Tim. 2:12ff. According to the extreme male-only view, this passage is teaching that women are not only disallowed to teach or lead, they are constitutionally incompetent to do so, because they are too easily deceived! For example, Earle, a contemporary commentator, says, "Since she was so easily deceived, she should not be trusted as a teacher."<sup>9</sup> Even women writing in the traditional vein have not hesitated to affirm that,

...it is undoubtedly true that on account of her greater spiritual capacity, the woman is more open to deception in the supernatural sphere...<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, there are several questions that must be answered by the male-only interpreter before we can admit that such a reading is possible. These questions stem from three problem areas:

1. Inconsistency in Pauline application of the teaching.
2. Implausible use of the Old Testament by Paul.
3. Lack of any supporting critical evidence.

## Inconsistency in Pauline Application

First, we would have to question a "deception proneness" interpretation when we compare this passage to that in Tit. 2:3,4. One wonders, why these women (if they are so easily deceived) are allowed to teach the other women and children--the very ones that are most vulnerable to falsehood themselves? Is Paul enunciating a different view of the nature of women in Titus? Or do we need a different understanding of the passage in Timothy?

How can we believe that Paul would only fear women teaching men if, in fact, there is a basic defect of this sort in all women? Yet, at first glance, it would seem that by quoting the Old Testament in defense of the point that he is making,<sup>11</sup> he must be arguing that all women are alike in this respect.

Women are also specifically allowed to prophecy in public, which would undoubtedly open the door to the same danger--that of deception-prone women foisting falsehood on the church.<sup>12</sup> Why does Paul allow women to practice this gift, but does not allow them to teach?

We find the resolution to this problem when we realize Paul did not believe women are more easily deceived than men, and he is actually quoting Genesis for a different reason, as we shall see.

## Paul's Use of the Old Testament

Traditional, male-only interpreters cannot account for the way Paul is allegedly using the Old Testament in 1Timothy 2. In vs. 14, Paul reminds us that "...it was not Adam that was deceived, but the woman, being quite deceived, was carried away into sin."

Is Paul arguing that all women from that time to this have been easier to deceive than men? If this is true, it would appear that Paul is guilty of reading into the text of Gen. 3 something that simply is not there. To draw such a conclusion from this text would be improper and illogical. How does it follow from Gen. 3 that women are more easily deceived than men? The passage only teaches that Eve was in fact deceived. It nowhere asserts that this weakness has become endemic to the feminine gender.

Any modern interpreter who tried to prove such a disturbing point from an isolated occurrence would be rightly criticized for committing a serious logical error. For instance, it would be as easy to argue that all first-born sons are violent because Cain was. In both cases, a universal trait is being attributed to an entire class of people on the basis of a single incident, without any logical or exegetical reason.

Possibly Paul had a special revelation indicating that women are more easily deceived, but this does not seem to be the case. Rather than appeal to a revelation that he has received, he appeals to Genesis 3 for his evidence, and expects us to understand what he sees there. Thus we would expect to see him sound interpretive principles to derive the meaning of the text.

In addition, how could Paul adduce the principle of deception-proneness for women from Gen. 3 when it occurred before the fall of mankind?<sup>13</sup> If women had innately the flaw of deception proneness, then it would seem they had this flaw by virtue of the way God created them. This follows from the absence of any influence from the fall at the time that the serpent chose the woman for his attack.

Therefore, according to traditional thinking, Eve would seem to be the product of a flawed design on God's part. This conclusion flies in the face of the verdict of God that His creation was "very good." These problems disappear, however, if we conclude that Paul is not arguing that women are more easily deceived than men.

## Lack of Supporting Evidence

No convincing evidence from history, nature or contemporary observation confirms that women are more prone to deception than men in the area of theology or in any other area. On the contrary, in the course of church history, men have been a very fertile seed-bed for heresy and deception, usually without any help from their under-educated women. Indeed, a student of church history must be appalled at how ineffective the suppression of women has been in preventing error in the church.

How unusual it is to find a doctrine in the Bible that does not seem to square with reality at all! Yet science has failed to demonstrate any deception proneness in women. Why would we be unable to observe such a tendency if it is real?

Of course, we do not judge the truths of Scripture by the latest "conclusions" of modern science. However, it certainly is prudent to re-think any interpretation that seems to be so contradictory to observation. This is nothing more than a call for a critical interpretation (i.e. one that makes sense).

An example will help us to understand this principle. Atheistic authors have argued that the Bible teaches that the Earth is flat because of references to the, "four corners of the earth." Yet the same authors will refer to the "sunrise," even though it is now well known that the sun does not rise, or circle the earth, but that the earth revolves around the sun. It is in the eye of the reader that the sun appears to rise.

It is possible, even likely, that readers of the Bible may have understood the phrase, "four corners" to be referring to a flat earth during that period in history when the earth was believed to be flat. Later however, observation showed that the earth was actually round. It was then necessary to return to the text of the Bible and find out whether it actually taught a flat earth or not.

It did not. This conclusion required a reassessment of the meaning of some passages in Scripture--not a change in the content of the Bible, but a change of the reader's understanding of it. Speaking from a Christian point of view, we believe God knew the Earth was round all along. It is we who sometimes misread passages that are actually correct, thinking that they affirm something that is false.

We are not tampering with the text at all by trying to understand it in a way that best squares with the observable world and with reason. Only in cases where there is an unavoidable conflict between science and scripture would we question the data of scientific observation, and it is doubtful whether such a case exists.

We need a hermeneutical methodology must allow us to handle passages where critical considerations make it difficult to make sense of a passage. The interpreter should first determine through exegesis what the possible range of meaning in the passage is. This phase should be conducted with the utmost liberality, since it is not seeking a conclusion, but only to eliminate certain unacceptable conclusions. Within the permissible readings (of which there is often more than one) we can then use reason, scientific observation, and other hermeneutical sources to determine the most likely reading.

Yet this is often not the method used.<sup>14</sup> Scholars have tended to focus on the interpretation they prefer, finding support for it, instead of simply finding out how much latitude exists in the text, and admitting the plausibility of other views that are within those limits.

It is particularly painful for the educated modern woman (or man) to listen to Bible teachers and preachers defending the idea that women have the trait of deception proneness, regardless of how endearing the teacher thinks it is. A common approach is to claim that women are more emotional than men. This characteristic, it is argued, is so pleasant that it makes up for the weakness in the area of gullibility.<sup>15</sup>

The careful observer today will see that, while some fit this scenario, there are exceptions both among men and women.<sup>16</sup> These exceptions are not allowed for in the traditional view. No women are permitted

to teach. No wonder even some evangelical authors have been tempted to say that Paul was giving his own confused opinion in this area.<sup>17</sup>

It should be a source of profound embarrassment to the church today that it finds itself in the position of defending an indefensible generalization of this type, in spite of the fact that such is not specifically taught in Scripture. We do find today that higher education is often useful in preventing deception proneness. Both males and females are better empowered to judge an argument's cogency when they are trained to do so. No wonder some conclude that Paul is arguing that women are more credulous than men because he was making the error of attributing the credulity of ancient women to their gender, when the real cause might have been their lack of formal education.<sup>18</sup> While some modern interpreters have suggested this answer, the error is actually being made on the part of the male-only interpreter. In fact, Paul did not believe that women were more easily deceived than men.

It is most unusual to see in scripture a major, high-impact truth based on only one verse. It is even more unusual (if not totally unprecedented) to see that truth based on an implication rather than a direct statement--an implication which in turn is based on an apparently improper interpretation of an Old Testament passage.<sup>19</sup>

The proposition held forth, then, by the male-only interpreter--that women should not teach or lead because they have an innate tendency to be deceived--can be characterized in the following way: It cannot be harmonized with the Pauline position on women teaching other women and children, and in fact, is contradictory to that position (See Tit. 2:3,4 above).

It is based on a faulty interpretation of Genesis 3.

It is unconfirmed by history, by modern scientific observation, or other sources.

It is based on scanty evidence, in fact on a possible implication from one questionably interpreted verse in the Bible.

From these points, we see that the traditional male-only interpretation of this passage is not as strong as it may have seemed at first glance. In fact, these problems call out for a different solution to the problem--a solution that is readily available.

### **Proposed alternatives**

Careful reading in 1 Timothy indicates some problems with the women in Ephesus. Chapter 5:13,15 indicates that some were "...idle gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention... some have turned aside to follow Satan."<sup>20</sup>

The passage we are studying in Chapter 2 also suggests that all was not as it should be. When Paul says that he is not allowing a woman to "... exercise authority over a man..." (2:12), he is actually using language that is stronger than it seems in most modern translations.

The word authority in this verse is not *exousia* (the usual word), but rather the word *authenteo*. This later word, used only here in the NT, is a strengthened term with negative connotations. *Exousia*, on the other hand, has no such negative connotation. *Exousia* is used of the authority of God, and of legitimate leaders. *Authenteo* comes from an early root whose meaning is unclear. It is sometimes translated "to domineer," or "to lord over."<sup>21</sup>

Some have suggested that the women in this church were guilty of misusing their freedom in Christ, including false teaching, to try to take over the running of the church.<sup>22</sup> In such a case, Paul would not be speaking to a normal situation, but to a threatening division or at least disruption in the local church. If this scenario is correct, there might be good reason to prohibit the women from teaching publicly. If they were attempting to exert undue influence, a teaching ministry would only tend to facilitate their usurpation.

The best argument against this position is the fact that Paul does not justify the rule against women teaching and domineering based on strategic considerations, but on Old Testament theology. Thus, it is felt, we cannot argue that this is a special situation.

In answer to this objection, are two points, as we shall see:

1. The argument from Genesis 3 only relates to the issue of women domineering over men, not to their ability to teach.
2. The case made by Paul is only intended as a general maxim, not as an absolute.

## Paul's Use of Gen 3

In the Greek grammar of vs. 12, there is a division between the issue of teaching, and that of domineering over men. The actual statement in Greek is,

"for to teach, I am not allowing, neither to domineer over a man, but to remain quiet, for it was Adam who was first created..."<sup>23</sup>

Some scholars argue that both the infinitives "to teach" and "to domineer" refer to the same object (*andros*, man).<sup>24</sup> Others argue that they do not. So B.P. Payne translates,

"To teach, however, on the part of woman I am not permitting, nor to lord it over a man..." He also states that "man" in this sentence is the object of "lord it over" and is too far removed from "to teach" to be understood naturally as qualifying the meaning of that verb as well."<sup>25</sup>

The context is the main factor determining how to read this construction. I think a proper analysis of this passage and the following verses shows that the entire passage is a commentary on Genesis 3 and the origins of gender roles.

In Genesis, we see two facts which, when combined, issued in God's decree,

I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. (Gen. 3:16b)

These two facts were:

1. Adam was created first<sup>26</sup>
2. Eve was deceived<sup>27</sup>

Either one of these facts alone would not have resulted in God making the statement He did. It was the combination of the two that led to the verdict mentioned.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, Paul would reasonably bring up both of these events in connection with the issue of women domineering over men. Since God said, "...he shall rule over you," we see a theological basis for authority within marriage. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for the women to usurp authority, and thus reverse in the church what has been established in the home.

The male-only view--that Paul was reflecting on the nature of woman in general rather than simply analyzing the reasons for God's judgment in Gen. 3--has difficulty explaining why Paul would bring up the fact that Adam was created first. An example of the tortured arguments that result can be seen in Guthrie's explanation,

...the priority of man's creation places him in a position of superiority over woman, the assumption being that the original creation, with the Creator's own imprimatur upon it, must set a precedent for determining the true order of the sexes.<sup>29</sup>

This conclusion should be decisively rejected! Scripture never warrants using a term like "superiority" to describe the relationship between men and women. Even when the doctrine of headship is clearly taught, Scripture never suggested that superiority is the issue. Understood properly, this election to authority will be seen as an added responsibility--that of initiating self-sacrifice--not as a privilege.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Bible, we can submit to authority without admitting that the person in authority is superior by nature. Otherwise, we would have no basis for ever submitting to another. Also, Christ was submissive to the Father, but it does not follow that the persons of the Godhead are not equal.<sup>31</sup> In the same way Paul affirms that in Christ, "there is neither male nor female" with regard to equality.<sup>32</sup>

What Adam did have was priority, not superiority. It was because of his prior creation that God put man in authority in Genesis 3 (along with the fact that the woman had been deceived). It was not because man was somehow greater than the woman.

Therefore we return to the point made earlier, that in 1 Tim. 2 Paul mentioned these two facts (the priority of Adam, and the deception of Eve) not because they illustrate the true nature of women, but because these were the two factors that led God to decree, "... he shall rule over you."

That Paul's attention was focused on the whole text of Genesis 3, and on vs. 16 in particular, is further clear because he reflected on the woman's problems with childbirth in the following verse. This comment would be completely out of context unless his thinking was flowing directly from Genesis 3:16.<sup>33</sup> This is clear in spite of the fact that the verse itself is not quoted in the passage.<sup>34</sup>

We can also draw another conclusion if Paul was commenting on the factors that led to Genesis 3:16. If he **was** discussing the origin of male authority in marriage then he **was not** discussing any notion about women being deception prone.

We conclude that the issue of women teaching only came up in 1 Timothy because teaching was being used as a forum for those who were trying to usurp authority in the church.<sup>35</sup> If so, the rule against women teaching in vs. 12 was related to the strategic needs of the hour, rather than eternal theological principles, or the innate, unchangeable nature of women. For these reasons, we also realize that the rule can change.<sup>36</sup>

## **Women In Authority a Maxim, Not an Absolute**

Finally, we are left with the question of women in authority as opposed to women teaching. Of course it would be wrong to domineer in any situation, whether male or female. In addition, it seems that Paul believed the pattern of sexual roles established in Gen. 3 for the marriage relationship also applies in general to the church.

We say "in general," because this principle is to be seen as a general maxim, not as an absolute.<sup>37</sup> The fact that God does not always consider it inappropriate to have women in authority over men, even at the highest level, can be demonstrated to those who accept the inspiration of the Bible by the case of Deborah the prophetess in Judges 4.

This example is significant for two reasons. First, the one who placed Deborah in authority was God, according to Judges 2:16. This is important, since she was very authoritative in Israel according to ch. 4:4. There is no evidence in the text that she was under anyone else's authority.<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, all of the reasons Paul named for the restrictions on women in 1 Timothy were already present at the time of Deborah's judgeship. We can be sure that this question has nothing to do with the advent of the church age, because we already know Paul's reasoning on the matter, which cites Genesis as his basis. Therefore, regardless of how we interpret Paul's view of Genesis, we must admit that God established a woman as judge over Israel in the face of those same factors.

This demonstrates that 1Tim. 2:12 is a norm, or a maxim, rather than a moral absolute. If we view it as an absolute, we condemn God for what He did earlier.

*To summarize the alternative understanding of 1Tim. 2:*

Paul was concerned about turmoil, false teaching, and division in the Ephesian church.

The women were forbidden to teach in that church because they were involved in causing some of the trouble.

Paul backs up his position against the women usurping authority with an analysis of Genesis 3:16, showing that there were good reasons behind God's ruling that husbands were to be the head of the home. This ordering of roles was not to be undermined in the church.

If, on the other hand, conditions were not threatening the stability of the church due to usurpation, the ban on teaching would not apply.

Finally, in a situation where the men are not accepting the responsibility of leadership, God may go to women even in this role.

## **Conclusion**

Once we see the weaknesses of the traditional view of women, we still have to determine what our view on the role of women should be. We lack space here to fully develop this area of theology, but we can indicate the general direction of our thinking.

The passages used by male-only interpreters have been dealt with above. The following points should also be considered on the positive side.

1. Women Served in the New Testament Church as Deaconesses. In 1Tim.3:11, Paul mentions "women" (*gunaiki*) in connection with the office of deacon. There is some debate as to whether he is referring to female deacons, or to the wives of deacons.<sup>39</sup>

However, there are two reasons why we should understand the reference to mean female deacons. First, if Paul was worried about the qualifications of deacon's wives, would he not be even more concerned with the qualifications of elder's wives? Yet, he fails to give any qualifications for the wives of elders in the passage. It would seem that the best explanation is that he is referring to deaconesses in vs. 11, rather than to deacon's wives. In the case of elders however, female elders are not mentioned, because female leadership is not contemplated.

If true, this squares with the Pauline position on female leadership in the church. It seems that Paul felt that it is not normative for women to be in a submissive role in the home, but to change hats and become a leader (at the highest level) in the church. However, this idea cannot be extended to leadership at a lower level, even when men are among those being led, because the women leaders are under the oversight of the elders.

This brings up the even more difficult question of what the role of deacon was in the New Testament church. Again, we are unable to address this question here. Suffice it to say that in Xenos Fellowship, deacons are held to be synonymous with home church leaders.

The second reason for holding that the *gunaiki* (women) in 1Tim. 3:11 are deacons is that Paul mentions a female deacon in Romans 16:1. Here again, some authors hold that this is an example of the generic use of the word deacon, rather than a reference to the office. There is no good reason for taking this line. Paul's use of the masculine noun here to refer to a woman indicates that he is referring to the office of deacon.

Therefore, women held the office of deacon in the New Testament church-- a position that was important, and authoritative within limits established by the elders.

2. Women prophesied in the church assembly, and therefore probably also taught there. 1Cor.11:5 mentions women praying and prophesying in public assembly. Since prophecy was viewed as one of the great gifts, it is difficult to see why a woman would be allowed to prophecy, but not to teach. This fact surely is an embarrassment to those who think women were more easily deceived. Deception proneness would be a devastating drawback for a prophet, no matter how that gift is understood.

Finally, if women were to be "silent" in the assembly, as Moo claims, how were they able to pray or prophecy?

3. Paul made extensive use of the service of women, probably including a spoken ministry. When Paul refers to women as his "fellow workers", or as being "outstanding among the apostles," he is recognizing their ability to do Christian work. It is very doubtful that Paul would attribute such praise to work that was not based on the ministry of the word. The fact that he had women traveling with him, and planting churches, clearly implies that they were speaking out with good teaching and evangelism. It is very difficult to reconcile the fact that Paul recognized female co-workers in church planting with the idea of women being silent in the churches.

4. Finally, as we have seen in the case of Deborah, God can and will go to female leadership even at the highest level, especially if the men are unwilling or unable to get the job done. So often the loudest voices raised in the church to oppose women leading are those of men who are not effectively serving the needs of the church themselves. Well might a stuffed-shirt male oppose female ministry in the church, because these men are the very ones who will be replaced first by women!

In the time of Deborah, Barak was deprived of honor when defeating the Midianites because of his cowardice. Today, many male-only workers will be deprived of the honor of defeating Satan if they try to protect their right to do nothing at the expense of women who want to serve.

Much of the church today hobbles about on one foot because it is unwilling to give women their rightful role as competent hard-hitting Christian workers. At Xenos, we should continue to hold out for the full function of our women as equal co-belligerents in the terrible spiritual struggle we must fight.

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#### Endnotes:

1 A short statement of the traditional view can be seen in the Ryrie Bible's comment on 1 Tim. 2:12, or in Ralph Earle, "1,2 Timothy", in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Gabelein, Frank, E., Editor (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids MI. 1978), p. 362.

2 All quotations from *The New American Standard Bible*, (Lockman Foundation, 1963).

3 It is also possible to understand this text in a way that makes no suggestion regarding who the women teach at all. In this view, the "reverent" behavior, the lack of "malicious gossip," the freedom from wine addiction, and their good teaching all serve as the kind of example that "encourages" the younger women to live for God. This view, unobjectionable to the author, squares quite well with the syntax of the passage.

4 The passage occurs in the context of concern over abuses during worship meetings.

5 1Cor.14:23. A self-centered attitude that was willing to indulge the flesh in seeking ecstatic worship experiences or grinding private doctrinal axes even at the cost of losing the non-Christian visitor was part and parcel of the mentality Paul was having to confront in this book.

6 See 1Cor. 1:11, and 11:18.

7 (vs. 35) The question of why only women asking their husbands is mentioned, but not husbands asking their wives, is probably best explained by the cultural norm (especially strong in the Jewish community) of educating men, but not women. It is also likely that since the women were the ones that were causing a problem in this situation, they were the ones who were addressed.

8 See H.A. Ironside in *1Corinthians*, p. 455 "...here the reference is to the official meeting of the church when all are gathered together as a worshipping community." If such a distinction were possible, 1Cor. 14 would be referring to the more informal type of meeting, since it featured participation by the people according to vs. 26. See D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1987), pp. 122-124 for a survey of the literature involved in this sort of view, along with a decisive refutation. His own view is not much better.

9 Ralph Earle, "1,2 Timothy", in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Gabelein, Frank, E., Editor (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids MI. 1978), p. 362. Also Douglas J. Moo, "1Timothy 2: 11-15: Meaning and Significance", *Trinity Journal* Vol. I, (1980), p. 70 "... it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Paul cites Eve's failure as exemplary, and perhaps causative of the nature of women in general and that this susceptibility to deception bars them from engaging in public speaking." Moo later claimed to have changed his view in the article, "1Timothy 2:11-15: A Rejoinder", *Trinity Journal* Vol.2 NS (1981), p. 204, "I am now inclined to see the reference as a means of suggesting the difference between Adam and Eve in the fall," However, the significance of this in 1Tim. 2 is not explained, thus leaving doubt as to the nature of this change.

10 Jesse Penn-Lewis, *The Magna Carta of Woman*, (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1975), p. 58.

11 The phrase "...it was not Adam who was deceived..." is, of course, referring to the story in Genesis 3.

12 1Cor. 11:5. The claim that different rules apply to prophecy than to teaching, on the grounds that God is taking direct control of what is said is vacuous. 1Cor. 14:32 makes it plain that the prophet controls what he/she says. In addition, if God controls the prophet, barring any possibility of error, why insist that the others "judge" what the prophet says (1Cor. 14:29)?

13 They had not yet eaten of the forbidden fruit. Yet if Paul is speaking of a trait rather than an isolated deed, it would appear that the trait was already present at the time of the fall. Thus the question is whether Paul is considering the cause or the outcome of the incident.

14 See Douglas Moo, "1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance," *Trinity Journal* Vol. 1, (1980), 9. 64.

15 See Gladys Hunt's discussion of the passage in view in *Ms. Means Myself*, pp. 37-41. "The Master tempter knew Eve's point of vulnerability as well as Adam's..." (p. 37) but at the same time, "...God has given the woman special sensitivities and gifts...in the emotional realm...a special sensitivity to the needs of others which includes an almost intuitive understanding of situations and people's feelings. Her empathy makes it natural for her to feel the hurts of others. She has a highly developed capacity for love and for giving of herself..." (p. 40) This argument goes on for several pages along these lines. Yet these kinds of speculations are not backed up by the scriptures or by any other source. Differences of the sort mentioned are often the result of a theological outlook, not the basis for it.

Should men admit that women are more able to give themselves to others in love? This would be the same as saying that they are more sanctified than men. Neither should Christian women admit that they are more easily deceived than men.

16 It may even be true that there are more exceptions than there are correlations--no one knows. However, if there were only one exception, it would present a serious problem for the male-only

interpreter. This is because the male only position claims that Paul is not arguing from the sociological norms of his day, but from a theological truth revealed in the Word of God (i.e. Gen.3). Thus we would either expect it to be true in all cases, or we would expect Paul to advise careful discernment on Timothy's part.

17 This is the position of authors such as Hardesty and Scanzoni who had a conservative reputation at the time of this book. Letha Scanzoni, and Nancy Hardesty, ***All Were Meant To Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation***, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974).

18 Yet he cites Scripture to support his case. This argument appears to be antithetical to the idea of Verbal Plenary Inspiration.

19 See Phillip B. Payne, "Libertarian Women in Ephesus", ***Trinity Journal*** Vol. 2 NS(1981), p.179.

20 Note that Ephesus was, "a bastion and bulwark of women's rights." Barth, Ephesians 2. 661 cited in Douglas J. Moo, "1Timothy 2: 11-15: Meaning and Significance", ***Trinity Journal*** Vol. 1, (1980), p. 81. This may very well have led to problems with the much more conservative Jewish contingent in the church. So Phillip B. Payne, "Libertarian Women in Ephesus", ***Trinity Journal*** Vol. 2 NS(1981), p. 182.

21 Colin Brown, ***The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology***, Vol. 3, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 1066. See also Donald Guthrie, ***The Pastoral Epistles***. in Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 76-77.

22 Don Williams, ***The Apostle Paul and Women***, (Los Angeles: BIM/Regal, 1978). Phillip B. Payne, "Libertarian Women in Ephesus", ***Trinity Journal*** Vol. 2 NS(1981), p. 183.

23 The importance of word order is minimal, but does serve to place emphasis in a sentence. Given the structure of the sentence, it is also possible to see "teach" as being modified by "domineer over a man". Thus Guthrie, "... women must refrain from laying down the law to men..." Guthrie, "Pastoral Epistles," p. 77. If teaching and domineering over men are seen as distinct issues in this sentence, it would follow that "remaining quiet" is the antidote to both problems.

24 D. Moo, "The Interpretation of 1Timothy 2:11-15: A Rejoinder", ***Trinity Journal***, Vol. 2 (Deerfield: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1981), pp. 198-222.

25 Phillip B. Payne, "Libertarian Women in Ephesus", ***Trinity Journal*** Vol. 2 NS(1981), pp. 198-222. Harrison F. Skeeel, in a follow-up to the debate between these two (Moo and Payne), has applied the search and analysis power of the GRAMCORD computerized Greek research program created by the American Bible Society to this question. He found 11 clear cases of object sharing by two of these kinds of infinitives, as well as 22 cases where object sharing must be ruled out. He concludes that the word order in 1Tim. 2:12 is anomalous, but there is a possibility that object sharing is evident there.

Skeeel supports Moo's position that object sharing is possible in 1Tim. 2:12, without in any way claiming that it is necessary. This conclusion is satisfactory. However, the point is not that we are forbidden to read 1Tim. 2:12 as involving object sharing, but that we are not required to read it so. Harrison F. Skeeel, "An Inductive Analysis of Infinitival Object Sharing, With Reference to the Interpretation of 1Timothy 2:12," (Deerfield: Unpublished Research Paper). By reading the statement as referring to teaching in general, rather than only teaching men, the serious critical problem mentioned earlier is resolved--namely why they would be allowed to teach other women and children.

26 The priority of Adam is significant in that once authority became necessary, God would turn to the prior existent for leadership.

27 Moo makes the confusing statement that, "...the Gen. 3 narrative nowhere attributes the judgment upon the woman to her being deceived." On the contrary, the impact of the woman's credulity is obvious,

since it is in direct response to her statement, "...I was deceived," (vs. 13) that God speaks. Douglas J. Moo, "1Timothy 2: 11-15: Meaning and Significance," *Trinity Journal* Vol. I, (1980), p. 69.

28 Note that her fall to deception is not viewed by God as something which was intrinsic to her even before the fall, but as a sin. See note #12 above. Also, it is possible that Paul saw Eve as poorly educated by Adam (not unlike the women in Ephesus) because she misquoted God's decree. This would follow from the call for women to be instructed in vs. 11. See Kaiser's summary of this position in Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Shared Leadership" in *Christianity Today*, Vol. 30 No. 14, (October 3, 1986).

29 Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles* p. 77

30 Eph 5:24ff makes it clear that the self-sacrificial model of Christ is the basis for understanding.

31 The comment made by Christ, that "the father is greater than the son..." (Jn. 14:28) should be taken as greater in station, by the express willing choice of the Son (see also Phil.2:6). Otherwise, we are not able to harmonize those affirmations made by the Lord to the effect that He and the Father are the same (see Jn. 14:7).

32 Galatians 3:28.

33 There are several possible explanations of the statement. See Phillip B. Payne, "Libertarian Women in Ephesus", *Trinity Journal* Vol. 2 (1981), pp. 180,181. Or Gladys Hunt, *Ms. Means Myself*, p. 36, for the idea that "the childbirth" refers to the Birth of Christ. See Ralph Earle, "1,2 Timothy" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Gabelein, Frank, E., Editor (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids MI. 1978), p. 362 for the view that the salvation in view may have been both spiritual and physical, and that the word "them" might refer to both husband and wife, as well as other options. Wrongly see Newport J. D. White, "The First and Second Epistles to Timothy," in *The Expositors Greek Testament* Vol. IV, Edited by Nicoll, W. Robertson (Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979), pp. 109,110, who thinks the passage means that women are saved (sanctified) when they realize and fulfill their true station in life--childbearing.

34 The reason for Paul's failure to quote the verse that he is explaining could be attributed to the fact that the verse was, and is, well known, and therefore unnecessary to quote, especially to Timothy.

35 It is suggested by most male-only interpreters that teaching tends to lead to authority, and therefore is brought up in this context. This is precisely correct! Now we need to see that it is the usurpation of authority, not teaching itself, that Paul is addressing when he cites Gen.3. In a situation where women are not attempting to usurp authority, then, there would be no reason to apply this prohibition.

36 The present tense of the verb used here could be translated, "I am not allowing a women to teach..." This translation more clearly suggests the temporary nature of the rule.

It is likely, in the view of the author, that the prohibition on teaching was not just applied to teaching men, but to all teaching. If this is true, verse 12 constitutes a temporary "gag order" on the women in that city. The syntax of the sentence allows such a reading.

37 The presence of maxims in the Bible does not affect the doctrine of biblical inspiration in any way. The Bible is only inerrant in all that it affirms. If it affirms that a maxim is generally true, then it is generally true. See Prov. 15:1 for an example of a generally true, but not always true, maxim.

38 The suggestion that Deborah was under the authority of Barak is belied by the fact that the text names Deborah herself as the one who "...was judging Israel at the time..." apart from any mention of Barak. It was Barak who was afraid to go into battle without the protection of Deborah. It seems that some interpreters are moving to an artificial solution to a perceived theological problem, rather than expositing the text. Barak is never called a judge in the Bible.

39 Correctly, Newport J. D. White, "The First and Second Epistles to Timothy", in ***The Expositors Greek Testament*** Vol. IV, Edited by Nicoll, W. Robertson, p. 116. Wrongly, Ryrie, Charles C., ***A Survey Of Bible Doctrine*** (Moody Bible Institute of Chicago 1972), pp. 144,145.