

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF  
THEOLOGY

WOMEN PREACHERS AND LEADERS: EXAMINATION OF  
NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING WITH FOCUS ON  
I TIMOTHY 2:11-15

BY

AGNES MAKAU:

JULY 2000

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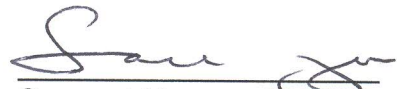
BY  
AGNES MAKAU

A Thesis submitted to the Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Theology

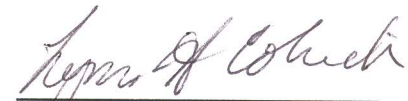
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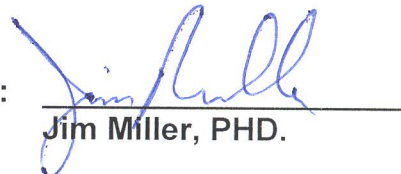
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## DECLARATION

WOMEN PREACHERS AND LEADERS: EXAMINATION OF NEW  
TESTAMENT TEACHING WITH FOCUS ON 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit.

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners.

(Signed) Agnes Makau  
Agnes Makau

June 26, 2000

## **ABSTRACT**

The Thesis discusses women preachers and leaders by examining the New Testament teaching with a focus on 1 Timothy 2:11-15. This is presented in five chapters.

Chapter One is mainly introduction encompassing the statement problem, the hypotheses (major and minor), the significance of the study, the purpose of the study, assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study, plan and method and literature review.

Chapter Two deals with the examination of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 emphasizing 1 Timothy 2:12. This includes The Author, Recipient and Purpose of 1 Timothy, The Religious Situation at Ephesus, The Exegesis of the Text within the Context and, finally, A Synthesis of the Findings. 1 Timothy 2:12 cannot be used to answer the question as to whether or not women can be preachers and leaders in the Church today. It must be understood within the context of the Ephesian situation. We would be reading into the text if we use it to decide the outcome of women as preachers and leaders in the Church today.

Chapter Three is the examination of selected passages relating to women. These are Romans 16:1-7, 1 Corinthians 11:5, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 2 Timothy 2:2. They are the texts which are more clear on what women can do. A look at these passages yields findings that do not deter a woman from being a preacher or leader in today's church. Romans 16:1-7 talks of Phoebe who was a deacon in a church and includes others that were fellow workers with Paul. 1 Corinthians 11:5 allows a woman to pray and prophesy in public. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is in the context of the order of worship and is not related to the concept of women as preachers and leaders today. 2 Timothy 2:2 addresses the issue of criteria for those who would be entrusted with the word of God or the responsibility of teaching the word of God. This text includes women which is evident upon application of correct interpretation.

Chapter Four discusses the relation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 to Romans 16:1-7, 1 Corinthians 11:5, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, 2 Timothy 2:2. In relating the findings of Selected Women-Related Passages in Chapter Three to the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, we determine that Paul cannot be saying women may not be preachers and leaders. If we insist that the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is a universal prohibition of women as preachers and leaders in the church, then we must also conclude that the Bible contradicts itself.

Chapter Five is the Conclusion. It also outlines the relevance of this thesis to the church in Africa today. A careful look at the passages under study reveals that women can be preachers and leaders in the church and should be accepted as such. As a matter of course, the gift must be polished by education to produce respected leaders such as we see in Phoebe and qualified preachers/teachers as exemplified by Priscilla.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Church practices should have, as much as it is possible, their basis or foundation in the Scriptures. This calls for careful and correct Biblical interpretation of each and every related passage of Scripture.

The debate on women as preachers and teachers of both men and women in the church today gains its momentum from the teaching in what tradition holds as the Pauline epistles. This is discussed later in this paper under Author and Recipient. The church has leaned heavily on Paul and his teachings in these books for a solution to the issue of women as preachers and leaders. The question we need to ask is whether Paul has always been interpreted correctly by the church. If the answer is “yes”, why has the debate continued? If the answer is “no”, why has the church not arrived at the correct interpretation? Or, having correctly interpreted the issue of women as preachers and leaders, has the church been reluctant to stand against tradition?

Women continue to be trained for ministry as well as men. The researcher is interested in finding how these women bridge the gap between their convictions and the church’s stand on women in positions of authority, specifically preaching and teaching. This will be accomplished by exercising correct principles of interpretation in regard to specific passages that affect the whole discussion. This thesis employs the historical critical method, which

extracts those normative (although not exhaustive) and universal elements, which the ancient text conveys. In a way, this method widens the gulf between the Bible and modern readers or hearers. It witnesses to the fact that the Word of God today has to do with the Word of God which was spoken in ancient times by the prophets and apostles. Therefore unless the modern interpreters allow the text to speak out of its original situation, they have no basis for claiming that their message is continuous with the message recorded in Scripture<sup>1</sup>. If we recognize the importance of making the word of God contextual, then the historical method is crucial.

Every interpretation process includes application. However the “intuitive” approach, which emphasis on immediate personal application evident in contemporary popular preaching and devotional literature, can only be helpful if it is combined with the historical method. Interpreters therefore must

- interpret Scripture with Scripture.
- interpret Scripture literally, that is according to the original meaning, literary form, and context.
- recognize the role of the Holy Spirit.
- interpret Scripture dynamically, in order to transform lives.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The aim of the researcher is to exegete key passages that teach on women, and their implication for women as preachers and leaders. The researcher will seek to understand the historical, social and cultural

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<sup>1</sup> Rene Padilla, “The Interpreted Word, Reflections on Contextual Hermeneutics,” *Themelios* (March 1981): 19-23.



background that may have determined the expression of Paul's teachings as he related to his recipients. In addition, a careful word study of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 will be conducted to reveal any hidden or helpful meaning. This will allow the researcher to know whether Paul has been misunderstood through misinterpretation.

## **The Hypotheses**

### **Major hypothesis**

The church has, over the years, misinterpreted 1 Timothy 2:12. Consequently, it has erroneously based its policies for women as preachers and leaders on this incorrect teaching.

### **Minor hypotheses**

1. Interpreters have not done justice to 1 Timothy 2:12 which affects the place of women as preachers and leaders greatly. It is not a good verse to use in deciding whether or not women can be preachers and leaders in the church today.
2. Today's African cultural and societal inclinations and beliefs, whether as a result of their culturally affected theological training or their experiences, have played a bigger role in the decisions concerning women as preachers and leaders than the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12.
3. The church should preach and effect equality of men and women in ministry regardless of culture, by using clearer passages than 1 Timothy 2:12.

## The Significance of the Study

The issue of women as leaders and preachers has been an unresolved debate in the church today. There is always a controversy when this is mentioned. Some churches have decided to solve the problem by allowing women to have a leadership and/or preaching ministry as well as men. Others do not. As a concession by those who do not, the leaders have specific positions in which a woman may serve, in effect holding them to limited areas of authority. To support their position, they use Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 2:12.

It is no wonder then, that a church in Kenya had some of its members leave because "some two women had been ordained into the holy order."<sup>2</sup> It becomes more confusing when the very respected and learned clergy of the church differ extremely in their views on the issue. Dr. George Carey is quoted as saying, "The idea that only a man can represent Christ at the altar is most serious heresy."<sup>3</sup> In the same year (1988), Pope John Paul II said, "women should be excluded from priesthood because Christ willingly chose only men as His apostles."<sup>4</sup> The issue here is not only lack of knowledge on what women should be, but biased applications of Biblical teaching and disharmony of convictions in practice as well. As a result, the women become the "grass that gets hurt" because those who are knowledgeable resist the truth. This clearly shows how confused the church is on this issue. Are these people interpreting the Bible well? Have the Bible's verses been taken out of

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<sup>2</sup> Nduta Kamau, "Can a Woman Serve God?" *The Christian Voice*, December 1994,

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

context? Why the extremes in our stand on this issue? To answer this question about women in preaching and leadership we must go back to the drawing board and rethink our interpretation of key passages.

The significance of this study is, therefore, an attempt to give a clear implication on the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12 for women as preachers and leaders. We must look at what the author has written, what he meant and how we can apply the findings to our modern church situation. Hopefully, this will also help solve the problem many denominations have, namely, what to do with their theologically trained women. The researcher also looks at other passages to determine 1 Timothy 2:12 is an irrelevant verse in the issue of women preachers and leaders.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine that 1 Timothy 2:12 is not the best verse to use for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not women should preach and lead in the local church. The researcher also looks at other passages to determine 1 Timothy 2:12 is an irrelevant verse in the issue of women preachers and leaders.

### **Research questions**

1. What was the social and cultural situation that was addressed in the first letter to Timothy?
2. What new insight might one gain into the discussion on women as preachers and leaders if the situation at Ephesus is considered?
3. Does the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12 apply to a localized or universal problem?

4. Does the social and cultural situation in Ephesus have any relationship with the church today in Africa?

### **Assumptions**

The church has incorrectly interpreted 1 Timothy 2:12 in the past, as well as the present. This has led to the wrong teaching regarding women as preachers and leaders. As a result, there is hot debate and people have not come to terms with the Ephesian context as compared to the African context.

The church has not discerningly judged its context as compared to the African context; otherwise the debate about women as preachers and leaders would not arise; yet, it has raged worldwide over the ages.

The Church has not come to an agreement as to the meaning of 1 Timothy 2:12. This has left women who are particularly gifted in preaching and leadership in a state of frustration.

Those who realize the true implication of 1 Timothy 2:12 have not effected the correct teaching in the church.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

It is possible to appeal to the whole Bible in studying women's roles and the part they play in church preaching and leadership. However, the researcher will only deal with the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12 within the context of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, and its implication on women as preachers and leaders, in view of the fact that it is quoted frequently by church policy makers in discussions as to whether women should preach and lead in church.

The researcher will also look into the teaching of Romans 16:1-7; 1 Corinthians 11:5, 14:34-35 and II Timothy 2:2 as cross-references in that they deal with women and church related ministries.

## **Plan and Method**

The researcher will do a careful exegesis of I Timothy 2:12 within the context of 2:11-15. This will then enable conclusions to be arrived at as to what the author said, meant, and how it applied to the recipients. Any social or cultural aspect alluded to will be noted with a view to careful application of the principles taught regarding our situation in the church today.

The researcher will be careful to look into alterations within 1 Timothy 2:12, such as the word "woman", which in many translations has been changed to "women in the Church", the word "man", which has been changed to "men", as well as the words "authority", "quiet" or "submissive". This is an attempt to determine whether the passage has been used to answer the question of women as preachers and leaders in the Church. Other passages, which include Romans 16:1-7; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, will be used to establish that there is no contradiction in the teachings and that our interpretation is consistent.

## **Literature Review**

The literature reviewed indicates that there is no consensus amongst Biblical scholars on the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12. There are those who believe 1 Timothy 2:12 teaches that women should neither preach nor be leaders. Others argue that women should participate fully, while still others argue that even if women participate there is a place for men and a place for women. As Ironside said, "The woman has her place and the man has his place. We each have our place in nature, and just as the one cannot change

places with the other in nature so we must not attempt to change places in the order of the church of God here on earth".<sup>5</sup>

The argument from nature seems to affect the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12. Many have concluded that it means women should not participate at all in church ministries, much less participate "fully". The researcher's question is "Has the woman been given any place at all in the church or has the man taken all places?"

It is not clear what the timeless principle should be. This Thesis calls for a proper literary interpretation. We must treat different types of literature according to the rules of interpretation. Those who propose a literal application of 1 Timothy 2:12 believe that their opponents are trying to find unjustified hidden meanings.

However, the researcher considers this to be an ignorance regarding literary styles. A writer is never confined to one style, and no language is made of one style. This is to say exegesis is always necessary due to the characteristics of their language. It is the opinion of the researcher that the author of first Timothy should not be denied this same liberty.

### **General Content of the Paper**

Chapter One is mainly introduction, which covers the statement problem, hypotheses (major and minor), the significance of study, the purpose of study, assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study, plan and method, and literature review.

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<sup>5</sup> H. Ironside, *Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1960), 69.

Chapter Two deals with examination of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and especially 2:12. This includes the author, recipients and purpose of I Timothy, the religious situation at Ephesus, the exegesis of the text within the context, and finally a synthesis of the findings.

Chapter Three deals with examination of selected women-related passages such as Romans 16:1-7; I Corinthians 11:5; I Corinthians 14:4-35; 2 Timothy 2:2.

Chapter Four deals with the relation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 to its related passages.

Chapter Five is the conclusion, which is mainly the implication of the study for today.

## CHAPTER TWO

### EXAMINATION OF 1 TIMOTHY 2: 11- 15 [ESPECIALLY 2:12]

#### The Author, Recipients and Purpose of 1 Timothy

##### The Author and Recipients

Tradition holds that Paul wrote the Pastoral Epistles. However, some modern theologians have, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, questioned this position. It is true that the Pastoral epistles contain a lot of different vocabulary when compared with Paul's earlier letters, but tradition would attribute this to the fact that Paul is now writing as a mature apostle who has been through several missions and has hammered out a Christian theology. He is also writing to very specific pastoral situations, therefore differences in vocabulary are to be expected. Moreover, one should not ignore the fact that their length, opening and closing formulae is very much Pauline. However, this kind of an explanation may not be adequate for those who hold firmly to some striking differences.<sup>6</sup> This thesis takes the traditional position that 1 Timothy is Pauline.

The time of writing is likely to be after the completion of the book of Acts as the journeys in the Pastoral Epistles do not fit into the Acts account. Gordon Fee suggests that Paul was released from his first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28) and made further journeys to Crete. (cf. Titus) and Macedonia,

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<sup>6</sup> J.N.D. Kelly observes that "the vocabulary is full of surprises, their author lacks the Apostles' vigor and variety, he writes smooth, often monotonous sentences, instead of piling



stopping off in Ephesus. According to 1 Timothy 1: 3-4, Timothy was urged to remain behind in Ephesus because false teaching was threatening the Church. Paul wanted him to re-establish the Church by promoting God's truth. Paul was re-arrested later and awaited his final trial in Rome where he wrote 2 Timothy. Paul charges Timothy with severe words to rebuke the false teachers. Paul was Timothy's spiritual father because Timothy might have been converted on Paul's first missionary journey in Lystra (Acts 14:6-7). Timothy was, however, not without spiritual guidance because the Scriptures bear testimony that he had been brought up to know the teachings of the Old Testament by his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15). His mother also became a Christian (Acts 16:1) but his father was Greek. This explains why Timothy was not circumcised until he became Paul's travelling companion (Acts 16:3) since it was the responsibility of a Jewish father to circumcise his son. Timothy is then described as a legitimate child in the faith although illegitimate according to the Jewish Law which did not recognize his Greek father. His Greek father had not circumcised him, so Timothy lacked the mark of a male Jew ( Gen. 17:10 )

History has it that Paul spent considerably more time at Ephesus than other places recorded in the New Testament (Acts 19 & 20). He warned the church there about false teachers to come (Acts 20:30). Ephesus itself was a renowned centre for magical practices and for the cult of Artemis. It is against this background that we must understand the content of 1 Timothy and especially the passage under study.

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## The Purpose

1 Timothy 1:3 clearly states the purpose of this epistle. Paul had left Timothy in charge of the Ephesian community and now writes to instruct him about certain ecclesiastical procedures. It is important to note the particular situation and the specific issues that Paul was dealing with in order to apply this teaching appropriately.

The church at Ephesus was in turmoil, threatened by heresy and bitter disputes over matters of faith and practice. The church was, therefore, in need of practical and spiritual guidance. Paul offers that guidance through the church leader, Timothy. Paul charges Timothy to rebuke the false teachers in order "to stop them from teaching different doctrine and embroiling themselves in myths (1 Timothy 1:3-4)."<sup>7</sup>

This false teaching included various elements such as the idea that resurrection had already happened (2 Timothy 2:18), that marriage is forbidden and that certain food should be restricted (1 Timothy 4:3) they argued about myths and genealogies (1 Timothy 4:4). The severe words of Paul in 1 Timothy 1:3 confirm to the readers that the problem was acute. This letter, then, must have served as a guidebook to any orthodox church leader in Ephesus.

We must admit that, in principle, the instructions in 1 Timothy are still relevant today and that the Holy Spirit still uses this word to teach believers. On the other hand, we must remember that, first and foremost, this letter was written to solve a problem in the Ephesian church. This means our target

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<sup>7</sup> Richard & Catherine Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in light of Ancient Evidence*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 43.

passage 1 Timothy 2:12 must be interpreted and applied with the background in mind. The purpose of this epistle forces us to revisit 1 Timothy 2:11-15 with the understanding that issues, which may be so hard to comprehend today, were readily understood at Ephesus. Therefore we need to ask ourselves, “has the church today violated some principles of interpretation<sup>8</sup> and might this have led to inappropriate application of 1 Timothy 2: 11- 15”?

### **The Religious Situation at Ephesus**

The religious turmoil at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3-4) must have influenced Paul to write what he did in 1 Timothy. To begin with, the Kroegers discuss the following:

#### *The Mother Goddess Cult*

The goddess shrine of Artemis (Roman name Diana) lay at Ephesus, being a gateway to Asia, flourished as a bastion of feminine supremacy in religion. Therefore it is no coincidence that the virgin Mary was first given the official title “theotokos” (bearer of God) at Ephesus where Artemis herself had earlier borne the same title. Femininity was also promoted as the source of fertility hence the source of life and even death. The mother goddess was believed to possess the power to resurrect through her womb. This cult was

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<sup>8</sup> Bruce Milne. *Know the Truth*, (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 45-47. The author lists four major principles of interpretation. (a) Scripture must be interpreted literally. This principle is known as the historico-grammatical method of interpreting Scripture. (I) According to the original meaning, because God’s word is almost always immediately relevant to the situation to which it was addressed. (II) According to literary form since the Bible has multiple literary styles, i.e. poetry, prose, parables, allegory, apocalyptic, fable, etc. (iii) According to context. The setting of the text or saying in the section and book of the Bible in which it occurs is fundamental to correct interpretation. (b) Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture. When there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, it must be searched and known by other passages that speak more clearly. This means (i) interpreting according to the purpose of Scripture. (ii) interpreting in light of other passages on the same theme. (iii) interpreting the earlier in light of the later and fuller. (c) Scripture can be interpreted only by the Holy Spirit; true understanding is God’s gift. (d) Scripture must be interpreted dynamically. After asking, “what did this mean in his own time and context

widespread. In the classical Greek mythology, Artemis was the sister of Apollo, known as moon goddess, huntress and protector of womanhood.<sup>9</sup> At Ephesus, Artemis may have been a goddess of fertility. Her temple attendants included eunuch priests. The Temple of Artemis in Paul's day was one of the great wonders of the world. Worship of Artemis could have extended into Greece, Gaul, Rome and Syria.<sup>10</sup> This leads us to conclude that the belief affected the church.

### Judaism

This was practiced at Ephesus but the Jews there were syncretistic. Helmut Koester points out, that syncretism (συγκρητισμός) was first used to designate a federation of Cretan cities, which had earlier lived in enmity with each other. In this context, the modern definition is employed, which is "to mix". This has been misunderstood to be a derivative of the Greek verb "κερυννυμί" (to mix). In this case, it actually means "the mixing" of religions. This includes the combination of deities of different origins, mutual permeation of various elements of different religions and cultures, or actual creation of a new religion out of existing ones.<sup>11</sup> In this context, Judaism was mixed with other religious beliefs.

Archeology bears evidence that Ephesian Jews were involved in magic.<sup>12</sup> The magical practice in Ephesus was very advanced. The magicians

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and what does it mean in the light of the whole of Scripture", we must ask, "what does this mean for today, here and now, in the life of this congregation, any person or my own life?"

<sup>9</sup> James Jeffers. *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 93.

<sup>10</sup> Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament History, Culture and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*, Vol. 1, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 96.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>12</sup> Kroeger, 1992, 203-211 quoting A.T Kraabel, *Judaism of Asia Minor Under the Roman Empire*, (Unpublished TH.D Thesis, Harvard University, 1968), 51-59, explains that

prescribed various combinations of six magical words to help people in different situations. Ephesian wrestlers would get a prescription to wear on their ankles in order to win their fights. This magic was also related to the goddess mother Artemis. At the on-set, this magical practice sounds very unbiblical because magic uses spiritual power for man's own ends and it is prohibited (Deut. 18:10-14).

### Gnosticism

Gnosticism, which is from the Greek word "γνωσις" (knowledge), was first used in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to refer to a current in the religious life. Gnostics understood themselves as the elite 'chosen' people. Gnosticism is involved in dualistic views. Cosmological dualism was an essential feature. They believed matter is evil and therefore the Saviour cannot have been in flesh. Gnostics believed in an opposition between the spiritual world and the material world. It was attacked by church fathers who regarded the various gnostic groups as heretical perversions of Christianity.<sup>13</sup> Due to the Greek culture, some Bible stories were distorted. This includes the creation story, where Eve becomes the one who gives life to Adam. This, however, does not come as a surprise, if we consider the goddess cult thriving at Ephesus. This gnosticism could also explain the problem of "myths and genealogies" (1Timothy 1:4).

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the curse tablets of Cnidus (city of Cnidus, lying to the south of Ephesus, Acts 27:7) yield evidence to the use of magic. Women used magic, explaining why 1 Timothy 5 calls some widows "workers of magic". Furthermore, 1 Timothy 2:12 may be translated "*I forbid a woman to slay a man...*" "Magic spells, charms, enchantments, and cures were widely employed in the ancient world; . . . Magic could be used for many purposes – for healing, love charms, fertility, averting of malignant forces. . ." Discussing the curses on the tablets of Cnidus, the Kroegers mention murders happening, even in Artemis's temple. We must remember that one possible meaning of "αυθευτειν" is "murder", although this is not the best meaning for our context.

<sup>13</sup> Edwin Yamauchi, "Gnosticism," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 350.

Bible stories were rewritten and gave the names of fictitious wives, children and any other characters. Dispute arose from such names and genealogies, since there was no authoritative basis. According to Yamauchi, the original gnosis is the theology of Jewish Christianity and agnostic dualists borrowed the symbolism of this Jewish Christian gnosis, but they adapted their borrowings to the demands of their own dualist system and it is this system which constitutes Gnosticism properly so-called.<sup>14</sup> Before the second century, it consisted of scattered beliefs that were not systematized (protognosticism). This gnosticism was heresy within the Christian system. One of the gnostic schools in the second century was Alexandria in Egypt, and the teacher was Basilides.<sup>15</sup> The schools highlighted the discontinuing of humanity, as expected in resurrection, in order to emphasize the evil of the physical existence in contrast to the spirituality of the resurrection.

### Christianity

Christianity was at Ephesus too. This is where Apollos proclaimed Jesus but only knew the baptism of John. However, Priscilla and Aquilla took him aside and gave him a more accurate and complete understanding of Jesus (Acts 18:19 – 26). It is in the same city that Paul attacked the basis of the Ephesian religion. It was here, too, that Demetrius, who was involved in the sale of idols, incited a riot against Paul, enabling him to continue doing so (Acts 19:37). This means the opposition at Ephesus was not foreign to Paul (1

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<sup>14</sup> Idem, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism; A Survey of Proposed Evidences*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973), 161.

<sup>15</sup> Kurt Rudolph, "Gnosticism," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1033.

Cor. 16:8-19), and the mother goddess cult must have contributed to it greatly.<sup>16</sup> Koester discusses more forms of religion, such as

### Emperor Worship

The cult of the emperor was in existence, too. It was a way for Roman leaders to establish their power in Eastern Mediterranean region. It also served to focus the loyalty of provincials on the person of the emperor.

### Mystery Religions

These are a group of cults with some common beliefs and practices, although distinct. For example, the annual plant cycle that symbolized a cycle of life and death. Religion of the Olympian gods, the cults of Demeter, Isis, Cybele, Mithras and others.

### The Cult of Asclepius

This was the local healing deity. He had a sanctuary at Athens. Because of the healing, he was considered the most humane god. People would go to his temple for healings. Temples famous for these healings recorded these events on wooden tablets, and later transcribed them to stone.

### The Cult of Serapis

He wore a basket of fruits (calathus) as a symbol of fertility. A “globe” supported his breast to signify his rule over the whole world.<sup>17</sup>

It is inevitable to conclude that Ephesus was highly pagan and this had a great bearing to the words of Paul in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, which leads to the following assumptions:

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<sup>16</sup> Kroeger, 1992, 47-66.

<sup>17</sup> Koester, vol. 1, 1980, 165-173.

- 1) Paul must have written to refute a heresy which advocated that Eve gave Adam life. This would have been influenced by the “mother goddess cult”, and Jewish / Christian gnosticism, which taught that Eve was the source of all fertility. Hence, 1 Timothy 2:13 is correct in the Ephesian context “for Adam was formed first then Eve”. The false teachers specifically mentioned by Paul include men, e.g. Hymenaeus, Alexander and Philetus (1 Timothy 1:19,20; 2:17; 4:14-15). This calls for careful interpretation so we are not quick to assign guilt to women.
- 2) The fact that “Adam was not deceived first...” (1 Timothy 2:14) is not relevant in deciding what women should or should not do in the Church. All are a product of Eve (male and female) and women should not be singled out. We must remember that the passage specifically addresses a particular situation at Ephesus. Moreover, Adam sinned willfully. Hence, we may assume that Paul is refuting a heresy threatening the Ephesian church. He was not issuing a command to be applied to any other church or to a particular gender without proper exegesis.

### **Exegesis of the Text within the Context**

Words have no meaning except within a context. It is obvious that, in all earthly languages, a word could have different meanings depending on how it is used. The same applies to a statement in a letter. Our target passage cannot be understood unless it is read in the immediate context of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 as well as the wider context of 1 Timothy.



1 Timothy 2:11-15 (Greek)

<sup>11</sup> γυνὴ ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ μανθανέτω ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ

<sup>12</sup> διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικί οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ ἀυθεντεῖν ἄνδρός,  
ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.

<sup>13</sup> Ἀδὰμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη, εἶτα Εὐα.

<sup>14</sup> καὶ Ἀδὰμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν παραβάσει  
λέλονεν

<sup>15</sup> σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, ἐὰν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει  
καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἀγιζσμῶ μετὰ σωφροσύνης

1 Timothy 2:11-15 (Translated)

<sup>11</sup> A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

<sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she  
must be silent.

<sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

<sup>14</sup> And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was  
deceived and became a sinner.

<sup>15</sup> But women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith,  
love and holiness with propriety. (NIV)

A survey of commentaries and Bible translations shows discrepancies  
which makes one wonder whether our target verse, 1 Timothy 2:12, has been  
mistranslated. Powers lists some translations that have changed some

singulars of the original Greek text into unexplained plural forms and added other insertions.<sup>18</sup>

*“women should listen quietly to their teachers and always show them deference. I do not consent to women becoming teachers, or exercising authority over men.” (Twentieth Century NT)*

*“I do not allow a woman to have authority over men.” (Barclay)*

*“Personally, I do not allow women to teach, nor do I ever put them in authority over men. I believe they should be quiet” (Phillips)*

*“Their role is to learn, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit women to teach or dictate to the men; they should keep quiet” (REB)*

*“I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men” (RSV)*

*“Women must be learners, quiet and submissive. I do not allow women to teach or to have authority over men; they must keep quiet” (Translator’s NT)*

Apart from these insertions and change of persons, there are suggested headings as to what this particular passage is all about:

*“Certain directions as to public worship” (Twentieth Century New Testament)*

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<sup>18</sup> Wards Powers, *The Ministry of Women in the Church*, (Adelaide: SPCKA. 1996), 33-34.

*“Church Worship” (ANB)*

*“Instructions on Worship” (NIV)*

*“Women in the Assembly” (Jerusalem Bible)*

*“Christian Conduct” (REB)*

*“Instructions Concerning Prayer” (NRSV)*

*“Women” (Beck)*

Further, some translations have inserted a church setting to the point of implying an office.

*“I do not allow women to take office as teachers, or to have the direction of men; theirs is silent service.” (Ward)*

*“A woman must listen quietly in church and be perfectly submissive; I allow no woman to teach or dictate to men, she must keep quiet” (Moffatt)*

*“Women must listen quietly in church and be perfectly submissive. I do not allow women to teach or to domineer over men. They must be quiet.” (Goodspeed, *An American Translation*)*

*“I allow no woman to teach or to have authority over men; and keep silence (in religious assemblies)” (Amplified Bible)*

*“Women should listen and learn quietly and humbly. I never let women teach men or Lord it over them. Let them be silent in your church meetings” (Living Bible)*

This presentation leads one to conclusions such as:

- 1) Translators have adjusted Paul's wording to their presuppositions.
- 2) Principles of interpretation have been violated and readers have ignored the need to examine 1 Timothy 2:12, assuming it contains statements for men and women in general.
- 3) Readers have not considered the possibility of Paul dealing with inappropriate relationships like you might find in a marriage, which could justify his use of singulars in this passage and not the one before.
- 4) The assumption that Paul lacked the words or made an omission, hence he should be rescued with some insertions, lacks justification.

This persistent disharmony among the translation and the understanding of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 calls for an exegesis of the same within its context. This passage has suffered abuse and misuse in the hands of scholars and believers. It has been used to oppress women in their endeavors even outside the church. In this respect, the title the Kroegers have given to their work, Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence, is thought provoking. It suggests interpreters of this text have not given attention to some evidence. The passage in question has been used widely and authoritatively to answer the question "should women be preachers and leaders in the Church today"? We can only get the right answer by first exegeting the text.

1 Timothy 2:11 (Greek)

<sup>11</sup> γυνὴ ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ μανθανέτω ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ

1 Timothy 2:11 (Translated)

“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission” (NIV)

The command in this verse is for a woman “to learn”. Ancient evidence indicates that anyone who gained knowledge did so by learning, even the great rabbis. The Greek noun “ὑποταγή” from the verb “ὑποτασσομαι” usually is translated “submit” or “be subject”. As a noun, “ὑποταγή” is used in the passive sense in 1 Timothy 2:11; 2 Corinthians 9:13; Galatians 2:5; 1 Timothy 3:4 and can be translated “subjection”, “subordination”, or “submission”<sup>19</sup>. “It was the duty of the Learner”<sup>20</sup> to learn in attentiveness or silence, which does not mean without speaking. Fee interprets this as “quiet demeanor” and continues to caution that it is not necessarily subjection, subordination, submission or any term of inferiority. In this context, we must consider the learning situation.<sup>21</sup> There is no better way of expressing the submission of a learner to a tutor than using the word “attentiveness”.

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<sup>19</sup> R.T. France argues in *Women in the Church Ministry*, (Leicester: Paternoster Press, 1995), 33-34, that “ὑποτασσομαι” is prominent in the New Testament. A more etymological translation might be ‘to order oneself under’ since the root from “ὑποτασσομαι” is derived from the verb “τασσω” and the noun “ταξίς” and is concerned with “order”. It is the Greek middle voice which regularly carries a reflexive sense. Although etymology is not necessarily a true guide to usage, in this case wider use of related terms in the New Testament reveals a wide ranging concept of an ‘order’ which God has designed for human society at many levels, within which it is appropriate that we each find our role. It is within this overarching concept of ‘order’ that the injunctions to ‘submit’ find their place. . . The idea of ‘submission’ applies not only to women. The verb is used to describe the Christian’s proper attitude to political authorities (Romans 13:1,5; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2-13) and Paul, in Romans 13:1-2 brings together an impressive collection of cognate terms reinforcing the idea of a God given society. (‘be subject’ is “ὑποτασσομαι”, ‘instituted’ is “τασσομαι”, ‘resists’ is “αντιτασσομαι” and appointed represents the cognate noun “διαταγή”).

<sup>20</sup> Kroeger (1992), 75-76. The authors argue that the words “silence” and “submission” are a Near Eastern formula implying willingness to heed and obey instruction. In this case, that included the word of God. The Greek speaking Jews who prepared a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible saw a remarkable correlation between “silence” and “submission”.

<sup>21</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 72.

This learning situation leads one to conclude that, for anyone to learn, he/she has to attentively do so. This, in turn, can be translated as “they have to submit to the teacher, otherwise they will not learn”. If we are to offer an alternative translation for verse 11, it may be as follows:

*“A woman should learn in quietness/silence and full attentiveness”.*

Following the religious situation at Ephesus, we note that Paul is right to give instruction on how Christian women should behave; not as the goddess mother cults taught, but as people who can be taught and receive what is said. Kasemann goes further to note a difference of the word “silence” used here and elsewhere in the epistles. In 1 Corinthians 14, “σιγα” is “silence”, which means “making no sound”. However, in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, another Greek term, “ἡσυχία”, is used which does not translate well into English. It means “calmness”, “peacefulness”, “quietness”.<sup>22</sup>

An argument along this line, then, reminds us to consider the context of a learning situation in verse 12 since the infinitive “διδάσκειν,” “to teach,” has no object. So our question would be “teach what?” It would seem to be “teach sound doctrine,” which can only be acquired through attentive learning. The Greek text has “γυνῆ” which is singular, meaning “woman.” Paul has changed from the plurals of verses 8 and 10 in such a way that his singular uses for Adam and Eve in verses 13-15 do not contradict or go beyond the boundaries of the context.<sup>23</sup> Ancient evidence establishes that it was not ordinarily within

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<sup>22</sup> Ernst Kaseman, *Commentary on Romans*, (London: SCM Press, 1980), 195.

<sup>23</sup> Powers argues in *The Ministry of Women in the Church* (35) that if Paul were referring in vv 11-12 to the relation of men in general to women in general, the continuation of the use of plural from vv. 8-10 would be expected and fitting. But if he were intending to speak of aspect of what is appropriate and inappropriate in the relationship of a wife and a husband, the way to do so would be by using the singular in referring to each of the parties

the Jewish and Greek tradition to teach women. There was a great reluctance in teaching women, apart from the exceptional case.<sup>24</sup> Such cases were quite rare in view of the fact that Jewish men believed women to be inferior and would not normally teach the Law to a woman.<sup>25</sup> It must be a surprise to those today who misinterpret Paul in this text when, contrarily, Paul advocates that women too can learn, for he is contradicting the traditional point of view.

Verse 12 gives us the reason why women should learn, yet it is phrased as a prohibition.

*"I do not permit (I am not permitting) a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."*

Consequently, I do not agree with Knight who seems to interpret "silence" as "not speaking" and argues that women should not participate in a male congregation. He goes further to politely mention that women can learn, but not be filled with the desire to teach. However, this is just within Knight's context in determining the irrelevancy of the verse regarding the liberation of women.<sup>26</sup> We still do not see how the desire to teach is prohibited in this verse. It is irrelevant to use the verse to determine women's participation in church preaching and leadership. There is need to point out that the background (cultural as well as religious and the linguistic factor) must be

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of the marriage. Exactly, in fact, as occurs in vv. 11-12. . . ." This is a possibility worth consideration before making conclusions.

<sup>24</sup> In *I Suffer Not A Woman* (75), Kroeger mentions that "Bervian, a second century woman was famed for her erudition in the Torah..."

<sup>25</sup> John Temple Bristow says in *What Paul Really Said About Women*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988), 70, "Jewish men regularly thanked God in their prayers for not making them women. Women were not supposed to be taught the law. A Jewish man would rather have the scroll of Torah burnt than hear it from the lips of a woman. Only the minority girls got synagogue education. . . ."

<sup>26</sup> George Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 138-140.

carefully considered lest one apply an incorrect interpretation. Otherwise we miss the point of hermeneutics.

1 Timothy 2:12 (Greek)

<sup>12</sup>διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικί οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός,  
ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.

1 Timothy 2:12 (Translated)

<sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.” (NIV)

For the second verse running, Paul uses singular “woman” which makes one wonder why scholars want to correct him by changing this to plural “women.” Translators must change with Paul, as he does, from the plural in verses 8-10 to the singular in verses 11-15, which leads them to conclude that it is a universal prohibition to all women. Otherwise, we would be arguing on a different context which seems to be followed by Knight,<sup>27</sup> leading to misinterpretation.

Διδάσκειν” – “to teach” or “to instruct” is one of the key infinitive verbs in this verse. When “διδάσκειν” is used elsewhere, it has an object. This object is usually the subject matter or content to be taught. In 1 Timothy 1:3-4, the object of “διδάσκειν” is “another doctrine”. In 1 Timothy 4:11, it is “these things.” We notice that such an object is missing in 1 Timothy 2:12. If we were to have a sentence structure or a grammatical diagram... “a woman to

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<sup>27</sup> In *The Pastoral Epistles* (139), Knight thinks that women are to do nothing with what they learn and quoting Conte Babylonai Talmud Hagiga 3a says “The men come to learn, the women come to hear. . .”



teach” (v12) would correspond to “a woman should learn” (v11).<sup>28</sup> In this case, the conclusion is that a woman must first learn attentively, then she can teach (sound doctrine). Otherwise she must not teach as her content of teaching is heresy which is not worth teaching. Paul also reminds us that the problem of heretical teaching was not in any way gender confined but the men were in error also. He actually mentions them by name, “Hymenaeus, Alexander and Philetus” (1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2:12; 4:14-15). It is even common sense that everyone allowed to teach in the church today must first be taught. One must be teachable before they can become teachers themselves. Bad students cannot make good teachers. It seems that readers have focused on women to the point of missing the key principle being taught in these verses. Many have quickly linked this to an office in the Church.

Kasemann explains why many commentaries have associated “teaching” with an office. He says that teaching is an activity involving personal direction and exercise. The student acknowledged a teacher’s authority. It is a general feeling that Scripture views teaching primarily as a governing function performed by elders, masters and others in a position of authority. In this context then, the connection between teaching, exercising authority and being subordinate can be seen more clearly. We need to ask two questions in connection to what Paul is teaching in verses 11-12. “Is he implying that women should not take an official leadership position in the Church”? “If teaching implies office, why would any Christian have a problem with being taught sound doctrine by a woman who is well trained”?

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<sup>28</sup> Fee argues in *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (72-73) that “teaching of course is where much problem lay in the church in Ephesus . . . then it is probably because some of

“Αυθεντεῖν” is the mysterious verb translated by many scholars as “to have authority over.” It is an infinitive which is compounded with “διδασκεῖν” Paul seems to have deviated from his usual term for authority, “ἐξουσία” referring to the normal use of authority. This choice of word raises our curiosity. Research has even proved that “αυθεντεῖν” only occurs once in the New Testament (i.e. 1 Timothy 2:12) and is never used in the Septuagint. Therefore, there is no scriptural background for interpreting the meaning of the word “αυθεντεῖν”.<sup>29</sup> Does this then imply that interpretation is without restriction? If we are intent on seeking the goal of hermeneutics, which is edification, it stands to reason that we should rethink our exegesis of this word, particularly, in line with the context at hand.

This verb “αυθεντεῖν” can be explained by the presence of goddess worship in Ephesus which flourished there. We must then look for an appropriate contextual meaning. There are several options here. “Αυθεντεῖν” can mean “usurping authority,” “demanding or claiming as one’s own,” “dominating or proclaiming.”<sup>30</sup> The same word is used to mean sexual aggression and murder. While this translation seems totally unrelated in our context, the significance is worth noting. It signified a cruel, hostile attitude. Clark gives us the possibilities that this

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them have been so terribly deceived by false teachers who are especially abusing the Old Testament.”

<sup>29</sup> Ernst Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans*, (London: SCM Press, 1980), 197.

<sup>30</sup> Philip Towner in *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 77, argues that “αυθεντεῖν” carries a negative connotation such as “to usurp or misappropriate authority” or “to domineer”. The unusual term signifies an uncommon situation. In the Ephesian’s context at least, women had misappropriated authority by taking upon themselves the role of a teacher without the accepted training.

- 1) forbids a woman's exercise of authority over man with possible implications that she is usurping authority.
- 2) forbids a woman to exercise authority over man only when she usurps that authority or exercises it in an arbitrary or domineering way.
- 3) is a prohibition of wrongful use of authority over men, not a complete prohibition of woman's authority over men.
- 4) is a prohibition against wealthier women who thought social status guaranteed them church leadership. Also a bossy and domineering woman in whose houses the Church was meeting, or women who were publicly demeaning their husbands.
- 5) is a prohibition against untrained or ungifted women attempting to act as teachers.<sup>31</sup>

If we believe that Paul was combating the teaching of heresy at Ephesus which seemed to promote women at the expense of God's truth then we can draw some conclusions from the possible interpretations.

- 1) Social status does not automatically qualify a woman to teach in church. She must first learn.
- 2) If any woman should assume she has authority to teach based on the teachings of the mother goddess cult she is misappropriating authority.
- 3) The act of teaching must seriously consider the content taught as impacting knowledge implies change of character.

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<sup>31</sup> Stephen Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scriptures and Social Sciences*, (Michigan: Servant Books, 1980), 66.

This line of argument smoothly leads us on to verse 13 which states “for Adam was formed first then Eve.” Contrary to the teaching of the mother goddess cult (that woman is the source of all fertility, hence life and death), is the Biblical teaching that Eve came from Adam (Genesis 2:21-23). Eve, then, cannot have given Adam life because Adam was created first. Consequently, Paul had no alternative than to combat a heresy, which was probably promoted by women influenced by the worshippers of Artemis. The Gnostic myths also glorified Eve and the serpent. Paul wants the women to adopt a calm, quiet, peaceful spirit and learn. As a result, he appropriately ends verse 12 with “ἡσυχία” which is translated “silent” as in “quiet demeanor,” not “without speaking”.

Others see in this the situation of husband and wife. However, the problem comes when we need to decide the situation. Is it home or assembly? The command to learn applies to women in general, therefore attentiveness also applies to women in a narrow and wider sense. Relating verse 12 to 13-14 and the religious situation at Ephesus also becomes complicated.

1 Timothy 2:14 (Greek)

<sup>14</sup> καὶ Ἀδὰμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν  
 παραβάσει γέγονέν

1 Timothy 2:14 (Translated)

<sup>14</sup> And Adam was not the one deceived, it was the woman who was  
 deceived and became a sinner.” (NIV)

Paul, again, appeals to the historical facts in Genesis 3. Paul may have been reminding the Ephesian women that the glorification of woman is

uncalled for. A woman is as much a sinner as a man. As a matter of fact, she sinned first. However, this verse cannot answer the question of women as preachers or leaders in the Church for the obvious reason that man also sinned willfully. If either of them intends to lead or preach, they must be credible. Both are equally sinful and equally need a Saviour. Therefore, we must take this statement in its context.

The Kroegers explore the myths that surrounded Eve, shedding more light on the argument in verses 13-14.<sup>32</sup> This ancient evidence cannot be ignored if our interpretation of these verses is to make sense. If we were to rephrase Paul, we could probably put it this way. *'People of Ephesus! Before you promote Eve and violate the teaching of Genesis, I need to bring to your attention that not only was Eve the first to eat the forbidden fruit; but that Adam was around before Eve. She was, in fact, created out of Adam. So where is your argument in promoting her, and subsequently women in general, above men? Think again! You are distorting the teachings of the Scriptures.'* "Hence, these verses should be understood as an orthodox refutation of gnostic-like mythology about the origin of man."<sup>33</sup>

1 Timothy 2:15 (Greek)

<sup>15</sup> σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, εἰάν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἀγιζομῶ μετὰ σωφροσύνης

1 Timothy 2:15 (Translated)

<sup>15</sup> But women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety." (NIV)

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<sup>32</sup> Kroeger, 119-120.

This verse sounds inconsistent with the evangelical view of the doctrine of salvation. According to Ephesians 2:8-9, “for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not by works so that no one can boast.” Childbearing is an act of “works” and cannot bring about salvation for anyone. So then, what is Paul saying? Is there a special reference here? One suggestion is that it refers to “Mary and the birth of Christ presenting her as the good example compared to the Ephesian women”<sup>34</sup>. However, the context does not imply this and we should explore other options. For instance, another opinion suggests that part of the gnostic idea at Ephesus was that if “Jesus Christ comes to do away with the works of the female, then bringing a child into the world...was one with serious spiritual repercussions.”<sup>35</sup> Yet a third suggestion denies a woman her sexuality, saying she cannot find eternal life until first she surrenders her femaleness. Gnosticism encouraged women to “flee from the bondage of femininity and to choose for themselves the salvation of masculinity.”<sup>36</sup>

This being the background, we must be careful to look at the text. The Greek preposition translated “through” has other meanings. It could also mean “during” childbirth referring to that time during childbirth, a mother will be safe.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.; In discussing this, they remind us that the Greek preposition “through childbirth” is “διὰ” (dia) with a genitive case... It may have the sense of “during”, “throughout” or “within an attendant circumstance.”

Therefore, this may be suggesting that Paul was correcting an error of gnostic beliefs and affirming that a woman can attain salvation “within childbearing functions” or while she still possesses her femininity with a capacity to bear children. If this is the case, the Apostle Paul is affirming what is consistent with the teaching of Scripture, that salvation is available for both male and female. God created the female as female and He accepts her as female and offers salvation to her as female. Whatever the Ephesians believed sounds like a special punishment to women and grace is no longer a fact. Paul may also have been guaranteeing them safety in childbirth.

### **A Synthesis of the Findings**

A few irregularities in translating 1 Timothy 2:11-15 cause concern. The alterations represented by “woman” to “women” and “man” to “men” bring into question the original meaning of the text. The insertions represented by “Church”, “church meetings”, “religious assembly” and “take office” call for an explanation. Translators and commentators seem to be in a hurry to correct Paul, otherwise they would not have altered his use of the singulars. The commentators also seem to prefer inserting the situation of office and church in the words of Paul without a clear justification.

It is clear that Paul was writing within a culture, which had its reservations regarding women. This belief permeated not only the interactions within the church; but all relationships, including marital relationships. Therefore, there is a need to see the passage the way the recipient(s) understood it before drawing conclusions as to the principle.

Our findings lead us to the following conclusions. The fact that Paul commanded woman to learn is not out of the ordinary. Ancient evidence

establishes that anyone who gained knowledge did so by submissive learning. Even the great rabbis had to be attentive in their learning. Hence, submission implies attentiveness. The use of a singular for 'man' and 'woman' as opposed to the previous verses 8, 9 and 10 agrees with the use of the names Adam and Eve in verses 13-14. Another possibility is that translators who change the singular 'man' to 'men' or 'woman' to 'women' in verse 12 take the singulars as generic. Hence this justifies the change from singulars to plurals.

When Paul says he "permits no woman to teach or have authority over men", this does not necessarily give room for translators to insert "office". It is not there. The fact that "the act of teaching" almost always implies an office may not necessarily be the case here. The meaning of "αυθεντειν" must be explored first. Although we have seen that it has a range of meanings, the underlying fact is the idea of a crude, hostile attitude. This, applied to the context, leads us to choose meanings like "usurping authority", "demanding or claiming as one's own", "dominating" or "proclaiming". Woman, then, is being prohibited from misusing authority to the point of proclaiming herself the source of man. This would be inconsistent with the teaching in Genesis 2:22, "then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man." Therefore, Paul may be prohibiting a heretical teaching, which was a result of the religious situation at Ephesus and had penetrated to the church. He commands woman to learn so that, if she must teach, it will be sound doctrine. If the heretical teaching we are dealing with here is the fact that women proclaimed themselves "owners of fertility" and the source of men, then verse 13 makes a lot of sense, "for Adam was formed first then Eve". The fact that Ephesians believed their mother goddess was the source of fertility implied



that Eve was the source of Adam. The worship and glorification of women at Ephesus must have led Paul to remind them that "Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman..." (verse 14). Paul's purpose was to bring the Christian women back to the proper theological teaching. However, Paul does not leave it unbalanced, and in verse 15, he refutes another heresy against the femininity of women. Giving them hope of safety during childbearing and placing them at the same point with men by teaching the women can be saved (as in salvation) even when they retain their capacity to bear children. In this way Paul removed the hindrance to salvation that had been put on women.

What then are the timeless principles in this passage? If one will teach, he/she must first learn in attentiveness. If one will not learn, h<sup>e</sup>/she is not sure of the subject and may be misappropriating the authority of the context. Whatever one teaches (content) must be consistent with the rest of the scriptural teaching. Any teaching in conflict with Scripture is heresy. It must be refuted. This passage, therefore, does not answer the question as to whether women can be church leaders and preachers in the church; rather, it teaches how one is to do what one is supposed to do. Otherwise, as Payne puts it, we would be falling into "exegetical and logical weakness."<sup>38</sup> A look at other Pauline passages related to women shed more light as to why 1 Timothy 2:12 is an irrelevant verse to use in deciding whether women should be preachers or leaders in the church. The following chapters give us those findings.

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<sup>38</sup> Phillip R. Payne, "Libertarian Women in Ephesus: A Response to Douglas Moo's Article, '1 Timothy 2:11-15 Meaning and Significance,'" *Trinity Journal*, 2 (Fall 1981): 169.

## CHAPTER THREE

### EXAMINATION OF SELECTED WOMEN-RELATED PASSAGES

#### The Teaching of Romans 16:1-7

##### Romans 16:1 (Greek)

<sup>1</sup>Συνίστημι δὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὖσαν [καί] διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κενχρεαῖς, . . .

##### Romans 16:1 (Translated)

<sup>1</sup>I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea....(NIV)

Romans 16:1-7 is well titled “Personal Greetings” in a majority of the commentaries and Bibles because that is what it is. At the end of his letter, Paul writes a long list of specific people. These people are given a brief description as to who they are in relation to Paul. In this thesis, we are concerned with some of the women and the description Paul gives of them.

In 16:1-2 Paul mentions Phoebe whom he commends to the believers in Rome. He calls her “our sister” and, as Stott comments, “it is no slight thing to be called the sister of Paul.”<sup>39</sup> Paul describes her as a “διάκονος” which is translated as “a servant” and qualified by “of the church in Cenchrea”. Translators have a difference of opinion as to the status of Phoebe. Fitzmyer explains that “διάκονος” may designate her generally as an ‘assistant’ or

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<sup>39</sup> John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans*, (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 393.

‘minister’ in the church; or specifically as a ‘deacon’ a member of a special group in the church. He goes on to explain that in the Greek-Roman world, “διακονος” denoted a waiter at table, a royal servant, or even a holder of a religious (non-Christian) office.<sup>40</sup> Moo argues that Phoebe is more than an ordinary believer. She is a ‘servant’ or ‘deacon’ and the qualification of “διακονος” by the phrase “of the church” suggests more certainly that Phoebe held the office of a deacon in the church at Cenchrea.<sup>41</sup> Although the Church is in its infancy, the office of deacon is already being developed and there is no evidence of the disqualification of women per se, based on what we learn of Phoebe in this passage.

It is also important to note that the Greek word “διακονος” in reference to Phoebe is not feminine. Thus, the distinction of “deacon” and “deaconess” does not exist here. In fact, this distinction does not appear at all in the New Testament.<sup>42</sup> From Paul’s description and commendation of Phoebe as a “servant of the church in Cenchrea” and “our sister” who should be treated “worthy of the saints”, one can recognize the integrity of Phoebe as a leader in the church at Cenchrea. This might as well refer to the office, making “a deacon of the church at Cenchrea” accurate when referring to Phoebe.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans*, vol. 3. (New York: Double Day Publishers, 1993), 729.

<sup>41</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 914.

<sup>42</sup> 1 Timothy 3:11; Philippians 1:1.

<sup>43</sup> In *The Ministry of Women in the Church* (161), Powers quotes the church father, John Chrysostom in his commentary on this verse (5498) as saying, “Paul has added to his comment about Phoebe her rank by mentioning her being “deaconess”; that is, Chrysostom regards Paul’s comment as meaning that Phoebe holds formal office in the church as a “deaconess”. She is the bearer of Paul’s letter to the Romans; she is commended as one who has been of significant help to Paul personally, and to many others. She is committed by Paul to the care of the Roman church who are formally asked to see to all her needs.” All this, together with the formal way in which she is stated here “to be a *diakonos of the church in Cenchrea*, strongly indicates that Chrysostom is correct in his understanding of the

Phoebe must have been a highly credible member of the ministry to be recognized like this and Paul, in using such a description, gives dignity to Phoebe in her acknowledged position.

To quote Murray: "in any case Phoebe is one of the women memorialized in the New Testament by their devoted service to the gospel."<sup>44</sup> She was honoured for what she did as a minister in the church. Therefore we should not discredit Phoebe's ministry simply because one might think a woman could not have been the leader she seems to have been commended as being. Romans 16:1 is one clear reference in the New Testament to the use of "διακονος" as referring to a female minister. The Roman culture was, in itself, very liberating to women. In discussing this, Bristow says that the Romans cherished a woman as her husband's companion and co-operator. She accompanied him on outings and social affairs, even dining in public. Women of the upper class were allowed to organize meetings and pursue academic studies. The influence of the Isis Cult, brought to Rome from Egypt, had a strong impact on these women. They would gather together and were taught to say (to her goddess), "who gavest to woman the same power as to men."<sup>45</sup>

The reader may have to understand that the Egyptian society was quite equalitarian. Women had equal rights with men and they retained these rights even in marriage. Herodotus, an Athenian visiting Egypt, had this to say, "The

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meaning of the term and that Paul's description is a reference to her office of "deaconess" in the church. . . ."

<sup>44</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), 227.

<sup>45</sup> John Bristow, *What Paul Really Said About Women*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988), 12.

Egyptians themselves in manners and customs seem to have reversed the ordinary practice of mankind. For women attend markets and are employed in trade while men stay at home and do the weaving.”<sup>46</sup> This is the kind of influence that the Roman’s view of women had undergone. The Roman world was influenced by the Egyptians, although they employed Greeks to teach their children. They were between two worlds. This information plays a vital part in our interpretation.

Paul not only commends Phoebe, but he proceeds to send his greetings to another notable woman in verses 3-4. He says, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.” Priscilla is always mentioned together with her husband Aquila in ministry. There is no single instance where Aquila receives mention alone. Even when the Scriptures refer to their home, they use the plural. These two exercised a teaching ministry. According to Acts 18:26, Apollos (a Jew) taught boldly about Jesus. However, he only knew the baptism of John. It is Priscilla and Aquila who, having heard him, took him aside and “explained to him the way of God more adequately”. This implies that Priscilla and Aquila were knowledgeable. According to 1 Corinthians 16:19, their ministry was not limited to this incidence inasmuch as they had a church meeting in their home. They were obviously actively involved in its ministry. The fact that Paul acknowledges their ministry in Romans 16:3-4 teaches us that. Priscilla and Aquila were proven teachers of the word (very sound teaching), leaders of the church and fellow colleagues of Paul in ministry in a wider sense. Paul

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 10.

mentions these two in again in Acts 18:23; 1 Corinthians 16:19 and 2 Timothy 4:19. Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned equally. The argument is that Paul mentions many men without mentioning their wives, so Priscilla must have played a very key role in ministry. Most of the time, Priscilla is mentioned first. The two are recognized officially as leaders of a church and as reputable teachers. Their ministry was accepted as without flaws. Is it not possible then, to have women qualified, as in the case of Priscilla, to preach and lead in the Church of Africa today?

In Romans 16:7, Paul greets Andronicus and Junias and describes them as “my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.” The two are mentioned together, probably as husband and wife.<sup>47</sup> Junias is also a feminine name, although Hendriksen offers a possibility of it being masculine.<sup>48</sup> Stott explains that, in the Greek sentence, the second name is Iouinian, which could be the accusative of either Junias (masculine) or Junia (feminine). Commentators are agreed that the latter is much more likely to be correct in that the former name is unknown elsewhere. Perhaps, then, Andronicus and Junia were married; a couple about whom Paul tells us four things: As Jews, they are his kinsmen; they have, at some point, been his fellow prisoners; they were converted before he was; and they are outstanding among the

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<sup>47</sup> Roy A. Harrisville in *1 Corinthians*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 251, mentions that the ancient church regarded them as man and wife.

<sup>48</sup> William Hendricksen, *Introduction to the Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 505.

apostles.<sup>49</sup> Together with Andronicus, she is described as "outstanding among the apostles". "Apostles" here is used in a wider sense than the twelve original apostles, including other preachers of the Gospel who are recognized by the churches.<sup>50</sup> The implication is that these two were outstanding apostles and whatever they did in ministry was accepted without question. In fact, Junia as an apostle may have done all that Paul did as an apostle. Inasmuch as the church was still developing and there was a great need to "separate the sheep from the goats", it was exceptional for anyone to receive such a commendation in the early church. Andronicus and Junias appear to have had a clear and firm stand as far as the gospel and ministering were concerned. Not only were they apostles, but they were described as being "outstanding".

From Romans 16:1-7 we note that women in the church were recognized in a ministry capacity as either leaders or preachers. In this particular context, Paul has nothing to refute, but only commends these women, their capacity as ministers, leaders and apostles for the good work done and recognizing it as unto the Lord.

### **The Teaching of 1 Corinthians 11:5**

#### 1 Corinthians 11:5 (Greek)

<sup>5</sup> πᾶσα δὲ γυνὴ προσευχομένη ἢ προφητεύουσα ἀκατακαλύπτῳ τῆ κεφαλῇ καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῆς· ἐν γὰρ ἐστὶν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τῆ ἐξυρημένη.

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<sup>49</sup> John Stott, *The Message of the Romans*, (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 396.

<sup>50</sup> Acts 14:4, 14; 1Thessolonians 2:7

1 Corinthians 11:5 (Translated)

<sup>5</sup> And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head-it is just as though her head were shaved. (NIV)

This passage is in the context of 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, implying that women may pray and prophecy in public;<sup>51</sup> however, not in a way that dishonors their head (husband, in the figurative sense) by uncovering the head (in the literal sense).<sup>52</sup> Generally speaking, whenever this passage is discussed, people seem to note the head covering but not the praying and prophesying. The Corinthian cultural background of the day assumed that a woman exposing her hair had loose morals and was sexually promiscuous. Paul is saying she might as well have her hair cut or shaved off completely. In the context of verses 3-6, Fee argues that “from the metaphorical use of ‘head’ that the man would shame his head if he were to have (something) hanging down the head and the opposite for a woman.”<sup>53</sup> Powers’ opinion is that

The only difference marked by the apostle was that the man had his head uncovered because he was the representative of Christ. The woman had hers covered because she was placed by the order of God in a state of subjection to the man. It was also a custom among the Greeks and Romans that no woman should be seen abroad without a veil. For the Jewish woman, it was the law. This was, and is, a common custom throughout the East and none but public prostitutes go without veils. Also, if a woman should appear in public without a veil, she would dishonour her “head” which was recognized as being her husband.<sup>54</sup>

From this explanation, it is possible that only immoral or immodest women in the society went out publicly without an appropriate head covering.

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<sup>51</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:13

<sup>52</sup> Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1977), 543.

<sup>53</sup> Gordon Fee, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 491.

<sup>54</sup> Powers, 74.



“It is just as though her head were shaved” (11:5b). “An adulteress (and sometimes a woman guilty of other faults) could have her head shaven.”

Therefore, in this context, a woman who did not have her head covered placed herself in the same class as a woman who had been shaven, i.e. immodest and immoral.

Powers suggests that, after salvation, women might have thrown off the veil as a sign of liberation and that this could have been interpreted as being “free and easy” by the society.<sup>55</sup>

In 1 Corinthians 11:15 Paul does not mention “veil” but uses “covering”, “περιβραλαιον” (wraparound) which could be translated shawl. It is suggested that he is referring to the hairstyle. This could also indicate that “covering” refers to hair which is not piled high on the head. It would seem Paul is advocating that “uncovered” refers to “loosed hair”, which Fee says would bring difficulties, and wonders

- 1) How will the uncovering of man be opposite to this in verse 7? Will it mean that a man should have piled up hair, since verse 7 says “A man ought not to cover his head since he is the image and glory of God...”
- 2) How the long hair of verse 15 serves the purpose of a shawl or wraparound?
- 3) How one would reconcile the fact that there is no absolute evidence of long hair in public being a disgrace.
- 4) How one would reconcile the fact that submission to the husband is modified by verses 10, 11 and 12, the context being the church.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 75.

The custom of a shaved head indicated the woman either had been publicly disgraced because of some shameful act, or was openly flaunting her independence and refusing to be in submission to her husband. Paul's message to her was: "show your respect for and submission to your husband by covering your head during public worship."<sup>57</sup> Paul's reasoning, in this instance, is in conjunction with the societal symbol of submission. If the family relationship is ruined, we have no church relationship.

It is important to note that scholars have not agreed on the significance of the covering or uncovering of the head. It is also possible that these verses have a temporary cultural significance. This argument sounds convincing because not all cultures attached any relational significance to a head covering like the Jews, Greeks and the Romans. Another option is that Paul's directive is not restricted to his time since he referred to the order of creation in 1 Corinthians 11:8, "for man did not come from woman but woman from man". Thus, women of all times should wear a head covering. Still another possibility is that of a lasting principle in the passage requiring wives, in all ways, to show respect for their husband by submitting to his authority; not merely with a particular style of attire, but by godly lives. There is still a final suggestion that these verses should not be understood as a mandate for all marriages, but as reflecting marriage relationships at that time in Corinthian history and giving a reason why women should have covered their heads.<sup>58</sup> Verses 11-12 are a

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<sup>56</sup> Fee, *Corinthians*, 521.

<sup>57</sup> NIV Study Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Corporation, 1985), 1748.

<sup>58</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:10

contrast emphasizing equality and mutual dependence between men and women who are “in the Lord”.

There is a cultural significance in this passage to the Corinthian believers. Paul seems to be saying, “whatever you do outside the church to show respect and submission to your husbands, do also within the church. For the Jew, this was unquestioned and the custom of covering the head was deep rooted in the society. Paul, therefore, is teaching a principle to be followed by Christians in order that they are not misinterpreted by their culture. He concludes by stating that “long hair is given to her (woman) as a covering” (1Corinthians 11:15). He allows the women at Corinth to keep their long hair, which then contrasts verse 7 stating that a man ought not to cover his head.

A few observations are helpful here. First, this passage is culturally inclined. Second, it is not every woman in the church who prays and prophesies that has a husband to whom she must submit outside the church. If we apply this verse today, how does it relate to single women who are gifted in ministry? Third, other cultures and/or religions require a head covering for married women as a sign of submission and sexual purity, e.g. Muslims. This does not make their women Christians, nor does it make them obedient. Therefore, if we take a head covering to be the true “uniform” for women in the church, we might be promoting a cultural aspect (which is not necessarily godly) instead of emphasizing the purity of the heart - the core for Christianity. Fourth, the fact that Paul appeals to the creation order does not make it a command. It does not mean he promotes culture at the expense of the Gospel. Therefore, if it helps one to make a point, even culturally, why not use it? However, in this case, the fact that a statement is true does not make it a

command. In fact, this verse does not say every woman must submit to every man. If we apply it to a ministry, it excludes single women in ministry today. If we take it as a command that a woman must submit to a man, are we implying that women must be unmarried to serve the church today? What about the Catholic church which requires celibacy for their male and female ministers?

Having stated these observations, there is need to affirm that good family relationships outside the church strengthen those within the church. Although the greatest argument has been on the “head covering”, our interest is in the “every woman who prays and prophesies”. It seems that Paul has no problem with a woman praying or prophesying. Neither does he criticize women for their public participation. He does show his concern for the way in which a woman exercises her public prayer or prophecy. One suggestion exploring this idea concludes that prophesying is private and it is not the same as teaching and preaching.<sup>59</sup> At this point, we need to ask, “what is the content of prophecy and how can one so thinly distinguish it from preaching?”. Prophecy, here, means “delivering a revelation or message from God”. How far in meaning is it from preaching? Wayne explains that “prophesying simply represents the activity of receiving God’s message and passing it on. Before the time the written revelation was complete, the prophet received his message directly from God. Once the writers had inscripted God’s message, the preacher, as God’s spokesman, took it from there”<sup>60</sup> This means that the Word, from which we preach today, is God’s oral message recorded.

Whatever the argument, there is one thing we do not need to solve, and that is

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<sup>59</sup> Powers, 81.

<sup>60</sup> Wayne House, “Neither . . . Male nor Female . . . in Christ Jesus,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145, no. 57 (January-March 1988): 47.

the fact, that women can pray and prophesy in public. In Joel 2:28-29, we read that even women will be bestowed with the power to prophesy by the Spirit of God in the last days. God says, "I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy." (NIV) and this prophesy is realized in Acts 2:17-18. If God includes women when he empowers his servants, who is man to deny it?

### **The Teaching of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35**

#### 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (Greek)

<sup>34</sup> αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει.  
<sup>35</sup> εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοῦς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν· αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ."

#### 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (Translated)

<sup>34</sup>Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission as the Law says.  
<sup>35</sup>If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church." (NIV)

Paul instructs the women to "remain silent in the churches". The word for silent here (σιγαω) is different from that of 1 Timothy 2:12, even in its meaning. "λαλεῖν", used negatively, means "do not utter a word(s)" or "stop talking" while the word in 1 Timothy 2:12, "ἡσυχία" means quietness. "λαλεῖν"

refers to saying something with one's mouth, while "ἡσυχία" refers to the attitude of submission. "λαλεῖν" is used as the normal word when people engage in informal conversation, chatting or babbling.

According to the Greek custom, women were expected to be private and not public; a belief that was shared by the Jews. In view of this background, it is suggested that Paul is discussing primarily the disruption of worship by women who became involved in noisy discussions surrounding speaking in tongues and prophecy. This admonition could be attributed to the possibility of men and women sitting separately. In this way, if something were said that a woman did not understand the obvious thing would be to chat amongst themselves or ask their husbands wherever they sat. This disrupted the worship and Paul felt it should stop. To that end, he urges them to remain silent. Although "λαλεῖν" has a wide range of meaning, in this case it is in the negative to maintain a peaceful worship based on the way women spoke which disturbed the worship. France, quoting Kenneth Bailey, gives the following paraphrase:

*"Women please keep silent in worship and listen to the female and male prophets. Do not interrupt them with questions, and don't talk/chat in church. If you can't understand what is being said, ask your husbands at home. They understand more Greek than you do and will be able to explain things to you."*<sup>61</sup>

In a situation like this, Paul had no alternative but to ask the women to remain silent. This does not mean women should not talk as in preaching. It

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<sup>61</sup> France, 55. The better linguistic equipment of the husband derives from the cosmopolitan nature of Corinth as a major seaport, and the frequent tendency of immigrant women to be less exposed to language than their working husbands.

means that, at this particular congregation, there was a problem, which could only be solved by asking those causing the problem to be silent. In this case, it was the women.

“Churches” in this passage may not necessarily refer to a building as Christians at this time did not have specific buildings for Christian gatherings as we have today. They met in houses (Acts 12:12; 10:40; 18:7) or halls as in Acts 19:9. Churches, as it is used in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40, refers to the people of God and, particularly, to an assembly or meeting of the people of God. Because “church” is translated from two Greek words “Ἐκ” and “καλεω” forming “ἐκκλησσια” meaning the “called out ones”, these are believers. It is in such a gathering that women should be silent, not disturbing the worship. This command does not include every other form of vocal communication. “As the law says...” Paul has been talking about order in worship in this passage. He is particularly against competition. Believers are expected to submit to one another. “All these must be done for strengthening of the church” (1 Corinthians 14:26), “should speak one at a time...” (v. 27) “...if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop.” (v.30) We have to conclude that it is the law of order which reigns in every society at all times if it is to function properly. This is not necessarily the submission of wife to husband. It is a Christian society where a believer is expected to submit to another believer in order to strengthen the Church. This means Paul’s injunction to silence for disorderliness in the church by the use of the Greek word “σιγαω” (sigao), “keep silent, be silent, stop talking” (1 Corinthians 14:28, 30, 34) are conditional not absolute. There are very clear examples from the above passage.

- 1) If someone is speaking in tongues and there is no interpreter, the speaker should “keep quiet”. (v.28)
- 2) If a revelation comes to someone sitting down, the first speaker should “keep silent”. (v.30)
- 3) If the wives want to enquire about something from their husbands, they should do so at home, not in the assembly. (v. 34)

### **The Teaching of 2 Timothy 2:2**

#### 2 Timothy 2:2 (Greek)

“<sup>2</sup> καὶ ἃ ἤκουσας παρ’ ἐμοῦ διὰ πολλῶν μαρτύρων, ταῦτα παράθων πιστοῖς ἀνθρώποις, οἵτινες ἱκανοὶ ἔσονται καὶ ἑτέρους διδάξαι.”

#### 2 Timothy 2:2 (Translated)

“<sup>2</sup> And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (NIV)

This verse is Paul’s charge to Timothy. As Paul advanced in age, it appears that he relied on the aid of his younger associates who were able to carry on the work of preaching. Timothy was one likely candidate, having been Paul’s spiritual son.<sup>62</sup> However, different translations have rendered this verse with variations such as:

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<sup>62</sup> Acts 14:6-7



*“Take the teachings that you have heard me proclaim in the presence of many witness, and entrust them to reliable people, who will be able to teach others also.” (Good News Bible)*

*“You have heard everything that I teach in public; hand it on to reliable people so that they may in turn be able to teach others.” (The Jerusalem Bible)*

*“And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (New American Standard Bible)*

*“Entrust to reliable people everything you have learned from me in the presence of several witnesses that they may instruct others.” (Christian Community Bible)*

*“Everything that you have heard me teach in public you should in turn entrust to reliable men who will be able to pass it on to others.” (Phillips)*

*“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (New King James)*

*“For you must teach others those things you and many others have heard me speak about. Teach these great truths to trustworthy men who will in then pass them on to others.” (Living Bible)*

*“And what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (Revised Standard)*

*“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (New International Version)*

These variations leave one wondering which translation is correct?

They confirm that translators have interpreted the verse differently. Exegesis of this passage might help bring understanding. “Και” comes at the beginning of verse two. It could be translated “even”, “and”, “also” or “just”. In this particular verse “and” is appropriate to act as a conjunction of verses one and two joining them as sentences. In making it a part of verse one, It also shows the appeal or request Paul is making to young Timothy.

“ἃ ἤκουσας παρ’ ἐμοῦ” *“Things you have heard from me.”* “ἃ” is a determiner. It tells us the object of “ἤκουσας”. It is the “thing” that was heard. This suggests that the “thing” that was heard must have been mentioned somewhere else in the preceding passage. A similar appeal is in 2 Timothy 2:13-14. Verse 13 talks about “sound teaching” while verse fourteen talks of “good deposit” indicating that 2 Timothy 2:2 could read, “The sound teaching you heard from me”, or “The good deposit you heard from me”. In any case, “good deposit” refers back to “sound teaching” so we will retain “sound teaching”.

When translators choose “the things”, “everything you have heard me teach”, “my teaching”, “what you have heard” or “the teachings” they are correct because everything Paul taught apparently was the true gospel. Timothy then is to take it as such.

“ἤκουσας” is from “ἀκούω” meaning “to hear”. It is aorist active indicative second person singular making it “you heard”. This culminative aorist can also be called “resultative perfective or effective.”<sup>63</sup> In this context “Timothy heard” which means that, at some point, he had listened to the

“sound teaching” taught by Paul. This is because “παρ’ ἐμοῦ” is genitive and its construction here is in the ablative of source. This means the source of the sound teaching was Paul. “διὰ” with a genitive object means “through”.<sup>64</sup> It indicates the means by which Timothy heard the sound teaching, i.e. through “many witnesses”. This leads us to the translation “from me through many witnesses”. Minor gives the following possibilities:

- 1) Timothy received Paul’s teaching indirectly through reports from others.
- 2) Paul directly taught Timothy and the word “through” means
  - a) what Paul taught Timothy was also attested to by many others.
  - b) Timothy heard the message not only from Paul, but from many others who testified to the same message.
  - c) Paul’s teaching was re-enforced by many others who testified that it was the true gospel.
  - d) Timothy heard from Paul what Paul had received from the testimony of many others, including Jesus’ personal disciples.
  - e) All the people throughout Timothy’s life who impressed the gospel truth upon him, including his mother and grandmother.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> James Brooks, *Syntax of New Testament Greek*, (New York: University Press, 1988), 100.

<sup>64</sup> J.W. Wenham, *The Elements of New Testament Greek*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 206.

<sup>65</sup> Eugene Minor, *An Exegetical Summary of 2 Timothy*, (Santa Ana, CA: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1992), 44.

From the exegesis of the passage, whatever meaning we come up with, the source of the “sound teaching” must be Paul. Three points of conclusion are therefore appropriate:

- 1) Timothy heard the “sound teaching” directly from Paul. He was, after all, Timothy’s spiritual father (Acts 14:6-7).
- 2) Timothy heard from people who had listened to Paul.
- 3) Timothy heard directly from Paul and he also heard from people who heard from Paul.

“πολλων μαρτύρων” “in the presence of many witnesses”. Whatever the occasion wherein Paul charged Timothy, others were present who heard it as well and attested that it was the truth. Those who were present are being referred to as witnesses who can bear testimony. Minor suggests that there must have been a certain occasion when Timothy was charged by Paul, possibly his ordination in view of the fact that “ἤκουσας παρ’ ἐμοῦ διὰ πολλῶν μαρτύρων” is taken in the locative sense. Others would think it was Timothy’s baptism.<sup>66</sup> The idea of many witnesses strengthens a case. It shows how true, serious and important the charge is. Timothy cannot dare to neglect such a charge.

“παράθον” is from “παρατιθημι”, which means “to commit”, “entrust”, “deposit”, “hand over”, “pass on”, “pass on to the care of”. It is aorist middle imperative, second person singular. The command is to Timothy. He must keep the chain moving. Some translations choose to use “hand on”, “entrust”, “teach”, “commit”. Many of them bring out the idea of not just passing on, but

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 45.

giving it to the next person with a note of seriousness and an assurance that the person will do the same. The command implies that Timothy has no choice, he cannot keep the message (sound teaching) to himself; (he must pass it on to others) and the sound teaching is worthy to be known and passed on by many people to others; otherwise it will be of no benefit.

“πιστοῖς ἀνθρώποις” translates “To faithful people”. Timothy will not pass the sound teaching just to any person. Paul tells Timothy to whom he shall entrust the sound teaching. Whoever it is must be “faithful”, which is also translated “trustworthy”, “reliable” and “dependable”. It is people who will pass on the message faithfully. They must be trustworthy enough to guard the teaching they receive. This implies that the end result will be a chain of “successive teachers of truth through whom the truth can be transmitted” and by whom the sound teaching will be passed on to others.<sup>67</sup>

“ἀνθρώποις” is translated “men”. This translation causes a stir among those who are patriarchal because “ἀνθρώπος” means “man” as distinct from “God”, “angel” or “animal”. It is the word for human being. It is not the same as “ἄνθρωπος” which means “male” as distinct from “female”. This implies that the sound teaching should be entrusted to reliable men and women and that there is no room for the idea that, while women can be taught, they must then only teach women. The word “ἑτεροῦς” which is “others” is masculine gender plural which, in accordance with Greek grammar, includes both sexes.<sup>68</sup>

“ἱκανοὶ” means “competent”, “able”, “qualified”, “capable” and as “ability” when used as a noun. Paul is also giving a description of these human beings

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<sup>67</sup> Powers, 107.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 108.

to which the sound teaching should be entrusted. They should be “competent”, “able”, “qualified”, “capable” or have the ability to teach others. These “others”, like Timothy, must keep the chain moving. They cannot keep the “sound teaching” to themselves.

“διδάξει” comes from “διδασκω” meaning “to teach”. It is aorist active infinitive. It means either “to instruct a person” or “to teach a thing”.

Therefore, these “others” or “reliable people” will instruct others with the sound teaching; or they will teach the sound teaching to others.

“καὶ”, in this construction should be translated as “also”, “in turn”, “in their turn” or “as well”. This does not come out clearly in most of the translations. Many choose to use “also”. However, “also” could be playing the following roles:

- 1) It adds the actions of the faithful people to the action of Timothy in that, after Timothy teaches them, they will also teach others. It states the anticipated result of committing the teaching to faithful people.
- 2) It adds the quality of competence in teaching to the quality of faithfulness, i.e. commits these things to faithful people whom, besides being faithful, are also competent to teach others. Thus it gives a second qualification.
- 3) It explains in what sense they are faithful in that they are committing these things to people on whom you can rely as having the ability to teach others.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Minor, 46.

In conclusion, “καὶ” plays a double role because of its position in the construction. It adds another quality to the people to whom Timothy is entrusting the sound teaching. It also indicates the ability of these same people to whom Timothy is entrusting the sound teaching to teach others what they have learned. Some observations will help us in drawing principles from this passage:

- 1) Both men and women should be taught. They should, in turn, be teachers.
- 2) This verse does not imply the congregation should be divided by gender in order to be taught. Those who do so because of their cultural backgrounds (or other reasons) should admit to doing so rather than declaring it to be one of Paul’s teachings.
- 3) Biblical truths must always be taught to others. Believers should not be more involved with other agendas, thereby risking the violation of a command. The task of teaching in the church must continue until Christ comes.
- 4) Time, place, gender are immaterial. Whatever teaching is passed on must be the truth and the teachers must be credible.

### **A Synthesis of the Findings**

According to the teaching of Romans 16:1-7; 1 Corinthians 11:5; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 2 Timothy 2:2, it is appropriate to conclude that we need to follow the principles of Biblical hermeneutics to avoid false conclusions from the same Bible. Our findings prove that Paul acknowledged the work done by female counterparts and could happily commend them without reservations. He also charged Timothy to pass on the valuable Biblical

teachings to entrusted people who, in turn, would teach them to others. He did not discriminate against women. He also did not say that women should teach only women. It seems that the discrepancies are from the interpretations of Paul's readers rather than his teachings. It is true that, in some circumstances Paul asked women to remain silent, but we must consider the context and exegete the passage from the viewpoint of the first hearers, not the secondary ones.

Can Paul be saying contradictory things? Can the Bible affirm opposite teachings and make them commands? Can the Bible be misleading and still be considered infallible? If the Bible cannot be consistent, we need to recheck our hermeneutics to reconcile the teaching of these crucial passages.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **RELATION OF 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15 TO SELECTED WOMEN-RELATED PASSAGES**

The selected women-related passages seem to yield some conclusions that will shed light on our understanding of 1 Timothy 2:11-15. First, it is important to remind ourselves of the significant conclusions we can draw from 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

The author instructs the woman to learn in quietness and submission. However, he also has two negative instructions; not to teach and not to have authority over a man (or her husband?).<sup>70</sup> The author goes against tradition here by instructing a woman to learn in view of the fact that very few women received an education of any sort at this point in time. The woman, however, is supposed to receive the instruction in quietness and submission as is every learner.

In considering the negative instructions, the context of the teaching is not explicit. Although we tend to apply it to pulpit preaching, we cannot prove that this is what the author intended. Our lack of understanding is also evident in our inconsistency in applying this teaching. Think for a moment. Women are allowed to be Bible or Theological School lecturers, training pastors; yet they cannot teach the same material in a church assembly! The second negative instruction concerns a woman having authority over a man or a husband. The strange Greek verb “αυθεντεω” doesn’t seem to bother scholars. However,

the real meaning could make us rethink our conclusions. If “αυθεντεω” refers to the concept of “usurping authority”, “improper authority” or “wrong attitude”, is it not time we sought the problem Paul was addressing? It sounds very specific. In the context we have two options, either of husband/wife relationships, which cannot include the whole congregation, or the abuse of authority. The underlying need here is that of correct hermeneutics.

Turning now to the teachings of the selected women-related passages, in our interpretation of Scripture, we must not only let Scripture interpret Scripture, but we must also be consistent in our teaching. If Biblical teaching contradicts itself, we must go back to our principles of interpretation to see where we went wrong. This is the case with our study. Some of the challenges we must consider include distance.<sup>71</sup> In his discussion, Klein mentions the following areas of distance.

### Time

That which exists between the ancient texts and the modern world. This presents the concept that the world today may be at a loss to understand what a text means in view of the fact that it involves subjects beyond its personal time span. This gap also involves decisive shifts, so the decades (or centuries) between events and their recording in the Biblical texts may entail changes in social, cultural, political and religious perspectives.

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<sup>70</sup> France, 63.

<sup>71</sup> William Klein, et.al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 12-16.

Cultural

In the Bible, we encounter customs, beliefs and practices that make little sense to us. For example, what does “head covering” mean today? Could it pass for a “hat”?

Geographical

Some passages would be interpreted better if we visited the places mentioned in the Bible

Language

We are unfamiliar with the literary conventions of ancient authors because we have an incomplete knowledge of the ancient languages.

In spite of these challenges, the Bible is eternally relevant. It is God’s word to His people and we would do well to find its relevance to our lives by interpreting it correctly. We must discover what God intended, avoid misconceptions or erroneous perspectives and conclusions about the Bible. We must also be able to apply the Bible’s message to our lives.

Did Paul then intend that women should always be silent in church in his teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12? That would be unlikely if we consider the teaching of 1 Corinthians 11:5 which allows a woman to pray and prophesy in public. This indicates that we must have the correct meaning<sup>72</sup> of “silence” in the context of 1 Timothy 2:12. We must distinguish between the two Greek words “λαλεῶ” which is different in meaning from “ἡσυχία”. The latter refers to attentiveness while the former has to do with opening a mouth

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<sup>72</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 87. “. . .at least to learn quietly.”

to say something. “ἡσυχία” as used in 1 Timothy 2:12 does not prohibit use of the mouth. It is describing a learning situation which must not be overlooked.

What about “not to teach or have authority over man” which, in turn, has been translated “not to preach or be a leader in the church”. First, the insertions that teaching implies office, must be justified before they can be applied. Since the text does not have this situation as the one being addressed, the opposite can be true as well. Second, there is need to reconcile this with the teachings of other Scriptures. Acts 18:19-26 bears witness that Priscilla and Aquila instructed the errant Apollos so his teaching would be more accurate. Not only that, but 1 Corinthians 16:19 and Romans 16:3 describe Priscilla and Aquila as having a church in their house; hence, fellow workers in Christ Jesus with Paul. If “to teach” in 1 Timothy 2:12 means office, then it must mean the same in the case of Priscilla. If “having authority over man” in 1 Timothy 2:12 means not being a preacher or a leader in the church, then the same must apply to Priscilla and, of course, it doesn't. Is the Bible inconsistent in its teaching? It would be a great blunder if Phoebe, in Romans 16:1-2, is not given consideration also. Paul speaks highly of her. He calls her “our sister”, “a deacon of the church in Cenchrea” and “a worthy saint”. If the church will not permit women to be church preachers and leaders as Paul has indicated they should be, then Paul is being misquoted. The church should also take Paul's positive instructions seriously, not forgetting the commendations he gives about women.

What does one do with passages like 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 where, once again, Paul is understood to condemn women to silence? This simply sends us back to principles of interpretation. There is a need to ask what was

the original intent of the author? How did the recipients understand the message? That means we must consider the background and the locality. What was going on at the time Paul wrote? For 1 Timothy 2:12, the religious situation was so heretical that Christians needed to be careful about what they taught. At the time when 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 was written, the women were disturbing the worship service with their talking. So, in the former, Paul is making an effort to stop false teaching, and in the latter, he is restoring order in the worship service. With this kind of an understanding, there need not be contradictions or inconsistencies.

To conclude this, we see that Paul is not ignorant of the cultures of his recipients. He does not want to break the natural order of either creation or community. This does not mean he sacrifices any culture for the sake of another; nor does he compromise Christian teaching for the sake of culture. However, he tries as much as possible to solve Christian problems within their cultural teachings enabling the church to stand. In the light of the passages discussed, we can say Paul:

- 1) Dealt specifically with problems in specific areas, i.e. churches.
- 2) Strongly maintained that women participate as well as men in ministry, e.g. pray, prophesy and teach.
- 3) Charged Timothy to entrust Biblical teachings only to those people (men and women) who are qualified not only to preserve the truth, but also faithful in teaching others.
- 4) Insisted that the only way of dealing with false teaching is to first learn quietly and submissively in order to teach the true doctrine in return.

- 5) Did not forbid women to participate in public as long as it was orderly.
- 6) Wrote in a time, culture and language distant from ours. That distance implies that there could be elements of interpretation we need to deal with carefully in order to apply the teaching appropriately.

This means, that whatever the disruptive, disgraceful behaviour of the wives in the Corinthian congregation was, that does not preclude all Christian women from ministering in the church, nor from active participation in the church. He argues for orderliness, which should strengthen the church. We must, therefore, understand these injunctions within their context. If 1 Timothy 2:12 was to refute heresy, then we cannot make it a command and apply it to all women of all churches and ages.

Having said this, it seems that Paul's letters have made their way into patriarchal societies who eisegete Scriptures instead of exegeting them. Men, as well as women, have constantly misinterpreted Scripture. Sometimes it's because of their cultural background. A good example would be "submission" which has always been understood to mean "timidity". Others have decided that every verse that reads "man" means "male" and women are shut out. Based on what we have learned thus far, this is incorrect. I submit that Paul is not inconsistent, nor is he a woman hater. It is his readers that major on his negative instruction and ignore the positive ones thereby making their interpretation unbalanced.

Does 1 Timothy 2:12 answer the prevalent question of whether or not women should become preachers and leaders in the church? We have

already found that this was not the original intent of the author; hence, if the church needs an answer to this question, they must look elsewhere. First the “silence” in 1 Timothy 2:12 does not refer to opening one’s mouth. It has to do with the attentiveness of a learner in a learning situation. Second, the learning situation is not synonymous with preaching and leading in the church. Third, the context of Ephesus is the background for 1 Timothy 2:12. Therefore, we must understand that context and how it affects us today. This passage does not deter God given gifts from being used in building up the church.<sup>73</sup> This should be encouraged.

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<sup>73</sup> Senavoe, Juliana, “Ministry of Women in the Church,” *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 17 (1998): 135.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

The church in Africa continues to be disunited regarding Paul's teachings on women in the church, especially in the areas of preaching and teaching. As a result, there are those who believe Paul teaches that women should not participate at all in church ministries, particularly preaching in the pulpit and eldership. Others maintain that women should participate fully while still others qualify that by saying there is a place for men and a place for women in the church ministries. What inconsistency! This clearly shows that there is more to this issue than what Paul wrote.

Some denominations actually admit that they have no Biblical basis for their stand on women's ministries. It is tradition and they want to keep it that way. Rather, for the sake of an edified church, they should allow the true teaching of God's word to take its rightful place of authority. Others will say Paul advocated that women should remain silent. It would behoove any such teacher to consider a re-examination of their hermeneutics. The researcher tends to think that believers have read their cultural biases into the Bible. No wonder the church has no consensus on what women can or cannot do. Within the church, there is no authoritative stand on the issues. The only teaching from Paul that comes out clearly, as established by this study, is that, should women teach, they must (like everyone else) be qualified to do so and faithful to teach true doctrine.



Many scholars seem to appeal to the so-called “order of nature”<sup>74</sup>; but what does this really mean? Does it mean women cannot teach or preach the Word of God? How do we tie the two together? Who is the authority on what women should or should not do in church? Has the place of women in preaching been established? Has the woman received her place as a minister, or have the men in authority denied her this position? We have seen that the story of creation has nothing to do with whether or not women should be preachers and leaders in the church. Whatever we do with women in the church should be based on sound Biblical teaching.

The church today has suffered because of this discrepancy. Her leaders would rather God’s word be entrusted to men who are lay-leaders without qualified training rather than women who have been trained specifically for the purpose of teaching and preaching. This is a direct violation of 2 Timothy 2:2 which says “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men (people) who will also be qualified to teach others”.<sup>75</sup> It is high time the church took a step forward and accepted women as fellow laborers.

### **The Implication of the Study for Today**

The Bible was originally written to and about a patriarchal society. One must be highly critical to see women included in the liberation process. Many Bible readers will be quick to notice that “Jesus had no women as disciples” and “Paul taught silence where women are concerned”, which is often taken to

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<sup>74</sup> Ironside, 69.

<sup>75</sup> NIV

mean that women have no place in leadership<sup>76</sup> and that they should not teach men in that it violates the nature structure.<sup>77</sup> Jesus and Paul have been misinterpreted. These conclusions lead to the misinterpretations of Scripture we experience in our churches today. Therefore if men would strive for liberation of humankind, they must, by the same token, do so for women. There is no difference between a racist and a sexist. We would be wise to make a most important observation of the fact that neither Jesus nor Paul discriminated against women.

The New Testament depicts Jesus as a liberator of women. In fact, the Gospel of Luke is referred to as “the gospel of womanhood’ in which almost a third of the material is dealing directly with women.”<sup>78</sup> He healed women as often as he did men. Contrary to the Jewish expectation, he allowed a woman who had a hemorrhage (considered to be unclean) to touch his clothing. Instead of rebuking her, and probably reiterating what the crowd might expect, Jesus commended her faith. “Take heart daughter . . . your faith has healed you,” (Matthew 9:22). We could go on to mention the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-15), the crippled woman (Luke 13:10-17), Jairus’s daughter (Matthew 9:18-25), the Gentile woman’s daughter (Matthew 15:21-28) or the widow’s only son (Luke 7:11-17). Unlike other rabbis, Jesus was genuinely involved with women. He talked to women in public, defended the oppressed i.e., the woman caught in the act of adultery in John 8:3-11. He allowed the “unclean” to touch him, even to the point of anointing him (Luke

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<sup>76</sup> Vickie Kemper, “Much Ado About Women,” *Sojourners*, December 1988, 4-5.

<sup>77</sup> Douglas Moo, “Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance,” *Trinity Journal* 1, no. 1 (1980): 82.

<sup>78</sup> Melanie Morrison, “The Witness of Women A Study of Life Giving Encounters in the Gospel Narratives,” *Sojourners*, July 1980, 11.

7:36-50). Jesus went against tradition and called a woman “daughter of Abraham” (Luke 13:10-17), a concept which had never existed. In the Jewish history, they had only known “son of Abraham” (Matthew 3:9; Luke 1:73, etc.). Jesus even talked to a Samaritan woman (John 8) and presented to her the gospel of salvation. This is something that a Jew could never have done, let alone a great Rabbi like Jesus. Jesus’ secondary purpose is quickly seen, in that this woman quickly spread the good news and, because of her faith, many others believed as well (John 4:42). Powers makes the comment that Jesus did the opposite of Jewish expectations.

The Jews “generally assumed women were incapable of learning religious things...their participation in public worship was limited...they did not count as part of the quorum for a congregation... they were never called upon to read lessons at Worship... They could not act as legal witnesses... they could not pronounce the blessing at meals; they were discouraged from reading the Law... In public, they were expected to be veiled; an uncovered head in public could make a woman liable for divorce. Their social relationship was confined to other women. They did not eat with male guests and men were discouraged from talking with women... Conversation with a woman in a public place was particularly scandalous, even if she was a member of one’s own family.”<sup>79</sup>

In this respect, Jesus broke the cultural sexual barriers when he spoke, healed, defended and spent time with women. He even allowed Mary, the sister of Martha, to sit at his feet for teaching. No Jewish rabbi would have used his time teaching the Law to a woman. Jesus, the greatest Rabbi, not only taught Mary at his feet, but also commended her when her sister complained at Mary’s absence in the kitchen. Jesus asserted the woman’s dignity and status.

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<sup>79</sup> Powers, 17.

Paul also allowed women to learn (1 Timothy 2:11), and to prophesy (1 Corinthians 11:5). We must, therefore, stop trying to fish for negatives from the Bible while ignoring the positives that are screaming out to all who will hear. We must agree that the Christian faith liberates women.

This study calls us to properly understand the social, cultural and historical background of 1 Timothy 2:12. It has a definite bearing on what Paul chose to write. When Paul wrote the pastoral epistles, he was not throwing his punch carelessly as one beating the air. He aimed at particular problems and wrote to solve them. We, then, must be careful not to read the Bible in single verses. Before we can apply the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12, we must ask the right questions. Why did Paul write? To whom was he writing? What was the prevalent situation he addressed? How were the recipients expected to appropriate his message? We must understand the principle before we apply it to our situation. Hence, we must deal with the following:

### Hermeneutics

Some passages of Scripture clearly teach the equality of men and women<sup>80</sup> especially in spiritual matters. These programmatic texts must be considered as a whole, not in isolation. These programmatic texts prove that there is need to search the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12 and, if the cultural and historical background leads to a prohibition, this limits our application of the same. Does this mean the text is irrelevant? This is most unlikely. The basic principle is there for the church to adapt. This verse, then, breaks cultural

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<sup>80</sup> Galatians 3:28, ". . . neither Jew nor Greek . . . male nor female . . . one in Christ Jesus." (NIV)

barriers (allowing a woman to learn) and cautions against untrained teachers as this can lead to heresy.

### Interpretation

The interpretation of this passage may result in problematic situations due to societal patterns that could have been useful in calming a disturbance in Christian circles. The household code that regulated one's behaviour could have come in handy to a writer like Paul.

This means that the form cannot apply to a different society, which does not share in the same patterns, following a particular methodology. This may mean that Paul's actual prohibition is limited to those boundaries as in the Ephesian church; for example not because of the nature of the verb "αὐθεντεῖν", but because of the specific context, that is "I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man". The fact that even the verb "αὐθεντεῖν" is strange and without a certain history may imply that readers should tread carefully in their application. They should not rush simply because it seems appropriate for their particular cultures. We can comfortably conclude that this unusual verb (and not the usual "εἰσουσιαστικῶς" [authority]), may as well suggest an unusual situation. This prohibition is also limited to particular recipients, unlike the church today. It seems to be addressing women, authority and men. It may possibly apply to the marriage relationship as well; marriage being an inner circle and the society or church the bigger circle. How does the church today stretch this to cover unmarried women who are actively involved in church ministry? Would we then need another Paul to address the singles in this matter? We need to understand Paul's original intention.

What, then, is the effect of the rationale? How does 1 Timothy 2:12 relate to verse 13-15? We have already noted that Ephesus was a dangerous place for a Christian as far as heresy was concerned and because of the mother goddess cult. The Christian women of Ephesus, may have been deceived and were involved in false teaching. As a result, these women must be prohibited from teaching unless they come to understand 1 Timothy 2:12. If this teaching is therefore limited to Ephesus, the application must be limited. Towner suggests the following areas to consider in limiting the application.<sup>81</sup>

#### *The Context of Heresy*

False teachers have emerged within the church and some of their teachings specifically target women, i.e. 1 Timothy 4:3; 5:13,15; 2 Timothy 3:6-7. Therefore, if we reconstruct the situation, it is false teaching that is being prohibited rather than teaching in general.

#### *The Social / Cultural Context*

The status of woman in the Greek culture was very low. It was a man's world and Paul was just being sensitive to a culture. This, however, depends on how one sees it. In this context, Paul commands a woman to learn which was contrary to the culture.

#### *The Broader Context of Paul's Ministry*

This seems not to support the universal application because women participated in recognizable ministry positions within Paul's ministry. In this regard, we have already mentioned Priscilla (Acts 18; Romans 16:3) and Phoebe (Acts 16:1-2) as well as others (Romans 16).

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<sup>81</sup> Towner, 5.

### Sensitivity to Culture

New Testament writers and teachers seem to have viewed their cultures with great sensitivity. For example, if a behaviour or pattern “in the world” could help enhance proper fellowship, they did not hesitate to recommend it. This does not mean that the church was to compromise its policies. Some of these patterns seem to have created a suitable ground for promoting Christian virtues, especially the household code. This means the church has to be sensitive to today’s lifestyle. Our culture has allowed women to climb the ladder outside the church and respectably so. If society hardly questions the fact that women are called to work alongside their male counterparts today, why can’t this happen within the church as well?

In a bid, therefore, to properly understand, the church needs to remember that hermeneutics leads to right interpretation and, accordingly, appropriate application. This promotes consistency in Biblical teaching, which should be the mandate of the church.

Apart from proper understanding of scriptural teaching, the general Biblical position of women does not quite tally with what has been concluded as the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:12. Women seem to participate in ministry except for specific problematic situations and this is in order. Even the Old Testament displays strong willed and capable women such as Rahab, Ruth, Tamar, Deborah, Huldah and Miriam. Proverbs 31 portrays the woman as one who tends to household chores, buys real estate, manages household staff, oversees production from a vineyard and engages in the manufacture of linen garments. In the New Testament, Jesus challenged the culture by mingling

with women, unlike other rabbis. In light of this, we need to reconsider the role of women in the church without branding “*silence*” on them.

The African culture compares well to the Greek and Jewish cultures in the area of women. A woman has to maintain an inferior role. She is not expected to participate in a conversation with men. This does not mean the stand is Biblical. If culture conflicts with the Bible, culture must yield to the higher authority of the Bible. Jesus and Paul both stood against oppressive and unjust cultural tendencies against women. Their mission was meant to destroy beliefs that discriminated against anyone sexually, economically, politically or racially. The readers of the Bible do not seem to get the point. The cultural practices have shaped people’s beliefs so strongly that Biblical teachings are misconstrued. People in the African church today behave exactly like the Greeks and Jews we see in the first century church. Some cannot envision a woman reading Scripture in church as part of the worship service, let alone preaching. They fail to see Jesus comfortably in the presence of women, meeting their theological needs as in John 4: 19-22, “Sir, I can see that you are a prophet... Believe me woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.”

The church seems to contradict itself in this area. It prays for laborers and yet when they come in the form of women, they are rejected. When the church does not reject women, it divides its ministries and places women where they may not be gifted. Some women have been asked to teach Sunday School while they lack the skill of handling children. Others have been forced into the worship leadership when they struggle to sing within the congregation. Women who can teach have been ignored because they should



be in “submission”. Unfortunately, this puts one trained in theology in an untenable position of listening to an unprepared and possibly a heretical preacher or teacher. They have been reminded that preaching implies having authority over men since it has to do with the “do’s” and “don’ts” of Christianity. These “rules” then become commands and should not be uttered by a woman. My question is, “does the woman (or the preacher) give God’s word power and authority, or is it God that empowers His word? A man does not give extra power to God’s word simply by being male. The word of God is already powerful to do its work, “for the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”.<sup>82</sup> Hence, it may simply be cultural for commands to be obeyed when issued by a man; however, the word of God should be obeyed regardless of who brings it forth.

The history of women’s effective ministry cannot go unnoticed. “Some historians suggest that modern women owed their participation to Susan Wesley’s powerful influence. John Wesley acknowledged his mother’s formative influence on him personally. He called her “a preacher of righteousness”.<sup>83</sup>

This has, however, had its own demarcation that has recurred throughout church history. Wesley is said to have allowed women to “exhort” rather than “preach”, but briefly, lest their exhortations become sermons. They were advised to call their gatherings “prayer meetings”, lest anyone think they

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<sup>82</sup> Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

<sup>83</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Women in the Church*, (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 43.

were forming a congregation with a female preacher.<sup>84</sup> These inconsistencies mean that the church must rethink its argument on women as preachers and leaders, particularly when quoting 1 Timothy 2:12.

The church still associates ordained ministry with leadership. We need to remember, however, that everyone in the ministry is expected to be a servant, not a boss. If Christ is our example of servanthood, the church has missed the mark. Servanthood in the church today seems to be synonymous with bossiness. However, our target verse, 1 Timothy 2:12, is weak in the argument of office. First because it does not mention the context as church. Second, although a teaching position carries with it some authority, the two can be separated in the church today. Someone can be allowed to teach in a church and yet not be the leader of that church. The person who teaches God's word, which is authoritative, does not himself or herself have authority over the congregation. The word of God has authority over people or one's own opinion.

Therefore, this passage alone cannot give us a strong answer as to whether women can be church leaders or not and should not be used without further support in determining a woman's place in the church. An elder commenting on this issue in Machakos, Kenya had this to say, "Amongst the Kamba community, male prophets never existed. The men were always drunk and no one could believe their prophecy. None could tell whether they were sober or under the influence of alcohol. A time is coming when women must lead the church of Christ because men are losing their credibility as leaders. They are "drunk" with money and other desires that make them unfit for the

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 43.

job. You women better get ready to lead.” Hearing this from an older person proves there is hope for women in church preaching and leadership. We might not be talking about extensive changes immediately, but the small changes are a beginning. The church in Africa, however, needs to be quick in its realization and take effective measures for the future. The church in Africa has itself to blame if it does not use the women laborers who are available. We should not join Packer in his plea, “let’s stop making women presbyters”<sup>85</sup> because, contrary to his stand, the Bible does not teach against women as preachers and leaders in the church today, or ever. The policies that are in operation today have their basis in tradition or cultural beliefs, not the Bible in general and specifically not in the context of 1 Timothy 2:12.

The church then has not done justice to the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12 and, as a result, should reconsider its application by beginning a fresh exegetical process.

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<sup>85</sup> Packer, J. I., “Let’s stop making Women Presbyters”, *Christianity Today*, February 1991, 17.

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