

# Women and ministry in the church

Resource for the Baptist Churches of New Zealand, 2017

This is a brief exegetical consideration of the ‘difficult passages’ which relate to women in ministry in the church, and some others which clearly affirm women’s significant ministry for the sake of the church; it is not exhaustive by any means. The document also does not address women in the family or home. As authors, we acknowledge the brevity of this document but pray it is helpful for the conversation within the Baptist Union of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

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## Gen 1-3

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*Dr Csilla Saysell*

The creation and subsequent account of the fall are key passages underlying much of the debate around the position of women and many NT texts that contribute to the discussion. Gen 1:27 affirms that humanity (both male and female) was created in the image of God. In the ancient Near East royalty bore the image of their god in the sense of being representatives for and ruling on behalf of the deity.<sup>1</sup> This meaning is supported in Gen 1 by the mandate given to both man and woman (‘them’ in v.28) to rule over the created world corresponding to the image of God in both.

In both Gen 1 and 2 the same terminology is used for humanity/the man (*ha-’adam*). The definite article ‘the’ (Hebrew *ha-*) indicates that this should be read as a title and not as the personal name Adam with a male-only referent.<sup>2</sup> This is even clearer from Gen 5:2, where the creation of male and female is reiterated along with the fact that God named *them* humanity (*’adam*). In Gen 2 it would be best to translate this as ‘the human’, i.e. as a representative of humanity rather than as ‘man’ since the word in English for most people has largely lost its generic sense.

The sequence of ‘the man’ being created first in Gen 2 is taken by complementarians as signifying the subordination of women under men, a recognisable pattern from ancient Near

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth A. Mathews, *Gen 1-11:26*, NAC 1A (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1996), 169.

<sup>2</sup> Richard S. Hess, “Equality with and without Innocence: Genesis 1-3,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, eds. R.W. Pierce and R. M. Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 79-95 (80); Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1 (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1987), 32.

Eastern rules of primogeniture (the rights of the firstborn),<sup>3</sup> but this is a demonstrably false conclusion. The ancient Near Eastern narrative, Atrahasis, for instance, has the woman created first, even though the account comes from a clearly patriarchal society and her prior creation does not indicate a superior position.<sup>4</sup> Within the biblical context, the man's prior creation (Gen 2:7) and the woman's origin from man (vv.21-22) are appropriately balanced by all humans (thereby all men) being born of women (Gen 3:20) indicating interdependence rather than hierarchy.<sup>5</sup> Further, God consistently subverts the human system of primogeniture throughout Genesis (e.g. 17:18-19; 25:23; 48:18-19) severing any connection between sequence of birth and supremacy.<sup>6</sup>

It is also sometimes argued that naming symbolises a person's power and authority over another (hence the woman, who is named by the man is under his authority).<sup>7</sup> However, the naming of children in the OT is variously performed by the father (Gen 21:3 – Isaac), both parents (Gen 25:25 – Esau), or by the mother (Gen 29:32, 33, 34, etc. – Jacob's sons). Surely this cannot mean that Jacob's sons were all under their mothers' authority but not Jacob's. Rather, naming sometimes highlights a person's destiny, the circumstances of the birth, or a personal characteristic thereby demonstrating some understanding of an individual's nature.<sup>8</sup>

In Gen 2 naming is done in the context of God's statement that 'it is not good for the human to be alone' (v.18). As God brings the animals to him in response, the naming becomes part of the discernment process whereby the nature of these creatures is evaluated leading to the conclusion that they are not suitable partners for the human being (v.20).<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the woman's creation evokes a cry of delight that her nature is essentially his, expressed playfully in the name *'ish* (man) and its female form *'ishah* (woman) in v.23.

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. Thomas R. Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15: A Dialogue with Scholarship," in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, eds. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 85-120 (106-107). Schreiner affirms the ontological equality of men and women in theory, though his argument that their distinct roles require women to submit to the headship of men does create hierarchy in practice.

<sup>4</sup> Hess, "Equality," 85. Atrahasis is a creation and flood narrative for which we have manuscript copies from 17<sup>th</sup> century BC. For reference, Abraham probably lived around 1800 BC.

<sup>5</sup> A point picked up by Paul in 1 Cor 11:11-12.

<sup>6</sup> Hess, "Equality," 84.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 70.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Gen 25:26 – Jacob means 'heel/cheat', which expresses both the circumstances of his birth (he grabbed his brother's heel to get out first) and a character trait of tenacity as well as deviousness. Gen 17:15 is an example of God indicating Abraham's destiny in his new name (Ab-raham = father of many).

<sup>9</sup> Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976), 65.

The symbolism of the woman being created out of the man's side (i.e. not from a higher or lower body part) suggests again a lack of hierarchy.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, the woman's description as 'helper corresponding to him' (*'ezer kenegdo*) cannot imply subordination because 'helper' (*'ezer*) mostly describes God himself or his help (e.g. Exod 18:4; Psalms 20:2; 121:1-2, etc).<sup>11</sup>

Gen 1-2 then presents the man and the woman as equals, co-rulers over creation. A key consequence of the Fall for the relationship, however, is set out in Gen 3:16 the woman's desire and the man's rule. Her desire may be sexual (cf. Songs 7:11),<sup>12</sup> or an urge for motherhood (cf. Gen 3:15),<sup>13</sup> or for control over the man (cf. Gen 4:7).<sup>14</sup> The key question is, whether such male rule is descriptive (i.e. a consequence of the Fall) or prescriptive demanding the woman to submit to the divine directive. Commentators are divided on this depending on prior interpretive choices.<sup>15</sup> However, the affirmation of the image of God in humanity post-Fall (9:6) suggests that God's intention of male-female co-rule over creation continues. If so, the subordination of woman under man's rule post-Fall is not God's mandate, but simply the result of disrupted relationships due to sin.

Gal 3:28, the central verse used to support the equality of men and women, clearly alludes to creation using the same Greek words for 'male and female' (*arsen kai thelu*) as the Septuagint in Gen 1:27.<sup>16</sup> The shift from 'neither... nor...' in Paul's list of pairs to 'no male *and* female' further highlights the connection.<sup>17</sup>

The three pairs recorded by Paul (Jew-Gentile, slave-free, male-female) come at the conclusion of a longer argument setting out who belongs to the people of God in the context of ethnic (Jew-Gentile) divisions within the church.<sup>18</sup> Paul extends the list to exclude social and gender discrimination as well emphasising the unity that believers enjoy in Christ.<sup>19</sup> It is not that these distinctions no longer exist, but they should not play a part in how Christians

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<sup>10</sup> Hess, "Equality," 86; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 69.

<sup>11</sup> Mathews, *Gen 1-11:26*, 214; Hess, "Equality," 86.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 81.

<sup>13</sup> John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 227-29.

<sup>14</sup> Mathews, *Gen 1-11:26*, 251; Hess, "Equality," 91.

<sup>15</sup> For the prescriptive approach see e.g. Mathews, *Gen 1-11:26*, 251. For interpreting it descriptively see e.g. Walton, *Genesis*, 237; Hess, "Equality," 92.

<sup>16</sup> The Septuagint is the ancient Greek translation of the OT that was frequently used by Paul and the early church.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 77.

<sup>18</sup> Gordon D. Fee, "Male and Female in the New Creation: Galatians 3:26-29," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, eds. R.W. Pierce and R. M. Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 172-85 (173).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 178-80.

are evaluated in the church.<sup>20</sup> While Paul's allusion is to Gen 1:27 with its creation ideal of equal co-rule, he clearly has in mind the wider context that includes the Fall and its consequences as well. Thus his statement in Gal 3:28 reflects post-Fall hostilities and barriers and God's restoring work of equal standing for all in Christ.<sup>21</sup>

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### *Jesus and women*

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*Dr Sarah Harris*

Jesus had many disciples, but the group we most readily identify today are “the twelve” whom Jesus called and named apostles.<sup>22</sup> This small group of disciples were all Jewish men and so the church has sometimes drawn normative conclusions about the gender of Jesus' disciples from this small group, while happily ignoring another distinctive – their ethnicity – they were Jewish and not Gentile. As a result, we often fail to see the much wider group of Jesus' disciples in the Gospels and forget the important roles they played. This article aims to highlight the women who followed Jesus, and to dispel the myth that disciples in the first century were exclusively men. It also aims to show that there is not a discipleship hierarchy where men are somewhere near the top of a mythical leadership ladder and women are close to the bottom. Finally, I want to explain why there were twelve men whom Jesus called; these men (and all others) do matter and it is important to acknowledge that!

A “disciple” could equally be translated “learner,” and a disciple followed a rabbi (teacher). Rabbis were men, and the Hebrew and Aramaic word for a “disciple” was, therefore, masculine. Luke did make one exception when he called Tabitha a “disciple” using a feminine word in Acts 9:36, but it appears that Luke may have coined this term and used it sparingly as it was not a word in common currency.<sup>23</sup> Discipleship was therefore, not a uniquely Jesus phenomenon, nor was it exclusive to Judaism; Platonists, Pythagoreans,

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<sup>20</sup> Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 85-86, 92-93; Fee, “Male and Female,” 181-85.

<sup>21</sup> C. L. Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 70-71. If we were to treat the allusion simply as a reference to Gen 1:27 then the point may be that even though from creation marriage and procreation were the norm, in God's kingdom singleness is an acceptable status (cf. 1 Cor 7). Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 77.

<sup>22</sup> This is a pre-edited for publication article from *The NZ Baptist Magazine*: Sarah Harris, “Gifted and Called: Women Walking with Jesus,” 132.6 (2017): 20-22.

<sup>23</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (4 vols.; ABRL; New Haven: Yale University, 2001), 3:78-80; Jacqui Lloyd, “The Women Who Followed Jesus, Part One,” *Stimulus* 20 (2013): 8-9.

Epicureans, Stoics, and Essenes had men and women who were disciples.<sup>24</sup> Finally, it was not an exclusively male activity.

The clearest way to identify a first century disciple then, was not linguistic, but descriptive; if we want to identify a disciple in the biblical text, we must look at what people were doing and saying. Meier notes the distinctive of Jesus' disciples: He initiated the calling of his followers; these people followed him physically and therefore they left their home; and, they risked danger and hostility as they travelled with Jesus.<sup>25</sup> Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna who follow Jesus on his itinerant ministry are three such examples (Luke 8:1-3). Mary was the most common female name in the first century,<sup>26</sup> and so a descriptor was added for clarification. Mary is from Magdala, or Migdal (Hebrew) and so she is Mary *Magdalene*. Magdala was a thriving city in the first century, and Mary must have been a woman with some level of social privilege as Luke tells us that she used her own wealth to provide for Jesus and the disciples as they travelled. She was, however, someone who has been quite unwell for Luke tells us she had seven demons before Jesus healed her. It is likely she had been married, but with no husband in view, she was probably widowed or divorced. At this time, girls married at about age twelve to fourteen, so when she meets Jesus she may not have been much older than twenty or thirty. Luke's second woman is Joanna who is married to Herod's steward Chuza (8:3). Herod (Antipas) had palaces in various cities and towns around Palestine, and in 18-20 C.E. he moved his northern base from Sepphoris to Tiberius. Joanna met Jesus in the Galilee region, and it is likely that she was from Tiberius where Herod was based.<sup>27</sup> Anyone employed as a manager in Herod's house will have lived with a reasonable level of wealth and privilege, and so Joanna will have known some degree of social status. What is striking is that as a married woman she left her husband to travel with a rabbi; her discipleship is quite extraordinary. Susanna is Luke's third named woman, although he mentions there were "many others." We know nothing more of Susanna, while the three women supported Jesus' kingdom ministry out of their resources. These women, however, do not enter the Gospel in these mere three verses and then exit off the stage; they travel with Jesus around the Galilee and up to Jerusalem during the time of the passion, resurrection and ascension. During this time Jesus teaches the male and female disciples and sends them into ministry contexts.

Mary of Bethany and her sister, Martha are other named female disciples (Luke 10:38-42; John 11; 12:2). They call Jesus "The Teacher", an expression even the

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<sup>24</sup> Lynn Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 159-224.

<sup>25</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 3:47-73.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospel as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 89.

<sup>27</sup> Lloyd, "The Women Who Followed," 8.

complementarian author Andreas Köstenberger acknowledges shows Jesus is their rabbi (John 11:28). He says “the fact the expression is used here by a woman ... is significant. Whereas contemporary rabbis regularly refused to instruct women, Jesus took a radically different approach.”<sup>28</sup> In Luke’s Gospel Mary sits at Jesus’ feet as a learner; to sit in quietness and full submission is the posture of a disciple (cf. 1 Tim 2:11).

A significant discipleship incident occurs when Jesus’ mother and brothers come to him (Matt 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8: 19-21). Someone says, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside wanting to talk with you,” to which Jesus “pointing to his *disciples*” replies, “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matt 12:50). This positions discipleship around those carrying out God’s will, or for Luke, “hearing the word of God and doing it,” something women frequently exemplify.

The first theologian in Luke’s Gospel is a woman: Mary, the mother of Jesus. She has clear theological interest and her articulation of praise to God has been formative for the church because of its depth and clarity (Luke 1:46-55). Synagogue and family prayers were filled with cycles of scripture reading which aided a person’s knowledge of God and supported a theocentric worldview.<sup>29</sup> Women were participants and visible in synagogue life in the first century; the crippled woman was **in** the synagogue when Jesus called and healed her (Luke 13:10-17). Yet the synagogue was a place in which women not only participated, some became leaders. Vamosh notes that, “written sources, including tomb inscriptions ... attest to women’s leadership roles. Their attendance in synagogue was a given.”<sup>30</sup> A second century inscription in Smyrna mentions, “Rufina, a Jew, head of the synagogue, [who] built this tomb for her freed slaves and the slaves raised in her house.”<sup>31</sup> Jewish girls such as Mary, and the crippled woman once she was healed, will also have attended the Jerusalem Temple as they were able. With Mary in particular we see her move from her role as Jesus’ biological mother into a clear disciple (Luke 8:19-21; John 2:1-11; 19:26-27; Acts 1:14).

Women learned about God in places other than “religious spaces.” They were present at the dinner table when theological and philosophical discussion often occurred;<sup>32</sup> the Bethany house is one example (John 12:1-8) while we often find Jesus around a meal table in the Gospels. The Roman bath house was also a place where symposia were held and learning occurred. These were found throughout the Empire including Palestine; in the large bath house in Beit She’an there is a Christian cross in one of the porticoes showing this was part of a believer’s life.

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<sup>28</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, *John* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 337.

<sup>29</sup> J. H. Charlesworth, “Prayer in Early Judaism,” *ABD* 5:449.

<sup>30</sup> Miriam Feinberg Vamosh, *Women at the Time of the Bible* (Herzlia, Israel: Palphot, 2007), 93.

<sup>31</sup> As head of a synagogue who is similar in description to Jairus (Mark 5:22). See Vamosh, *Women*, 94.

<sup>32</sup> This is a place where children quietly listened. See Cohick, *Women*, 87-89.

As a result, it should not be surprising to find that some women became teachers. Anna is one such example.<sup>33</sup> In Luke 2:36-28 she is found habitually speaking of God's coming redemption to *all* who were in the Temple. This was not a one off activity, signalled by the knowledge she "never left the Temple" and the present continuous language of "speaking" in 2:38; Anna was a recognised prophet for Israel in the time of Jesus. She stands in a significant line of OT female prophets from Miriam, through Deborah, Noadiah, and Huldah, and she is the first of the eschatological prophetesses described in Joel and at Pentecost.<sup>34</sup>

A very significant place we find women is at Jesus' crucifixion (Matt 27:55-56; Luke 23:27; John 19:25-26). In fact, we could say the women exhibit a loyalty to Jesus which stands in contrast to Peter who denies the Lord (Matt 25:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27). These women were also involved at the time of Jesus' burial (Matt 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55-56), and they were first to hear the news of Jesus' resurrection (Matt 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-11). In Mark, the first Gospel written, the women are commanded to *go and tell* the men what has happened (16:7) and his narrative finishes with the women and their actions. Matthew's Gospel is similar but the women's role is intensified as they are commanded to *go and proclaim* the news to the men (Matt 28:10); they are divinely commissioned as proclaimers – preaching language! In Luke's narrative, the astonished women go to tell the men what has happened; notably, the women exhibit faith while the men do not (24:10-11).

We sometimes forget that Jesus appeared to the women again (Luke 24:36), he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and commissioned the disciples (men and women) to be filled with the Spirit and to proclaim the gospel (24:45-47; Acts 1:8). The women never exited the stage! The women were blessed by Jesus at the ascension (24:50), part of the early worshipping community (Acts 1:14), and present at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-39). Women were integral to Jesus' discipleship team; it never was purely a one-gender group. Yet Jesus did choose twelve Jewish men and they are central to the wider story of scripture. So, what can we say of their role?

The twelve had a particular role to play both in the story of Jesus and they have a part that is yet to come; Luke explains that they have an eschatological role when they will judge the twelve Jewish tribes (22:30).<sup>35</sup> The twelve represent the culmination of the story of Israel (what has been in the past), and in that sense they fulfil the place of the twelve tribes, but the role of a disciple moved quickly to cross gender, ethnic and social boundaries. By the time

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<sup>33</sup> Sarah Harris, "Letting (H)Anna Speak: An Intertextual Reading of the New Testament Prophetess," *Feminist Theology* (2017) forthcoming.

<sup>34</sup> Turid Karlsen Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts* (London: T & T Clark, 1990), 177.

<sup>35</sup> This is why they were Jewish and not Gentile men.

John's Gospel was written in about the 90's, the twelve were known, but they are only mentioned twice. I suggest that by this time, it was clear that discipleship was not about these men, it was about a role that many played including Mary and Martha who feature strongly in the Fourth Gospel. This is confirmed in the book of Acts where women such as Lydia and Priscilla also feature prominently. In fact, Priscilla and Aquila are often referred to as "the most prominent couple involved in the first-century expansion of Christianity,"<sup>36</sup> and their work is significant. Their story (and that of Lydia) deserves more space than this article can allow, but suffice to say that this couple knew the scriptures more fully than Apollos, a key Christian leader, were teachers in the church at Ephesus, and "explained" Christological truth to this man. Priscilla and Aquila (yes she is mentioned first, defying cultural custom) are presented as gifted and godly teachers who were of high standing. In many ways Priscilla epitomises the significance to which women in the early church rose which I find very exciting. I trust when you pick up the Bible your eyes will be increasingly enlightened to the work of God in and by both women and men. The mission imperative can only be fulfilled as each take their part and use their gifts to grow and build up the people of God, for God is sending *all* into the world.

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*Toward an understanding 1 Corinthians 11:2-16*

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*Dr Sarah Harris*

This passage discusses suitable attire for prayer and prophecy in community gatherings. It is fraught with difficulty as 11:3 is the primary basis for a complementarian understanding of the relationships between men and women in general, and in this context, in the church. However, Paul uses the language of *kephalē*, from which complementarians find their doctrine of "headship," in a variety of literal and metaphorical ways, and the process of discerning where and how Paul uses this word has become "the battle of the lexicons."<sup>37</sup> At the outset it is important to note that the word "headship" is introduced by some modern readers into the text; it simply reads "*kephalē*."

As with any exegetical work the task is to explain this text in its ancient context and then draw the theological principles into the modern world. The conversation is complicated however, by people who rush to understand "head" from their own worldview. In doing so,

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<sup>36</sup> See Greg W. Forbes and Scott D. Harrower, *Raised from Obscurity: A Narrativial and Theological Study of the Characterization of Women in Luke-Acts* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2015), 193.

<sup>37</sup> Alice Mathews uses this phrase in *Gender Roles*.

they place themselves and their ideas at the centre of the text rather than God. Reading and interpreting the Bible cannot begin with “what this means to me”; this practice must stop.

The word *kephalē* has a range of meanings. First, the word can mean: (1) a literal head on a body, a body part as in vv. 10 and 13; (2) It can mean “source” or “origin,” and indeed frequently does in the ancient world;<sup>38</sup> (3) it is also used, though more infrequently, to mean “a being of high status.”<sup>39</sup> Thus the word can be used literally or metaphorically and Paul uses the word in both ways in this passage.<sup>40</sup> A point of caution for Western readers is that the English and German metaphorical use of “head” implies a leader, while in Greek (the language of our NT text) this is infrequent.<sup>41</sup> The TDNT says that “the LXX adopts the Greek use. Here, too, in almost exclusive rendering of the Hebrew *רִאשׁוֹן* which means “head, origins, source.” It is not the language of a leader. The language in Greek for a leader is *ἀρχή* which can also mean “beginning” (for a NT example see Col 1:18). Payne notes that the LXX

...did not regard “head” (*κεφαλή*) as an appropriate word to convey “leader.”... The LXX translators overwhelmingly (in 226 of 239 instances) chose *κεφαλή* to translate literal instances of “head.” Yet in only 6 out of 171 instances where “head” (*רִאשׁוֹן*) may convey “leader” did they translate it with the metaphor *κεφαλή* in a way what clearly means a leader. In contrast, the NASB, reflecting the natural metaphorical use of “head” to convey “leader” in English, translated 115 of these 171 instances “head.”<sup>42</sup>

The meaning “source” is an established meaning for *κεφαλή* from early lexicons to the present.<sup>43</sup> The second century text *On the Doctrine of Hippocrates and Plato* by Galen He identifies the “head” of a river as a source. In *De locis affectic* 3.12 whirlpools in a river might “rather arise when they are warmed by the sun or its source [*τὴν κεφαλὴν*] is heated in some other way.” Herodotus (*History* 4.90-91) says of the river Tearus, “Its springs are thirty-eight in number, some cold and some hot...From the sources [*κεφαλαί*] ...flows the best and fairest of all rivers. Hippocrates (5<sup>th</sup> C BCE) uses *κεφαλή* metaphorically in *Coac*. 498 to identify the ‘origins’ of muscles [*τῶν μυῶν αἰ κεφαλαί*].

Philo (1<sup>st</sup> C CE) says: “of all the members of the clan here described Esau is the progenitor, the ‘head’ [*κεφαλή*] as it were of the whole creature” (*Prelim. Studies* 61).

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<sup>38</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman*, 113-139.

<sup>39</sup> “*κεφαλή*,” BGAD, 542: Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 554.

<sup>40</sup> Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 92.

<sup>41</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman*, 118.

<sup>42</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman*, 119.

<sup>43</sup> See Payne, *Man and Woman*, chapter 7.

In 1 Corinthians verse 3 is broken into three statements:

1. The *kephalē* of every man is Christ.
2. The *kephalē* of the woman is man.
3. The *kephalē* of Christ is God.

For the complementarian reader this has equated to:

1. The *authority over* every man is Christ.
2. The *authority over* the woman is man.
3. The *authority over* Christ is God.

Alice Mathews, as representative of many scholars, notes that if Paul wanted to describe a hierarchy of authority it would read as follows:<sup>44</sup>

1. God is the head of Christ.
2. Christ is the head of man.
3. Man is the head of woman.

But this hierarchical pattern is not what Paul has written in this epistle, and Paul is a careful writer who writes here to subvert the order which 1<sup>st</sup> C ears might have expected to hear. The Corinthians lived in a high-context society; a society which was very stratified and where being visible or prominent was desirable. In chapters 1-4 Paul outlines the problem of immaturity in the believers theology and behaviour; they are behaving *kata anthropon* (κατὰ ἄνθρωπον; according to the world) and according to the flesh (*sarx*); they are σαρκικοί (3:3). Paul's expression in 11:3 and the ordering of it suggests that he is subverting their cultural power structures. This is in opposition to what some claim. Which is the better reading?

There are two pieces of evidence which show the inadequacy of a complementarian reading of this verse. First, Christian women are sustained by Christ; he is the one the woman submits to; he is her leader. The man plays no mediatory role for the woman; indeed, in orthodox theology neither he, nor any human can fulfil what Christ alone does. Women have the same access and accountability to Christ; and her spirituality is not mediated by another human; *in Christ alone her hope is found; he is her rock, her strength, her song*. In the Corinthian culture, there was certainly the need for women to work within socio-cultural systems of honour; Paul was not tearing down the basic ordering of males and females in society, but *he was subverting them*.

Second, the complementarian claim which stresses authority borders on, or steps into, heresy claiming that God the Father has authority over Christ; the Church Councils settled

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<sup>44</sup> Alice Mathews, *Gender Roles*, 117.

this Christological heresy when Arius claimed that that Jesus was subordinate to God.<sup>45</sup> Yes, scholars are agreed that the Incarnate Jesus submits himself to the Father in his earthly ministry, but he is not less than God which a complementarian reading suggests. The creeds state that Jesus is God from God; light from light; True God from True God; of one being (*homoousios*) with the Father. Further, the Son proceeds from the Father, and with the Father he is worshipped and glorified. To posit Jesus as having unequal authority as the Father is untenable. Complementarians try and explain that The Son is equal in nature to God, but his role is subordinate to that of the Father. If we are only talking of Jesus' earthly ministry the conversation is true, but the claim is that Jesus is *eternally subordinate to the Father*. This is not and cannot be claimed to be equality at all; it is ontological subordination.

Further to envision human relations as directly link the nature of God is to seriously overlook the otherness of God.<sup>46</sup> In Rom 1 creatures who set about over-turning this creation distinctive between the Creator and his creation are said to be idolatrous. Maintaining the "otherness" of God is a clear theological necessity.

Chrysostom takes great care to show that the term "head" in relation to humans must not be directly correlated to the relationship of husband and wives. "He points out that it would be absurd to think that the relationship between Christ and God and/or that which applies between the man and the woman is the measure of the other relationships."<sup>47</sup> For him, the subordination of the woman is a result of the fall. The woman

...was not subjected as soon as she was made; nor, the man say any such word to her: he said, rather, that she was 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh' but made no mention to her at all of rule of subjection.' *Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Corinthios* 26.3.

Giles' most recent book (2017) addresses the current problem which has arisen where some modern scholars have tried to create social applications from the life of the Triune God "and have argued that God's life in heaven should direct social life on earth."<sup>48</sup> This is a fallacy which some egalitarians and complementarians have fallen into; each concluding the opposite view. That is, complementarians look to divine hierarchy and conclude this to be projected onto male-female human relations; conversely, some egalitarians look to the

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<sup>45</sup> See Kevin Giles, *The Rise and Fall of the Complementarian Doctrine of the Trinity* (Eugene: Cascade, 2017).

<sup>46</sup> Giles, *Rise and Fall*, 101-102.

<sup>47</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 511.

<sup>48</sup> Giles, *Rise and Fall*, 102.

Trinity's equality and relate that to the social world of males and females. Giles rightly notes that

The Bible never makes divine relations in eternity prescriptive for human relationships on earth. What the Bible asks of disciples of Christ, both men and women, is to exhibit the love of God to others and to give themselves in self-denying sacrificial service and self-subordination like the Lord of glory did in becoming one with us in our humanity and dying on the cross. In other words, the incarnate Christ provides the perfect example of how to live with others on earth.<sup>49</sup>

Giles' work is particularly helpful as he has been the central voice which was first to systematically challenge complementarian thinking, and in 2016 partly through his own work, there was a shift in thinking from key opposing scholars who have admitted their error.<sup>50</sup> Carl Trueman, a gender complementarian, is now of the view that "the rejection of the complementarian doctrine of the Trinity calls into question the whole complementarian position as it has been expressed in recent decades."<sup>51</sup> He says:

Complementarianism as currently constructed would seem to be now in crisis. But this is a crisis of its own making – the direct result of the incorrect historical and theological arguments upon which the foremost advocates of the movement have chosen to build their case and which cannot actually bear the weight being placed upon them.<sup>52</sup>

Giles also records Liam Goligher's response (another gender complementarian).<sup>53</sup> He says men:

Presume to tell women what they can or cannot say to their husbands, and how many inches longer their hair should be than their husbands! They, like the Pharisees of old, are going beyond Scripture and heaping up burdens to place on believers' backs, and their arguments are slowly descending into a farce.<sup>54</sup>

In 2015 Jared Moore writing for the "Southern Baptist Convention" wrote that,

If complementarians can prove that there is hierarchy in the (ontological) Trinity, *then they win*, for if hierarchy exists among the Three Persons of God, and

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<sup>49</sup> Giles, *Rise and Fall*, 102.

<sup>50</sup> This includes Bruce Ware and Wayne Grudem as regards the eternal generation of the son.

<sup>51</sup> Giles, *Rise and Fall*, 111.

<sup>52</sup> Carl Trueman, "Fahrenheit 381." *Mortification of Spin*, 7 June 2016.

<http://www.mortificationofspin.org/mos/postcards-from-paloaville/fareinheir-381>. See Giles, *Rise and Fall*, 111-112.

<sup>53</sup> Dr Liam Goligher is the Senior Pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

<sup>54</sup> See Giles, *Rise and Fall*, 112.

these Three Persons are equally God, then surely God can create men and women equal yet with differing roles in the church and home.<sup>55</sup>

The agreement now is that this view is theologically unsustainable, and so they are starting to admit that “*they don’t win.*” Giles lists the stream of complementarian scholars and key voices who have now shifted their view; he describes what has taken place within their ranks aptly as “civil war.”<sup>56</sup>

As we consider 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Ciampa and Rosner rightly note three clear points from this passage:<sup>57</sup>

1. “Respect for a creation mandate to maintain and even celebrate gender distinctions with which we have been created.
2. A respect for culturally specific approaches to guarding moral and sexual purity.
3. A commitment to fully integrating women and their gifts into the experience of the worshipping community.”

They suggest that the Corinthian believers have tried to develop some form of teaching and practice where in Christ “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no ‘male and female’”<sup>58</sup> (Gal 3:28). As a result of this over-realised eschatology, they have thrown off gender distinctions in their worship which Paul argues strongly is both culturally and theologically important to maintain. Their behaviour is more akin to the ecstatic and frenzied worship of the mystery cults, than as worshippers of the Lord God. In this passage, Paul confronts their current practices and draws them back to culturally appropriate *and* God-honouring worship which cannot be misinterpreted by the watching world.

### 1 Cor 11:2-16

Paul begins this textual unit which extends to a discussion of the Eucharist, by genuinely commending the Corinthians for remembering him and for maintaining the traditions (plural) which have been handed on to them (11:2).<sup>59</sup> These traditions relate to

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<sup>55</sup> Jared Moore, “The Complementarians Win: A review of *One God in Three Persons.*” 19 May 2005. <https://sbcvoices.com/the-complementarians-win-a-review-of-one-god-in-three-persons/>.

<sup>56</sup> See Giles, *Rise and Fall*, 35.

<sup>57</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 503.

<sup>58</sup> This phrase ‘male and female’ draws from the Genesis creation narrative. NT Wright,

<sup>59</sup> There has been some attempt to explain Paul as using sarcasm here such as used in 4:8-10, but this is not well accepted. His praise seems genuine. Keener notes that “It was good rhetorical practice to start with a subject in which one could ‘commend’ or ‘praise’ the audience (11:2) before moving to one in

Jewish oral laws.<sup>60</sup> In 11:3 he makes his theological statement (*theologoumenon*) which forms the basis for Christian practice, and then moves to a contrast “but I want you to understand...” This suggest that there are some traditions they are not following. He goes on in v. 3 with his three relational pairs,<sup>61</sup> and then on into his wider argument which is framed within the creation story (11:7, 8, 12). His immediate goal however, is to establish the relationship of humanity with respect to God. As we have noted if Paul was attempting to simply explain hierarchy he would have begun with God; he did not; his focus is on how men and women are situated before God.

In the Graeco-Roman world humans viewed themselves in a subordinate relationship to the gods and then the Emperor (who will go on to be divinised), and they play their part in society based on their situation in life. Paul’s patterning in v. 3 would have been viewed as subversive in omitting any mention of the Emperor,<sup>62</sup> and discussing women alongside men.

Many evangelical scholars read the repeated use of *kephalē* in v. 3 as describing theological origins where: Christ is the source of every man, the husband is the source of “his wife” [for Eve was formed from Adam’s rib],<sup>63</sup> and God is the source of Christ, for he proceeds from the Father as in the creeds. When the text is read in this way attention is paid to chronological rather than hierarchical order; it draws the reader back to the patterns in the first and second creation narratives which can only be read as a creation unity. The alternative is to stress only the second creation story and to force hierarchy and authority leading to Arianism. Paul simply cannot be suggesting that.

The ancient world however, was ordered and patterned at least in part by gender distinctions which we must not overlook; the extent of this is debated. But parameters for this ordering must in some way be predicated theologically upon Genesis 1 where Adam carries no priority; for men and women together reflect the image and likeness of God. Moreover both are given the same mandate to subdue the earth. Eve was not sent to prepare vegetables while Adam planted and watered the garden. It is within this equal context that the reader interprets the second account of human creation where Adam’s formation is from the dust (and so his curse will come from the dust), and Eve’s creation is out of Adam (and so her curse will be his rule). In the second narrative the creation of human beings is explored

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which one could not (11:17, 22).” *1-2 Corinthians*, The New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 91.

<sup>60</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 505;

<sup>61</sup> Christ – man; husband/wife – man/woman; God – Christ.

<sup>62</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 507.

<sup>63</sup> Fee suggests that “the Man” and “the Women” is Adam and Eve. *1 Corinthians*, 556.

anthropomorphically and in more detail. Adam, is found to be alone – he is incomplete for he has no partner corresponding to him. By this time the animals, birds, and fish are completed; Adam however is alone – and this is not good; the man needs one like himself; an אִשָּׁה needs an אָדָם. To read a relational text (unlike the liturgical text of Genesis 1) as hierarchical when it is neither grammatically likely, nor theologically plausible, is wrong.

Paul's argument in Corinthians moves straight from his *theologoumenon* which is relational into a description of 1<sup>st</sup> C worship where there is an issue with believers doing something with their heads or hair when praying and prophesying (11:4-5). The Graeco-Roman cultural world has their own mores in terms of how people showed their heads in public and how they wore their hair. David Horrell writes:

Paul's specific and contextual concerns clearly motivate the whole passage: he uses the word κεφαλή [head] precisely because his concern is with the way in which the κεφαλή [head] must be attired in worship. He follows the assertion of woman's secondary place in the order of creation (vs. 8f) not with a command for her to be subordinate, but with an instance that her correct attire is a sign of her ἐξουσία [authority] to pray and prophesy. Paul's purpose seems to be the establishment of "proper" distinction between men and women rather than with male superiority or authority. The practical issue of attire is uppermost in his mind.<sup>64</sup>

1 Corinthians 11:4-5 presuppose both men and women are praying (speaking to God) and prophesying (speaking about God) in the gathered worship. Women prophetesses were well known in Israel (Exod 15:20; Judg 4:4; 2 Kgs 22:14; Neh 6:14; Isa 8:3) and the expectation was of a time when through the Spirit their "sons *and* daughters would prophesy;" prophesy has always been an activity women have participated in and kings looked to prophetesses to guide them. That women are speaking about God in the community should be considered normal. The problem Paul is addressing is not about the silencing of women (1 Cor 14:34) but they manner-in-which they are participating. If their behaviour is inappropriate, shame will come to their *kephalē*. Honouring and not shaming one's "other" was important; public decorum was necessary for the sake of propriety; women were to bring honour to their husbands and not embarrass them (and I am sure in a healthy marriage this worked both ways!). From his pithy thesis statement in v. 3, to the naming of the problem in vv. 4-5, Paul's argument to the Corinthians is sustained until v.14-16 where he draws things to a close. The central problem is clearly the behaviour of the Corinthian women while the

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<sup>64</sup> David G. Horrell, "The Development of Theological Ideology in Pauline Christianity," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (New York: Routledge, 1995), 230.

discussion of the men primarily serves as a foil to clarify Paul's logic,<sup>65</sup> and to show the outworking of his theological statement in 11:3.

Paul's argument is intricate and must be understood in its 1<sup>st</sup> C Greek context. At this time the expression "to take the veil" is an expression for one who is married (Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom*), and so it is firstly possible that Paul is directly addressing an issue concerning "wives" and not all women; γυνή means either woman or wife; context alone determines which is correct.<sup>66</sup> In Graeco-Roman culture men did not cover their heads in public while women did (Plutarch, *Roman Questions* 10).<sup>67</sup> Married women wore a *palla*, a large veil which covered her head and concealed the body when she went outside the home; an unmarried woman did not wear a veil.

However, Paul's expression may not even refer to a veil at all, but hairstyles. Society had clear protocols about one's hair.<sup>68</sup> Malcolm writes that, "A number of ancient sources commend long hair for women and view it as shameful for a woman's hair to be loosed or removed. See Numbers 5:18; Philo, *Spec. Laws* 3.60" and *Pseudo-Phocylides, Sentences* 210-212.<sup>69</sup> A woman with her hair down in public brings shame upon her husband, and if this was happening in the church it would bring the church into disrepute and present an inappropriate picture of godly worship. Women with hair down would be understood as prostitutes or exhibiting sexual looseness, and while this did take place in mystery cults, for Paul this was inappropriate for Christian worship. Christians had been sanctified (1:2), and were God's temple (3:16); they were set apart as holy. It was therefore irreconcilable that Christian women would act in this way. Further, Paul makes clear that the gender distinctions are God-given and should be observed. So for Paul, gender is not to be eschewed, and believers should live in a culturally appropriate way.

In vv.7-12 Paul gives his rationale which is tied to the creation story through the use of particular language (image, glory, woman from man etc.). In v. 7 the man is said to be εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ (image and glory of God), while the woman is the δόξα of man. This

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<sup>65</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 512-513.

<sup>66</sup> "γυνή," BDAG, 208.

<sup>67</sup> "Why, when they are praying to the gods, do they [i.e. Roman men] cover the head, and yet when they meet people worthy of honour while they have the *himation* on their head, they uncover it?" Malcolm says "the head covering (the *capite velato*) was expressive of humble devotion. It especially appears in depictions of those in respected positions of priestly leadership. It seems that Paul is hinting at this practice..." See Matthew R. Malcolm, *The World of 1 Corinthians: An Exegetical Source Book of Literary and Visual Backgrounds* (Eugene: Cascade: 2013), 105.

<sup>68</sup> For a discussion on hair in the 1<sup>st</sup> C, see Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 91.

<sup>69</sup> Malcolm, *World of 1 Corinthians*, 107.

describes the formation of the male who was first while the woman was created from Adam's rib, therefore she can be said to be his reflection. He was created from the dust of the earth; she was taken from man. This statement does not denigrate the woman or elevate the man. The man had no part in his own creation or that of the woman. In terms of the creation story where men and women are commanded to "fill the earth and subdue it" – as a man on his own, he is incomplete; he has no one corresponding to him and cannot fulfil the command to multiply. Further, it is worth noting that Adam did not identify his aloneness (incompleteness), God did. He did not assist or have any input into the woman's creation, God did. He was passive, God was active. While a few interpreters over the ages have erroneously taken this verse to mean that Adam was created in the image of God, and Eve was not, this is to seriously misread Genesis and Paul.

In 15:49 Paul is clear that "just as we (plural) have borne the image of the earthly man, we (plural) shall also bear the image of the heavenly one."<sup>70</sup> In Gen 1:26-27 scripture shows that all of humanity shares something of God, even though, as Paul expresses it, it is a glimpse or from a darkened mirror. Ciampa and Rosner note that when we read 11:7 in light of 15:49 we can understand that Adam the first human was created directly in the image of God and the rest of humanity (that is, every male and female from Eve on) are made in God's image for we inherit this from Adam and our own parents (cf. 5:3; 9:6).<sup>71</sup> It is also correct to remember that there is also a uniqueness to Adam *and* Eve's creation; for everyone that follows after them are borne from a sexual union and out of a mother's womb. It is true that Adam was made without any human contribution, and so Paul can say the man is made in God's image and likeness, while it is also true that God's image was present in Eve for she was taken from Adam. "Paul's point is not that women are not made in God's image but that the way the creation narrative distinguishes between the origin and purpose of the man and the woman suggest that the man (not originating from the woman or being created to complete her) does not reflect the woman's glory (but only God's), while the woman does reflect the glory of man."<sup>72</sup> This is not an argument which points to reciprocity and mutual interdependence.

In verse 10 Paul goes on to discuss the woman's authority and in vv. 11-12, the interdependence of men and women.<sup>73</sup> It is critical to notice that Paul is affirming women's own *authority* in worship; it is not mediated by men, and it is for the sake of the whole

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<sup>70</sup> NRSV, "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven."

<sup>71</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 524.

<sup>72</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 525.

<sup>73</sup> Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 93.

church. Some have tried unsuccessfully to take this phrase in a passive sense where someone else has authority over her (such as, her husband) but “there is no evidence for a passive sense to this idiom,” and this discussion is about the women and not the men’s authority,<sup>74</sup> some that *exousia* is a metonym for ‘veil’ but the word choice almost certainly eliminates this;<sup>75</sup> and some that it means the women now has freedom over her own head to do as she wishes, but this contradicts Paul’s argument and should be set aside.<sup>76</sup>

Paul describes the woman’s authority which is “on her head” (ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς) and gives a reason: it is “because of the angels.” Exactly what Paul means here is not clear. We can affirm that heaven supports appropriate participatory worship from women (and men), and Watson may be correct when he says their correct attire “is a prophetic sign to the angels that the new creation has dawned” and a new order is in play.<sup>77</sup> It is also possible that this saying alludes to the angels who are said to cover their faces in God’s presence in Isaiah’s vision (6:2), and Paul is taking this OT image as a supporting argument for the Corinthian women to also conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. None of this though is at all certain, for *men and women* have similar standards before the Divine council, and so why Paul discusses only women with respect to the angels makes this argument unclear. Yet “most church fathers understood the reference to their authority ‘as a metonymy for *a sign of power over*,’”<sup>78</sup> and so this is a strong statement of women’s position before God. Scholars generally accept Paul’s discussion of the cultural matter with hair or the veil is a sign of the woman’s authority to pray and prophesy in the *ekklēsia*. In a tangible way when the women’s head is covered she is free to be an active and declaratory participant in the community. It is helpful to remember that kings of old wore crowns, sceptres and diadems which symbolised their authority, and Paul may well be suggesting that the veil/correct hair achieves this for women. Of note is that the women’s head is her own and no one else has authority over it, for “God has granted her the authority to pray and prophesy.”<sup>79</sup>

Therefore we can say that this passage affirms women’s participation in church worship, the distinctives between male and female as complementary, and humanity’s correct relationship to God who is the one from whom all things come (11:12). Paul now builds to a particularly egalitarian picture which we could describe as *egalitarian complementarity*. This view honours God as Creator and where male and female celebrate one another. Paul’s

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<sup>74</sup> Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 576.

<sup>75</sup> That is, there is no precedent for Paul meaning veil but using the word ‘authority.’

<sup>76</sup> See Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 574-577.

<sup>77</sup> F. Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender*, 71.

<sup>78</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 531.

<sup>79</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 533.

argument goes on to say that the man is dependent on the women – for he will always be borne through (διὰ) her.<sup>80</sup> And the women is dependent upon the man, for she came from (ἐκ) him.<sup>81</sup> As Paul climactically ends – τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (but all things come from God). God is the true source and origin of all people, and therefore men and women are to live in a way that honours him, reflects his glory, and is compatible with the cultural codes of the day. Fee concludes: “By appealing to their own sense of propriety, as ‘nature’ by way of analogy helps them to see that, Paul brings to a close his argument over the ‘rightness’ of the women maintaining the ‘custom’ of being covered. But Paul is never quite comfortable concluding the argument in this fashion. Hence he draws the whole together with a final appeal to what goes on in the ‘churches of God.’ That he is dealing with ‘custom’ (church ‘custom,’ to be sure) is now made plain...”<sup>82</sup>

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*1 Corinthians 14:33b-36*

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*Dr Sarah Harris*

33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

*As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women (wives) should keep silent<sup>83</sup> in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman (wife) to speak in church. 36. Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?*

As we consider 1 Cor 14:33b-36 we must first remember that it comes after the material regarding women/wives in 1 Cor 11 where women are praying (speaking to God) and prophesying (speaking about God). Therefore, no contemporary scholar (complementarian or egalitarian) is trying to say women must not participate verbally in a worship context; for that would be an internal contradiction and make Paul incoherent. *Paul never expected women to*

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<sup>80</sup> “διὰ,” BDAG, 223.

<sup>81</sup> “ἐκ,” BDAG, 295.

<sup>82</sup> Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 585.

<sup>83</sup> The Greek *sigāō* (keep still, keep silent, BDAG, 922) is employed three times in chapter 14: v.28 – if no one is there to interpret a tongue then the tongue speaker is to be silent; v. 30 if another person rises to give a revelation, then the first is to be silent; v. 34 the disruptive women are to be silent.

*be silent at church.*<sup>84</sup> Early tradition (the Church Fathers from Tertullian to Aquinas) did however conclude that no woman could pray or sing audibly among men but their argument is not based on Paul's argument from 1 Cor 14, but the later text from 1 Tim 2 (Tert. *On the Veiling of Virgins*, ch 9;<sup>85</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-II, Quest. 177, Article 2). Philip Payne's analysis shows that the Apostolic Fathers give no sign of awareness of 1 Cor 14:34-35, and Clement of Alexandria reflects the text without these verses.<sup>86</sup>

This is a passage with text critical issues which are important and will be addressed first. Not all manuscripts have these verses in the same location in the passage, while all manuscripts do contain the verses. Codex Bezae (D) and some later texts locate these words after v.40. The material preceding this passage relates to prophecy (see 14:29-32) as does the material following it (vv.37-39) and so it seems to interrupt the existing argument. We can see the same type of issue in John 7:53-8:11 which is accepted as not original.<sup>87</sup> In that case, the interruption is less of a concern that the fact it is absent in many significant early witnesses and has non-Johannine language, but the result is that this text is widely accepted as not Johannine, and some key evangelical scholars go so far as to dismiss it entirely as not from the Jesus tradition.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, we should not dismiss this problem too quickly, although the fact that the text is present in the early witnesses means it is more likely to be Pauline.

Gordon Fee, and Philip Payne amongst a great many other scholars view this passage as an interpolation and not original, and their concerns should be engaged with.<sup>89</sup> Their

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<sup>84</sup> However early Church Fathers from Tertullian to Aquinas did in fact conclude that no woman could utter a sound; pray or sing audibly among men based on 1 Tim 2 (Tert. *On the Veiling of Virgins*, ch 9; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-II, Quest. 177, Article 2).

<sup>85</sup> It is not permitted for a woman to speak in the church; but neither (is it permitted her) to teach, nor to baptise, nor to offer, nor to claim to herself a lot in any manly function, not to say (in any) sacerdotal office. Let us inquire whether any of these be lawful to a *virgin*. If it is *not* lawful to a *virgin*, but she is subjected on the self-same terms (as the woman), and the necessity for humility is assigned her together with the woman, whence will this one thing be lawful to *her* which is not lawful to any and every *female*? If any is a *virgin*, and has proposed to sanctify her flesh, what prerogative does she (thereby) earn adverse to her own condition? Is the reason why it is granted her to dispense with the veil, that she may be notable and marked as she enters the church? That she may display the honour of sanctity in the liberty of her head? More worthy distinction could have been conferred on her by according her some prerogative of manly rank or office! (Tert. *On the Veiling of Virgins*, ch. 9).

<sup>86</sup> See Payne, *Men and Women, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 250-252.

<sup>87</sup> See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 187-189. Stanley Grenz notes that it was the Reformers who relaxed these restrictions while even as late as the 1890's there were still contexts where women were forbidden to sing in church. Grenz, 121.

<sup>88</sup> Witherington, *John's Wisdom*.

<sup>89</sup> They argue that these verses may have started out as a gloss in the margins, and have later been incorporated into the passage. For a clear and detailed argument see Payne, *Men and Women, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 217-267. See also E. Earle Ellis, "The Silenced Wives of Corinth (1 Cor 14:34-35)," in *New Testament*

argument is from both external (what texts and early interpreters suggest) and internal (from the letter itself) evidence:<sup>90</sup>

1. The transcriptional probability suggests it was not original. *Every* Western text has the passage after v. 40 (it most certainly breaks up the flow of the argument on prophecy). The earliest Western tradition dates from the first half of the second century.
2. *Codex Vaticanus* shows the markings of a textual variant. It has two horizontally aligned dots in the margin of v. 33 at mid-character height (*distigma*) suggesting an interpolation immediately follows. There are 765 unambiguous *distegmai* in *Vaticanus*.
3. *Codex Fuldensis* corrected by Bishop Victor of Capua (541-544 CE) rewrote and corrected the text, omitting the verses. He was known for his astute scholarship.
4. In MS 88 (non-Western manuscript), verse 36 follows on from verse 33, and they appear at the end of the chapter. The most reasonable explanation for MS 88's treatment of vv. 34-35 is that this manuscript was copied from a manuscript that omitted these verses.
5. Clement of Alexandria reflects a text without verses 34-35. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Paed.* 3.11 he says: "Woman and man are to go to church decently attired, with natural step, embracing silence ... fit to pray to God .... For this is the wish of the Word, since it is becoming for her to pray veiled.... Such ought those who are consecrated to Christ appear, and frame themselves in their whole life, as they fashion themselves in the church for the sake of gravity." He goes on to cite many verses from the epistle, but never vv. 34-35.
6. The Apostolic Fathers give no sign of awareness of 1 Cor 14:34-35. This is a significant point.
7. There is a high incidence of textual variant of these verses suggesting the variant must be considered as unstable.
8. From internal evidence: These verses contradict Paul's encouragement for women to speak in church in chapter 11.
9. They interrupt the flow of Paul's argument about prophets.
10. The verses use vocabulary (words and phrases) differently to other passages.
11. The verses conflict with the goal of the instruction in the church. For example, women are to ask their husbands as home, while Paul's primary interest is that

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*Textual Criticisms and Its Significance for Exegesis: In Honour of Bruce Metzger*, ed. E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 213-220.

<sup>90</sup> Taken from Payne's detailed analysis and draws heavily on secondary literature. He stands within a large group who view this text as an alien body. Payne, *Men and Women*, 217-267.

“everyone may be instructed.” Why should he expect the husbands were skilled enough to answer all their questions?

12. The use of “just as the law says” does not fit Paul’s theology or his style of expression. It is also found nowhere in the OT; what is he alluding to? The closest found is in the Jewish oral law where silence and submission is required of women (*Ketub*. 7.6 it is a transgression for a woman to speak to any man). Paul normally writes “as it is written in the law” and so the language itself is atypical.
13. Paul champions weak social groups (poor at the Eucharist 11:21-22, 33-34; weak in 8:7-13; 10:31; supports women praying and prophesying; ch’s 12-14 he encourages all the body to participate), while this summarily silences women.
14. The vocabulary imitates or mimics 1 Tim 2:11-15.

Many however, argue for the veracity of the textual unit and suggest the issue (which cannot be silence) is a particular type of speech in the church that Paul is addressing. It is possible, while less likely, that Paul is addressing non-believing wives who are attending the worship gathering, and they may be asking inappropriate questions.<sup>91</sup> Yet, if this were the case we would expect Paul to specify this in some way (eg. *gunaikes apistai*), and he does not.

Another possibility is that vv33b-35 are an extended quotation from a Corinthian correspondence, to which Paul responds in v.36.<sup>92</sup> That is, the men are saying women must be silent and Paul responds: *Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?* There is no doubt Paul is speaking with some sarcasm (and has done so already in 4:8-10), and this is a difficult verse in and of itself. The masculine adjective in v.36 (‘only’ is masculine plural) as an indication that Paul may be rebuking the men in the church who have put forward such a preposterous view, yet a masculine plural in Greek can equally include women, the argument is not very strong. Peppiatt’s view has yet to be well tested in the academy, although Lynn Cohick recently suggested she is open to this as a correct interpretation.<sup>93</sup> Ciampa and Rosner make a good point when they note that if this view is correct it is more likely that Paul would put more space into arguing for his own view.<sup>94</sup>

Most solutions to the conundrum that women are speaking (*vis-à-vis* 1 Cor 11) and women must be silent (1 Cor 14) is resolved in considering a type of speech which is occurring in the Corinthian church. The language of speech (*laleō*) is most recently used in

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<sup>91</sup> See Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 719, FN 201.

<sup>92</sup> This is most recently argued by Lucy Peppiatt, *Women and Worship at Corinth: Paul’s Rhetorical Arguments in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene: Cascade, 2015).

<sup>93</sup> ANZABS 2017, Adelaide.

<sup>94</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 720.

reference to tongues and prophecy, (14:27-28, 29) and as Paul has already been arguing about correct forms of speech in the church, then perhaps this is what is meant. It may be that he views tongues and prophecy as best carried out by women in the home, but then women are already prophesying in the church with Paul's blessing and so this view cannot be considered Pauline.

A view which some favour is that women must not weigh the prophecies of others (see v.29). Grudem says that v.35 is best read as: "Suppose what some women in Corinth had wanted to evade the force of Paul's directive. The easy way to do this would be to say, *we'll do just what Paul says. We won't speak up and criticise prophecies. But surely no one will mind if we asked a few questions! We just wanted to learn more about what these prophets are saying.* Then such questioning could be used as a platform for expressing in a none-too-veiled form the very criticism that Paul forbids. Paul anticipates this possible evasion...."<sup>95</sup> As Ciampa and Rosner note, "the level of deceptiveness and insincerity assumed in this speculation is remarkable;"<sup>96</sup> he seems deeply suspicious of women's motives which is concerning. Interestingly Grudem does not rule women out from evaluating prophecy, but says they must do so in their own minds (silently), but they cannot express their evaluations audibly. This would be spiritual authority which he believes is restricted to men.

It is important to clarify at this time that Paul must be dealing with "wives" and not all women. His directive is to ask "their husbands" (*idioys andras*) at home," and which is very clearly limited to the husband-wife relationship. The most likely scenario is that wives are publicly criticising their husbands, and in this Greek shame-based context, this would cause considerable cultural embarrassment to the husband. Grudem, even though Paul specifies *idioys andras* (their own husbands), says this cannot be limited to wives, but must mean all women, which is simply not possible in this text.<sup>97</sup> Grudem is normally very careful to note the specificities in scriptural texts, and stresses that they must be adhered to, yet here he seems want to do so; the likely problem stemming from an *a priori* starting point. His conclusion that this passage addresses all women is to be understood as special pleading and should be set aside.

In the Greek world learning took place through Socratic method which is a balance of question and debate; the likely scenario Paul is describing. The goal of this method was to strengthen your position or understanding of an issue or topic by engaging with people of

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<sup>95</sup> Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 253.

<sup>96</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 722.

<sup>97</sup> Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 248.

other views and perspectives. Under Socratic method it was only the learned who asked questions and debated with their teacher, but as Greek women married at around age 12 and their education stopped education when they were mere children. Their cognitive skills would be severely curtailed, and if they were engaging in Socratic dialogue, they are likely to be causing considerable problem; they were simply not skilled for this form of public conversation. Therefore, it is important to note that Paul talks about wives wanting or *desiring* (*thelō*) to learn, which is a positive sign which is certainly counter-cultural. He wants them to learn and participate (see 1 Cor 11), but the manner of this engagement, especially if they are not skilled in the rhetoric, means that at this time he has placed limitations.

This is not the case in the western world today; women are highly educated and quite able to engage in public conversation. We also do not live in the cultural situation like Corinth where men are embarrassed by their wives in the same way. This is what some of the ancient men said about wives:

Josephus said that “she is inferior to her husband in all things” (*Contra Apion* 2.25). Plutarch says of a virtuous wife that:

A virtuous woman ought to be most visible in her husband's company, and to stay in the house and hide herself when he is away. A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends in common with him. Not only the arm of the virtuous woman, but her speech as well, ought to be not for the public, and she ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of outsiders, since it is an exposure of herself; for in her talk can be seen her feelings, character, and disposition (*Conjugalium Praecepta* 9).

He also tells of a woman who accidentally exposed her arm when putting on her cloak, and after someone commented “what a lovely arm,” she replied, “but not for the public!”<sup>98</sup>

Quintus Antistius Vetus “divorced his wife because he had seen her in public having a private conversation with a common freedwoman, For moved, not by an actual crime but, so to speak, by the birth and nourishment of one, he punished her before the crime could be committed, so that he might prevent the deed’s being done at all, rather than punish it afterwards.” For Vetus a wife should not have a private conversation with a stranger (she should have had an attendant); certainly not someone else’s husband.

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<sup>98</sup> Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*, 726.

Marcus Porcius Cato scoffed at women “speaking to other women’s husbands! Could you not have asked your own husbands the same thing at home?” He goes on, “Our ancestors did want women to conduct any – not even private – business without a guardian... As soon as they begin to be your equals, they will have become your superiors.”<sup>99</sup>

Paul goes on to say that wives should be subordinate (to their husbands), ‘as the law also says’ (v.35), however, there is no clear place where this is found and this makes Paul’s words very difficult to reconcile. Some have found recourse to explain the use of *the law* here as the Miriam was punished with a leprous blight for speaking against Aaron (Num 12:1-15),<sup>100</sup> however this is somewhat tenuous and Paul is hardly suggesting any form of plague for women as a consequence for speaking. Chrysostom and Theodoret look to Gen 3:16 where the husband will rule over the wife after sin entered the world, and this view is supported by other key scholars today.<sup>101</sup> This suggests Paul is talking about the law not allowing women to behave in an insubordinate way and so bring shame on her husband.

The asking of questions by these married women in the public assembly was clearly against cultural norms and may have been having detrimental effects for the community. Paul’s solution whereby husbands are involved in their wives ongoing learning may even be innovative and progressive for 1<sup>st</sup> C Greek culture. While this would be extremely strange in the Western world today, and there should be no suggestion that we translate this directly into the modern world, neither should this be viewed as a ‘backwards’ solution. Further, it does not hold men up as superior or view women as inferior and unimportant. Instead, this solution keeps the peace in the community of faith and values the desire of these women to learn alongside their husbands.

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### *1 Tim 2:8-15*

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*Dr Csilla Saysell*

The text in 1 Tim 2:8-15 is perhaps the most controversial pertaining to the limits placed on women and the only one that explicitly forbids them to teach. The many and contradictory interpretations of almost every aspect and word of the passage, none of which is entirely

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<sup>99</sup> Livy, *History of Rome*, 34.1.

<sup>100</sup> See Walter Liefeld, “Women, Submission, and Ministry in 1 Corinthians,” in *Women, Authority, and the Bible*, ed. A. Mickelsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsityPress, 1986), 149-150.

<sup>101</sup> See Thiselton, Bruce.

unproblematic, suggest that we are dealing with a difficult text that is not easily unpacked. One is therefore well-advised to heed the basic principles of biblical interpretation, namely, that doctrine must be based on the whole teaching of the Bible and clear formulations must have priority over ambiguous or obscure texts.<sup>102</sup>

The central question in determining the meaning in 1 Tim 2:8-15 is whether it has a universal application to all women at all times and places or if it is restricted to the specific situation and context of the Ephesian church, where Timothy is based. Although the prohibition is phrased in universalistic terms and the allusion to Gen 2 suggests an appeal to the ideal state,<sup>103</sup> there is good reason to question such an approach. First, if this command is universal and thus has an enormous impact on all Christian women for all time, it is surprising, that the instruction comes only once,<sup>104</sup> and does so almost ‘by the way’ in a section focussed on urging appropriate behaviour for both men and women in prayer. Further, as Keener also notes, there is no indication that this is a well-established and known prohibition such as would be accompanied by phrases like ‘as you know...’, ‘as you have heard from me...’, ‘as I passed on the tradition...’.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, if read as a universal command, it manifestly contradicts Paul’s own practice in ministering with women and allowing them significant roles in teaching (e.g. Phoebe, Junia, Priscilla, etc.).<sup>106</sup> Finally, the use of Gen 2-3 is, as we shall see, illustrative of the kind of problem that the Ephesians faced rather than an explanation of a universal prohibition.

1 Tim 2 opens with a missional focus exhorting to prayer so as to enable a peaceful setting in which the gospel may reach all (vv.1-7). The subsequent ‘therefore’ in v.8 then admonishes men to pray without anger and dissension, presumably pointing to a particular hindrance to the efficacy of their prayers. This possibly refers back to the issue of heresy introduced in 1:3-7 that involved fruitless (and perhaps heated) discussions (cf. 6:3-5)<sup>107</sup> and even led to some men’s shipwreck of faith (1:19-20). If the prayer described is in the context of a house-

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<sup>102</sup> W.W. Klein, C.L. Blomberg and R.L. Hubbard Jr., eds., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2004), 463.

<sup>103</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 110, 113.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>106</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004) 199; Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 101.

<sup>107</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 118; Keener, *Paul Women and Wives*, 102; Paul Trebilco and Simon Rae, *1 Timothy*, ABCS (Singapore: Asia Theological Association, 2006), 45.

church, which was potentially open to uninvited outsiders (e.g. 1 Cor 14:23),<sup>108</sup> it may also warn of becoming a stumbling block for non-believers.

The command to the men in 2:8 is then followed by instruction for the women in vv.9-15. The initial 'likewise' in v.9 and the lack of any new verb suggests that the topic is still prayer.<sup>109</sup> The structure reflects the household code tradition, a form borrowed from secular contexts in which appropriate behaviour for men and women is prescribed.<sup>110</sup> All this suggests that we are dealing here with a cohesive unit rather than an abrupt change of topic from men's prayer to women's position in the church.

There are two aspects to the command for women. First, vv.9-10 focus on the issue of outward appearance (hairstyle and clothing). In the Greco-Roman world, as Towner points out, outward appearance was an indicator of inward attitude. Thus Roman wives wore simple clothing and hairstyles that did not draw attention to the wearer, but expressed a woman's virtue and fidelity to her husband, while elaborate hairstyles and garments were characteristic of sexually available women and prostitutes.<sup>111</sup> Based on Winter's research, it is now well-established that there was a movement among wealthy women in the Roman Empire who wanted the same sexual freedoms for women that men had and who increasingly had opportunities for public roles (such as becoming magistrates) and political influence.<sup>112</sup> Corresponding to their sexual promiscuity, they did away with traditional dress codes and practised contraception and abortion. It was considered so dangerous a movement that Augustus legislated against it as it was seen to disrupt the social mores of society.<sup>113</sup> These Ephesian women then were admonished not to engage in disruptive behaviour by sexually provocative attitudes and the ostentation of their wealth. Moreover, given the missional

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<sup>108</sup> Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 190-91.

<sup>109</sup> E.g. C. L. Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 288; Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 102; Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 119.

<sup>110</sup> Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 192. Although the Greek terms for 'men' (*aner*) and 'women' (*gune*) can mean 'husbands' and 'wives', it is more likely that the instructions are addressed to the former pair. As Witherington argues, it is unlikely that Paul would only wish husbands to pray, not all men, and the absence of the definite article with 'women' suggests again a general referent. Even in vv.11-12 where the discourse switches to 'a woman' the use seems to be generic. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 119. See also Trebilco and Rae, *1 Timothy*, 56; Linda L. Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, eds. R.W. Pierce and R. M. Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 110-125 (208). (*Contra* Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 138-39).

<sup>111</sup> Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 205-6, 208-9.

<sup>112</sup> Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 21-38.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-58.

context of the chapter (2:4), the above perception by outsiders would have been detrimental to the gospel message.<sup>114</sup>

The second aspect to the command is then explained in vv.11-12 and deals with the issue of teaching and authority. The rationale for the prohibition may be that at least some of the women were uneducated and a conduit for false teaching (1 Tim 5:13; 2 Tim 3:6-7).<sup>115</sup> Given the false teachers' greed (6:5), it was likely that they would target well-to-do women.<sup>116</sup> Another reason may be the imitation of the 'new' Roman women, who engaged in philosophical debates at banquets, which was criticised by contemporary men as inappropriate behaviour.<sup>117</sup> Thus, concern about heresy<sup>118</sup> and for the outward perception of the Christian movement likely forms the backdrop to the command.

Quietness (v.11) can be construed as complete silence, though women were not prohibited from praying or prophesying (1 Cor 11:4-5), so it is more likely that the word means a quiet attitude just as it does in 1 Tim 2:2,<sup>119</sup> which is contrasted in the letter with the improper speech of some women (3:11; 5:13). Learning accurate Christian teaching is then the remedy. It is worth pointing out, that the command for submissiveness does not mention husbands or men at all. Thus the natural reading of the text exhorts women to submit to the *teaching* they receive.<sup>120</sup> It does not envisage the submission of all women to all men, which would require the former to submit even to the false teachers, who seemed to have been mainly men.<sup>121</sup>

Verse 12 then goes on to prohibit women from teaching or having authority over men. The Greek for 'I do not permit' should better be translated as 'I am not permitting' in the present continuous tense. Paul's usage of this grammatical form without further qualifiers (e.g. 'for everyone', 'to all') always indicates personal advice for a specific situation rather than a

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 120-22; Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 198; Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 119-20.

<sup>115</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 112. While this issue is debated, Payne notes that 1 Timothy repeatedly describes women in similar or the same language that he applies to the false teachers (e.g. 1:7 and 5:13; 4:1 and 5:15). For a full list see Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 299-300

<sup>116</sup> Trebilco and Rae, *1 Timothy*, 46.

<sup>117</sup> Winter, *Roman Wives*, 112-13.

<sup>118</sup> That heresy is a major issue in 1 Timothy (and also in 2 Timothy), is evident from a number of references to it (1:3-7, 19-20; 4:1-5, 7; 6:3-10, 20-21). See e.g. Towner, 197-98; Trebilco, *1 Timothy*, 45-47.

<sup>119</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman*, 314-15; Keener, *Paul, Women, Wives*, 107-8; Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 120.

<sup>120</sup> Winter, *Roman Wives*, 113-14; Payne, *Man and Woman*, 315-16.

<sup>121</sup> As Trebilco and Rae point out, all the named opponents in 1-2 Timothy are men (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 1:15; 2:17; 4:14-15). Trebilco and Rae, *1 Timothy*, 47.

universal command.<sup>122</sup> The word for ‘teaching’ is a general one, thus context must be the guide in determining the meaning.<sup>123</sup> As we have seen, heresy seems a major reason for such a restriction on women teaching, whether it was in a public or private setting, instructing individuals or groups.<sup>124</sup> The second half of the prohibition, based on similar grammatical constructions elsewhere in Paul, should be read together with the first about teaching as a single idea of women teaching men with (self-assumed) ‘authority’.<sup>125</sup> The word translated in most English Bibles as ‘exercising authority’ only occurs here in the entire NT<sup>126</sup> and is not the standard verb used by Paul elsewhere.<sup>127</sup> This unique word can have a neutral sense or the more negative connotation of ‘domineer’, in some cases even denoting ‘murder’ and violence.<sup>128</sup> Again, the context in 1 Timothy suggests that a domineering attitude is in view.<sup>129</sup>

We now turn to vv.13-14, the most baffling aspect of the argument from Gen 2-3, which at first glance, confirms the universalist interpretation, since it appeals to Scripture and the way things have been set out from the beginning. On this reading, Eve was created second in sequence, which indicates her position in the created order as submitted to Adam’s leadership. Since she was more gullible being deceived first, it would explain why she is not to teach or exercise authority over men. This looks like a straightforward reading, however, there are a number of objections to it.

First, Gen 2-3 need not be an explanation of the prohibition, but rather an illustration of the same issue,<sup>130</sup> just as Paul elsewhere evokes the same example of Eve being deceived to demonstrate how gullible the whole Corinthian church was, including men (2 Cor 11:3).<sup>131</sup> Further, primacy in sequence does not automatically indicate primacy in position. Gen 2 does not make this point, in fact, it is hard to see how it could do so, when it lists the creation of animals before the woman (2:18-22).<sup>132</sup> Moreover, if the subordination of women is based on the universal principle of the created order, why is it then narrowed down by interpreters to include only the authority exercised in the church and at home but not in politics or

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<sup>122</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman*, 320-25.

<sup>123</sup> Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 121.

<sup>124</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman*, 326-28, 334-35.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 337-59 (esp. 358-59).

<sup>126</sup> Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 290; Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 121.

<sup>127</sup> Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 220.

<sup>128</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women, Wives*, 109.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 109; Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 121; Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 293.

<sup>130</sup> Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 122.

<sup>131</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women, Wives*, 117.

<sup>132</sup> Kroeger and Kroeger make a similar argument based on the sequence of fish, birds, etc. before human beings from Gen 1. R.C. Kroeger and C.C. Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking I Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992), 18.

business?<sup>133</sup> Finally, it is difficult to maintain that women by nature are more easily deceived than men, when Scripture repeatedly affirms that men are not exempt either (e.g. 2 Tim 3:13, Titus 3:3).<sup>134</sup> If women are more prone to being deceived then they should not be allowed to teach anyone, neither in a missionary setting giving an exposition of the gospel, nor in Sunday school or instructing other women.

If this view, taken to *ad absurdum*, creates impossible scenarios, then how should we interpret the admonition in 1 Tim 2:14? Keener helpfully summarises the key points. First, the issue about the woman being created second is about the fact that the woman was not present when the man was given instructions about what they could and should not eat. Thus the woman is more easily deceived, not because she is a woman, but because she did not receive proper instruction, which corresponds well to the Ephesian situation.<sup>135</sup>

Finally, the reference in v.15 to women being saved through childbirth cannot mean that they have a special way to eternal salvation as this would make nonsense of the NT teaching on salvation through Christ alone. As Towner observes, it is more likely connected to the issue of the false teachers forbidding marriage (4:3) and/or the new woman movement which advocated a lifestyle not burdened by children. Thus women are exhorted to embrace the culturally accepted, traditional roles of motherhood and raising children (childbirth may indicate more than just bringing a baby into the world) in conformity with what society would have accepted as a praiseworthy lifestyle.<sup>136</sup> ‘Salvation’ then has the sense of ‘working out one’s salvation’, i.e. living in a way that demonstrates the salvation received in Christ.<sup>137</sup> Alternatively, being ‘saved’ may mean God’s promise of help in being rescued (i.e. brought through childbirth safely), which links in with the increased pain of childbirth after the Fall (Gen 3:16), as well as with women’s fear of dying in childbirth, a not infrequent occurrence in the ancient world.<sup>138</sup>

In summary, two issues may have contributed to the restrictive line taken in the letter regarding women. First, the potential secular influence of permissive attitudes in dress, sexual behaviour and public roles coupled with the missional focus of the chapter, made it essential that women conform to society’s traditional expectations of dress and attitude so as not to hinder the efficacy of their prayers and ultimately the spreading of the gospel. Secondly, the

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<sup>133</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman*, 402-403.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 411-12.

<sup>135</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women, Wives*, 116.

<sup>136</sup> Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 234-35.

<sup>137</sup> E.g. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 123-24; Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 235.

<sup>138</sup> Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 130-140. Also Keener, *Paul, Women, Wives*, 118-20.

threat of heresy together with the limited access to education available to women and their consequent susceptibility to false doctrine (illustrated by Gen 2-3) required that they learn correct Christian teaching first. While the passage places significant limitations on women in a local church, and it is a marked departure from Paul's practice, it is explained in terms of the specific local context that made such action necessary. As Towner observes 'experimentation with greater freedom in women's ministry activities might, for the sake of the church's mission, need to move in concert with cultural trends. What this means for Christianity in traditional Asian or Muslim contexts is that too much too fast could endanger the church's witness and credibility. But in much of the Western world, too little too slow could neutralize the church's impact in society just as effectively.'<sup>139</sup>

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*We acknowledge Paul's female co-workers (Rom 16: 1-5, 6, 7).*

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*Elliot Rice*

At the end of the letter to the Romans, Paul's *magnum opus*, he gives an extensive list of greetings to the house churches of the city, along with a special commendation of his letter bearer, Phoebe. The list in chapter 16 is striking, both for its unusual length, and for the number of women named in the Roman ministry. In the following discussion we will consider Phoebe, Paul's personal messenger and teacher to the churches of Rome; Prisca, the long-time co-worker of Paul, and one of his trusted feet on the ground in Rome; the hard-working women of verses 6 and 12; and Junia, the woman Paul esteemed as being "prominent among the apostles". In Romans 16, we will find that the early church was embracing the leadership of women in all spheres of its ministry.

#### Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2)

*"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well."*<sup>140</sup>

At the beginning of Paul's greetings to the house churches of Rome is his commendation of Phoebe, an otherwise unknown believer, who he describes as "our sister", a "deacon", and a "benefactor of many". The commendation stands out from the long list of greetings beginning

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<sup>139</sup> Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 239.

<sup>140</sup> All biblical references taken from the NRSV, unless otherwise stated.

in verse 3, and has prompted most commentators to recognise her prominence and to treat vv. 1-2 as a discreet section. While her prominence is clear, opinions of the role Phoebe plays in this passage vary, centred on the debated interpretation of the words *diakonos* (διάκονος) and *prostatis* (προστάτις).

### *Deacon*

Having named Phoebe a “sister” in the faith, Paul goes on to call her a *diakonos*, which can mean either “servant” in the more general sense (see KJV, NASP, ESV, NET, HCSB), or “deacon” in the more specific sense (see NIV, NRSV, NLT, CEB, or NJB with “deaconess”). Against the former translation, the majority of scholars now affirm that Phoebe was indeed a recognised deacon of the local church of Cenchreae,<sup>141</sup> based on three pieces of evidence. (1) Paul uses the noun *diakonos* to describe her role, as opposed to a verbal form such as *diakonia* (“who serves”), so that an official role is more likely in view.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, as Schreiner observes, the masculine form of the noun suggests the office of deacon is intended.<sup>143</sup> (2) The noun is qualified by the participle, *ousan* (“to be”) and *kai* (“and”), so that Paul is describing a specific, recognised ministry, instead of a more general form of service.<sup>144</sup> (3) Most significantly for the argument of the office of deacon instead of the more general “servant” is the qualifier, “of the church at Cenchreae”, paralleled by its use Phil 1:1.<sup>145</sup> Schreiner concludes, “the designation ‘deacon of the church in Cenchreae’ suggests

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<sup>141</sup> Fitzmyer is an outlier in contemporary scholarship when he writes that it is “not clear” whether or not Phoebe had official standing in the church of Cenchreae. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 33, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 730. Knight alone argues (still) that “[servant] is more likely, since the reference to Phoebe as a ‘servant of the church’ has been widely understood to be a use of the Greek term *diakonos* in a non-technical and non-official sense, as it often is used elsewhere in the New Testament.” George W. Knight III, “The Family and the Church: How Should Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Work Out in Practice?,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991), 353.

<sup>142</sup> Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2009), 61.

<sup>143</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 787.

<sup>144</sup> So James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 886–87; Andrew Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul* (England: Apollon, 1998), 64; and Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 1058. On the presence of *kai*, the latter explains, “I believe . . . that this adverbial use of *kai* should be retained, both (1) because it is attested by such major textual witnesses as P<sup>46</sup> and Codex Vaticanus (B 03), and (2) because it witnesses to a proper understanding of Christian women in leadership roles in the early church.” “C. E. B. Cranfield concludes it is ‘virtually certain that Phoebe is being described as ‘a (or possibly ‘the’) deacon’ of the church in question, and that this occurrence of *διάκονος* is to be classified with its occurrences in Phil 1.1 and 1 Tim 3.8 and 12.” Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 61–62.

<sup>145</sup> So Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 62; Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 914; Perriman, *Speaking of Women*, 64.

that Phoebe served in this special capacity, for this is the only occasion [in Romans] in which the term δῶκονος is linked with a particular local church.”<sup>146</sup>

Opinions diverge, however, when it comes to describing the nature of Phoebe’s deacon role, particularly whether it can be called a “leadership” position or a “helping” position. Arguing against her leadership, Moo suggests deacons in the New Testament provided practical help, such as pastoral visitation, aid for the poor, and money management.<sup>147</sup> Schreiner goes further, arguing against any notion of her congregational leadership in favour of a women-focused ministry.<sup>148</sup> Perriman, without ruling out a sense of leadership, argues that “in the absence of the development of any clear technical sense, it is absurd to suggest that the word *signifies* ‘missionary’ or ‘leader’.”<sup>149</sup> However, recent scholarship has seen the debate turn in favour of viewing Phoebe as a leader.<sup>150</sup> (1) Following the recognition of her role as “a (or ‘the’) deacon of the church at Cenchreae,” commentators are highlighting the “legitimizing effect” of that title,<sup>151</sup> so that a leadership function appears likely.<sup>152</sup> (2) In 1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 11:15 and 23, *diakonos* is used to describe Paul and his colleagues’ ministry, which clearly went beyond philanthropic activities;<sup>153</sup> yet because Romans 16:1-2 refers to a woman, the same title in her case is subordinated. Quoting Schüssler Fiorenza, McCarthy writes, “‘Exegetes tend to denigrate these titles, or to interpret them differently, because they are given to a woman’.”<sup>154</sup>

### *Benefactor*

The arguments for or against Phoebe’s leadership are developed through discussing the second word of contention, *prostatis*, variously translated as “helper” (LEB, NASB, NCV, NET, NKJV, NLV, NLT, RSV), “benefactor” (CSB, HCSB, NIV, NRSV), “sponsor” (CEB), “respected leader” (CEV), “patron” (ESV), and “good friend” (GNT). As Moo highlights, this

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<sup>146</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 787. Dunn’s caveat is well noted, however, when he clarifies that “it would be premature to speak of an established office of diaconate, as though a role of responsibility and authority, with properly appointed succession, had already been agreed upon in the Pauline churches. We are still at the stage of ministry beginning to take regular and formal shape . . . and the form in each case would depend very much on the context and needs of particular congregations.” *Romans 9-16*, 887.

<sup>147</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 914.

<sup>148</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 787.

<sup>149</sup> Perriman, *Speaking of Women*, 64, n. 9; emphasis in original.

<sup>150</sup> So Brendan Byrne, *Paul and the Christian Woman* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1988), 70; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary on the Book of Romans*, ed. Eldon J. Epp, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 944–45; Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 61–62; V. K. McCarthy, “Phoebe—Paul’s Sister in Gospel Leadership: Rom. 16.1-2,” *ICJ* 15.2 (2016): 117; and Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1058.

<sup>151</sup> McCarthy, “Phoebe,” 117.

<sup>152</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 944–945; emphasis in original.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* emphasis in original.

<sup>154</sup> McCarthy, “Phoebe,” 118.

is the only case of *prostatis* being used in biblical Greek.<sup>155</sup> Among commentators, favour is split between benefactor,<sup>156</sup> patron,<sup>157</sup> helper,<sup>158</sup> and leader.<sup>159</sup> Schreiner argues against “patron”, finding the feminine noun *prostatis* carries a lesser status than the masculine *prostatēs* (patron),<sup>160</sup> and against “leader”, arguing it unlikely that Paul would call her his “leader”.<sup>161</sup> In favour of “help”, he identifies a play on words between *prostatis* and *paristēmi*: “Paul says to help (*paristēmi*) Phoebe because she has been a help (*prostatis*) to many, including to Paul himself.”<sup>162</sup> Perriman likewise finds her leadership of Paul improbable, and sees *paristēte* as the key for interpretation.<sup>163</sup> In contrast, Payne finds it less remarkable that Paul should speak of Phoebe’s leadership over him, given his command in Ephesians 5:21 that all Christians should “be subject to one another.”<sup>164</sup>

In favour of “patron”, many commentators argue patronage was a common convention in Greco-Roman society,<sup>165</sup> and that Paul has benefited from his patron Phoebe’s financial and legal backing. It is widely accepted that Phoebe was therefore a person of high social standing and means, a homeowner who presumably hosted Paul and the church at Cenchreae, and resourced him for his mission locally and abroad.<sup>166</sup> This is further compounded by the proximity of Cenchreae to the popular port city of Corinth, so that Phoebe “has been a patron

<sup>155</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 917.

<sup>156</sup> So *ibid.*, 916; Erlend D. MacGillivray, “Romans 16:2, Προστάτις/Προστάτης, and the Application of Reciprocal Relationships to New Testament Texts,” *Novum Testamentum* 53 (2011): 199; Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1058; and Michael F. Bird, *Romans*, SGBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 521.

<sup>157</sup> So Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 888–89; Byrne, *Paul and the Christian Woman*, 70; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 33:731; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 916; Jewett, *Romans*, 947; J. David Miller, “What Can We Say about Phoebe?,” *Priscilla Papers* 25.2 (2011): 16; Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1058; and Bird, *Romans*, 521.

<sup>158</sup> So Schreiner, *Romans*, 788; Perriman, *Speaking of Women*, 67.

<sup>159</sup> So Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 888–89; Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 62–63.

<sup>160</sup> Miller contests Schreiner’s interpretation as owing to male bias: “Such an understated translation as ‘helper’ is unfortunate, however, for *prostatis* is a technical term. The masculine form *prostates* and its Latin equivalent *patronus* regularly receive the translation ‘patron,’ and we should wonder why translators and commentators have been reluctant to recognize this sense in the feminine form.” “What Can We Say about Phoebe?,” 16. See also McCarthy, “Phoebe,” 104.

<sup>161</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 788. Moo also contests Phoebe’s leadership of Paul. *The Epistle to the Romans*, 916.

<sup>162</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, “The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership: A Survey of Old and New Testament Examples and Teaching,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991), 219.

<sup>163</sup> Perriman, *Speaking of Women*, 67.

<sup>164</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 62.

<sup>165</sup> “One of the imbedded social and economic realities of the Greco-Roman world was the symbiotic system of patronage. Society was a complex web of patrons and clients. Patrons were benefactors of the arts and of various organizations. Patrons also recruited individual clients. . . . In return, clients sang the praises of their patrons.” Miller, “What Can We Say about Phoebe?,” 16. See also Bird, *Romans*, 521.

<sup>166</sup> Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 889; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 33:728; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 916; Jewett, *Romans*, 947; Bird, *Romans*, 521.

to many” travelling Christians. Moo, Longenecker, and Bird view “patron” and “benefactor” synonymously, but MacGillivray has written a compelling study of patronage, contesting that its meaning differs in classical and modern understandings.<sup>167</sup> The modern view posits an asymmetrical relationship of patron-client (in this case, Paul would be subordinate to Phoebe), whereas in the New Testament era, *prostatis* denoted a relationship of reciprocity. MacGillivray therefore prefers “benefactor” to “patron”:

Doing so would maintain the correct implications that Phoebe’s help, or assistance, was significant, while also avoiding any unhelpful connotations of servitude.

“Benefactor” is also a suitably broad and flexible term which should provide room for our continued understanding of ancient reciprocity to be applied to the text.<sup>168</sup>

Payne likewise argues against “patron”, and against limiting Phoebe’s role to practical help generally, contending instead that “[e]very meaning of every word in the NT related to the word Paul has chosen to describe Phoebe as a ‘leader’ (προστάτις) that could apply in Rom 16:2 refers to leadership. . . . This term almost always refers to an officially recognized position of authority.”<sup>169</sup> Longenecker adds weight to viewing Phoebe as a leader by drawing attention to Paul’s phrasing of the sentence, which in the Greek reads “her you should receive” (in contrast to the the English translation, “you may welcome her”). “[I]t needs always to be realized that the apostle . . . was laying particular emphasis on Phoebe herself in writing to his Christian addressees at Rome: ‘*her* you should receive.’”<sup>170</sup>

Phoebe’s significance as a leader is confirmed by Paul’s choice to send his epistle—this, his *magnum opus*—to Rome with Phoebe (an uncontested assertion!).<sup>171</sup> Such a task is significant, as Stirewalt explains about these ancient letter carriers:

The service of a personal surrogate was of special significance for Paul. . . . Separated from the people, confronted by the necessary temporal delays, Paul depended on a

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<sup>167</sup> “Unfortunately, when ‘patronage’ is introduced in many in New Testament studies there is often no stated recognition, or apparent awareness, of differences between the modern and classical meaning.” MacGillivray, “The Application of Reciprocal Relationships,” 188–89.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>169</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 62–63. He lists, for example, 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17; 3:4, 5, 12. Furthermore, “The NRSV ‘for she has been a *benefactor* of many and of myself as well’ has the disadvantage that this meaning is not listed by LSJ or BAG, and that Paul’s companion Luke uses a different word that LSJ, BDAG, and BAG identify as meaning ‘benefactor,’ ‘those in authority over them are called benefactors [εὐεργέτης]’ (Luke 22:25). Thus, the linguistic evidence and the context of Phoebe’s standing in the church strongly favour the normal meaning of the term, *προστάτις*, namely, ‘leader.’” *Ibid.*, 63; emphasis in original.

<sup>170</sup> Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1058; emphasis in original.

<sup>171</sup> So Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 886; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 33:729; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 913; Schreiner, *Romans*, 786; Perriman, *Speaking of Women*, 63; Jewett, *Romans*, 943; Miller, “What Can We Say about Phoebe?,” 17; McCarthy, “Phoebe,” 105; Bird, *Romans*, 519; and Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1064.

third party to complete and update communications and to return messages from the correspondents—to expand and interpret his written word, and to translate his thought and intention when the messages were presented orally before an assembly.<sup>172</sup>

More weight is now being given to Phoebe's leadership role with regard to this special task she no doubt performed. Though we cannot know for certain, it seems fair to suggest that Phoebe was chosen to represent Paul to the Roman churches with his message,<sup>173</sup> that she was present with Paul through the letter-writing process, during which time she was personally coached by him with regard to its content,<sup>174</sup> that she read the letter aloud to its recipients in Rome, and that she subsequently explained its meaning to each of the five house churches.<sup>175</sup> This has led several commentators to call Phoebe "the first commentator to others on Paul's letter to Rome."<sup>176</sup> Going further, Miller has called Phoebe not only a patron and a deacon, but also a preacher<sup>177</sup> and an apostle.<sup>178</sup> This last title is affirmed by Bird: "She was, for all intents and purposes, Paul's personal apostle to the Romans."<sup>179</sup> Paul's opening commendation of Phoebe to the Christians of Rome, I agree, should be read as a strong endorsement of a leader he trusted to share his most important letter, and to offer its faithful interpretation.

#### Prisca (Rom 16:3-4)

*Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*

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<sup>172</sup> M. Luther Stirewalt, *Paul, The Letter Writer* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 23.

<sup>173</sup> "From what we know about the practice of Greco-Roman letter-writing, it appears that the choice of a letter bearer was sometimes as crucial as the content of the letter." McCarthy, "Phoebe," 108–9.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>175</sup> She "therefore would have been in a position to explain to the Christians at Rome (1) what Paul was saying in the various sections of his letter, (2) what he meant by what he proclaimed in each of those sections, and (3) how he expected certain important sections of his letter to be worked out in practice in the particular situations at Rome. Probably Phoebe should be viewed as the first commentator to others on Paul's letter to Rome." Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1064.. See also Bird, *Romans*, 526–27.

<sup>176</sup> Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1064. See also McCarthy, "Phoebe," 112; Bird, *Romans*, 527; Miller, "What Can We Say about Phoebe?," 17.

<sup>177</sup> "In the modern church, we have a title for a person who stands before a gathered congregation and with rhetorical skill delivers a prepared message based on Scripture. That title is preacher." Miller, "What Can We Say about Phoebe?," 18.

<sup>178</sup> He offers this fourth title suggestively, based on her participation in Paul's ministry to the Romans, and the possibility that she might be included in Paul's use of "we" to describe his apostleship in 1:5. *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Bird, *Romans*, 519; Later, he writes, "I have to confess that it was a close reading of Romans 16:1-16 that led me to a complete turnaround on my views concerning the roles of women in the church. . . . The fact that Junia is specifically identified as an apostle here is no small thing. Not only that, but it was reading about and reflecting on Phoebe—in particular her place in the Pauline circle, the reason why Paul chose her to deliver this letter, and imagining what subsequent role she might have played in the Roman churches ahead of Paul's visit—that . . . led me to affirm the role of women in the teaching ministries of the church." *Ibid.*, 526.

At the head of Paul's subsequent list of greetings to the Christians of Rome is his message to his co-worker friends Prisca (colloquially and diminutively named "Priscilla") and Aquila.<sup>180</sup> They had joined Paul in Corinth after being expelled from Rome by Claudius around AD 49/50, and worked together in tentmaking for about one and a half years (Acts 18:1-2). This wife-and-husband-duo feature strongly in the subsequent ministry at Ephesus, and where they remained while Paul continued on to Syria (Acts 18:18-19; 1 Cor 16:19). They were notably involved in the continuing discipleship of Apollos, having taken him aside to explain the Way of God to him more accurately, before releasing him for further ministry in Achaia (18:24-28). Paul sends these greetings a few years later, now they have returned to Rome. Paul calls them *synergous* ("co-workers"), a title he used for those who partnered with him in ministry, travel, evangelism, and church planting.<sup>181</sup> Priscilla and Aquila are Paul's trusted partners in the ministry of the gospel, his "firm foot on the ground in Rome."<sup>182</sup>

The point of interest in this greeting is that Prisca is named first, despite Greco-Roman convention that the male be named first.<sup>183</sup> Commentators vary as to what this should indicate. Schreiner acknowledges the possibility that it implies Prisca's prominence and knowledge over Aquila's, but finds it "impossible to verify it."<sup>184</sup> He prefers to note the equivalence of their ministry as woman and husband. Piper and Grudem more strongly argue that Aquila's "headship" must be honoured, "without squelching the wisdom and insight of Priscilla."<sup>185</sup> They find, with Schreiner, that a claim cannot be made either for or against the dynamic of this couple in ministry, and for Prisca's leadership role.<sup>186</sup> Kurek-Chomycz, in the

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<sup>180</sup> "The names of Prisca and Aquila not only open the long list of greetings, but, more importantly, the characterization they receive is the most extensive one." Dominika A. Kurek-Chomycz, "Is There an 'Anti-Priscan' Tendency in the Manuscripts? Some Textual Problems with Prisca and Aquila," *JBL* 125.1 (2006): 113.

<sup>181</sup> See Rom 16:9, 21; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25; 4:3; Col 4:11; 1 Thess 3:2; Phlm 1, 24.

<sup>182</sup> Bird, *Romans*, 522.

<sup>183</sup> Kurek-Chomycz compares this with other references to the couple: "as opposed to 1 Corinthians, where Aquila was named before Prisca, in Romans all the extant witnesses have Prisca's name first. Interestingly, external attestation seems to be remarkably consistent concerning the order in which these two names appear in Pauline literature. In all three occurrences the couple is invariably mentioned together, but while in 1 Cor 16:19, as far as I can tell, the manuscripts are unanimous in putting Aquila's name first, in Rom 16:3 and 2 Tim 4:19 Prisca is mentioned before her male partner. By contrast, as we shall see, the textual tradition of Acts 18 is more divided. In the manuscripts generally regarded as best, Prisca's name precedes that of Aquila four times out of six in the entire NT." "Prisca and Aquila," 113.

<sup>184</sup> Schreiner, "The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership," 795.

<sup>185</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions: An Overview of Central Concerns About Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2016), 37.

<sup>186</sup> "Saying that Priscilla illustrates the authoritative teaching of women in the New Testament is the kind of precarious and unwarranted inference that is made again and again by evangelical feminists and then called a major biblical thrust against gender-based role distinctions. But many invalid inferences do not make a major thrust." *Ibid.*, 38.

most thorough analysis to date, confirms we cannot read too much into this ordering of names, other than to recognise there is intentionality in so ordering them.<sup>187</sup> For Dunn, it suggests her as “the more dominant of the two or of higher social status . . . and she may either have provided the financial resources for the business or have been the brains behind it.”<sup>188</sup> Longenecker too sees the possibility of her higher social status.<sup>189</sup> Payne and Perriman both highlight the potential for recognising her greater involvement in the instruction of Apollos, noting Luke’s favourable description of hers and Aquila’s teaching, without any sense of inappropriateness at her gender.<sup>190</sup> Even Piper and Grudem “admit that there are ambiguities in separating the Priscilla-type counsel from the official teaching role of 1 Timothy 2:12.”<sup>191</sup>

#### Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Rom 16:6, 12)

<sup>6</sup>*Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you.*

<sup>12</sup>*Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.*

Less significant for our discussion about women leaders in the early church, but still worth noting in the context of this highly favourable account of the female contribution to the Roman mission is Paul’s greeting to Mary, in verse 6, and to Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis in verse 12—all of whom are said to have “worked hard” (*kopian*). It would be unfair to read too much into the particular work these women had performed, as Paul refrains from telling us, but it is worth observing that no other people are so described in these greetings—he has singled these women out as being worthy of such a commendation.<sup>192</sup> *Kopian* was a word Paul had used to describe his own ministry with the gospel and the church.<sup>193</sup>

#### Junia (Rom 16:7)

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<sup>187</sup> “[I]n the nearest context in Romans 16 we may point to the occurrence of Andronicus and Junia (v. 7), who could have been a couple, like Prisca and Aquila, and then to pairs of relatives, such as Nereus with his sister (v. 15) and Rufus with his mother (v. 13). In all these instances a man is mentioned first and a woman is sometimes not even named. This suggests that placing Prisca before Aquila in Romans was not absolutely accidental.” Kurek-Chomycz, “Prisca and Aquila,” 114, n. 18.

<sup>188</sup> Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 892.

<sup>189</sup> Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1067.

<sup>190</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 64; Perriman, *Speaking of Women*, 63.

<sup>191</sup> Though they go on to call Prisca’s work a “risk” and “less-than-ideal role assignment.” Piper and Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions*, 52–53.

<sup>192</sup> “[I]t is noticeable here that Mary is picked out first for such commendation, confirming that women played a not insignificant part in the emerging roles of leadership within the infant Christian communities—the weightier the significance of κοινία (Harnack), the more significant their role.” Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 894. So also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 33:737.

<sup>193</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 67.

*Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.*

In recent decades, the most contentious verse in this section has been Paul's greeting to "Andronicus and Junia," and their credentials as being "prominent among the apostles." We will see that scholarly consensus now exists on these matters, with the exception of Piper and Grudem's 2016 re-publishing of their 1991 contribution. It is important to negotiate these arguments carefully, given their effects still linger in contemporary thinking. The first issue is whether to understand the Greek Ἰουνίαν to be naming a woman or a man, which is determined by how the word is subsequently accented (i.e., Ἰουνιάων for the masculine 'Junias', or Ἰουνίαν for the feminine 'Junia').<sup>194</sup>

Piper and Grudem, following Schreiner, throw doubt on the gender immediately.<sup>195</sup> "The church fathers were evidently divided," Piper and Grudem argue, pointing to translations by Epiphanius, who favours the male Junias, and Chrysostom, who praises her as a female apostle. They decide in favour of Epiphanius, "since he appears to know more specific information about Junia(s) (that he became bishop of Apameia)."<sup>196</sup> Such a decision is strange, however, as they admit being "perplexed about the fact that in the near context of the citation of Junia, Epiphanius also designates Prisca, who is mentioned in Rom. 16:3, as a man, even though we know from the New Testament that she was a woman."<sup>197</sup> One wonders if they prefer Epiphanius' masculine interpretation because it better suits their complementarian agenda, rather than because they consider it textually correct. Refuting the notion of Patristic confusion, Miller, following Fitzmyer, finds "[a]t least sixteen ancient authors, from Origen (c. 185–254) to Peter Lombard (c. 1095–1169), understand Romans 16:7 to refer to a woman."<sup>198</sup> Aegidius of Rome and Giles of Rome were the first to argue for the masculine rendering in the thirteenth century, a tradition which became established when Luther translated it "Junias", and which lasted until the middle of the twentieth century when text-critical opinion saw the female "Junia" return to favour.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> As Longenecker explains, "[t]he difficulty in determining how the name should be accented has been complicated, of course, by the fact that Greek accents for the NT text came into vogue only in the sixth century A.D.; prior to the employment of accents, decisions were made solely on the basis of a word's immediate context." *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1060.

<sup>195</sup> Piper and Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions*, 58; Schreiner, "The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership," 221; Schreiner, *Romans*, 796.

<sup>196</sup> Piper and Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions*, 59.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 91, n. 27.

<sup>198</sup> Miller, "What Can We Say about Phoebe?," 19; "Indeed John Chrysostom even said of Junia, 'How great the wisdom of this woman that she was even deemed worthy of the apostles' title'." Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 33:737–38.

<sup>199</sup> For more on this, see Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005).

Those who favour the masculine “Junias” argue it is an abbreviated, nickname form of “Junianus”. This, they argue, follows a convention employed with other masculine names ending in *-as*, such as Silas (Acts 15:22) from Silvanus (1 Thess. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:12).<sup>200</sup> Cervin has ably countered this argument:

Not every name has a nickname, and conversely, some names have several nicknames. Just because some names are shortened, it does not follow that certain *other* names are shortened. It is therefore the actual existence of a nickname, not its *supposed* existence, which is crucial. The claim that *Junianus* has been shortened to *Junias* is, so far, groundless because there is no evidence to confirm the theory.<sup>201</sup>

He also notes the (frequently overlooked) point that *Junia* (translated “Junia”) is a Latin name, not Greek, and that its translation into Greek follows “the standard method of transcribing Latin names into Greek, [so that] the *nomen Iunius/Junia* is rendered as Ἰουῦνιος/Ἰουβία.”<sup>202</sup> We can therefore confidently conclude that Junia was indeed a woman, concluding with Dunn that “[t]he assumption that it must be male is a striking indictment of male presumption regarding the character and structure of earliest Christianity.”<sup>203</sup>

A second issue of contention from those who would challenge female apostleship is how one should understand the phrase that Andronicus and Junia “are prominent among the apostles”. Piper and Grudem consider this “highly unlikely”, preferring the ESV translation, “well known to the apostles”, so they are not themselves apostles.<sup>204</sup> The majority of scholars, however, recognise that they are indeed prominent *among* the apostles. A further challenge to female apostleship is that even if they should be considered apostles, Andronicus and Junia would have performed a lesser form of apostleship than Paul and the original twelve had, like some kind of itinerant ministry.<sup>205</sup> To an extent, Fitzmyer agrees that the couple’s apostleship

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<sup>200</sup> So Piper and Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions*, 60; Schreiner, “The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership,” 221. However, Schreiner tempers this in his later commentary on Romans, when he acknowledges “the contracted form of Junianus is nowhere found in Greek literature (see NRSV).” *Romans*, 795–96.

<sup>201</sup> Richard S. Cervin, “A Note Regarding the Name ‘Junia(s) in Romans 16.7,” *New. Test. Stud.* 40 (1994): 467; emphasis in original.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 469. This he contrasts with “the fact that all of the Latin *nomina* ending in *-ius* are regularly transcribed into Greek as names in *-ιος*.”

<sup>203</sup> Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 894. Bird has also weighed in: “Despite some naughty scribes, biased translators, lazy lexicographers, and dogmatic commentators, the text speaks about a woman named ‘Junia.’ Jewett goes so far as to call the masculine ‘Junias’ a ‘figment of chauvinistic imagination.’” *Romans*, 523.

<sup>204</sup> Piper and Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions*, 60–61.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 61. Likewise, Schreiner, “The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership,” 221. Interestingly, Schreiner in his earlier contribution totally echoed Piper and Grudem, but in his later commentary he now mildly accepts that they are “among” the apostles, while continuing to dispute their (and especially Junia’s) prominence: “It is improbable, however, that Andronicus and Junia had the same level of authority as Paul, Barnabas, and James . . . [I]n the case of Andronicus and

differed to the twelve: they were commissioned as itinerant evangelists.<sup>206</sup> But according to Fitzmyer, this is not some lesser ministry, but the very responsibility of carrying the Christian message to Rome. Longenecker agrees, arguing with Douglas Campbell that the apostolic couple were foundational to Roman belief in Jesus of Nazareth as Israel’s Messiah and humanity’s Lord, and therein lies their “significance” among the apostles.<sup>207</sup> With Dunn then, “We may firmly conclude . . . that one of the foundation apostles of Christianity was a woman and wife.”<sup>208</sup>

### Conclusion

We have surveyed Paul’s commendation of Phoebe to the church in Rome, and his greetings to the church there, focusing on Prisca, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis, and Junia the apostle. Of the ten colleagues Paul praises in Romans 16:1-16, seven of the ten are women.<sup>209</sup> Against the contestations of Piper, Grudem, and their complementarian cohort, we have argued strongly in favour of female leadership in the church—indeed, “Paul attributes leading roles to more women than men in the churches addressed.”<sup>210</sup> It has become clear in contemporary scholarship, as it retrieves patristic reflections on the same topics, that Paul’s words here are nothing less than a full endorsement of his fellow women leaders.<sup>211</sup> The

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Junia the idea is likely that they were itinerant evangelists or missionaries. . . . As a female missionary Junia may have directed her energies especially to other women. . . . One should scarcely conclude from the reference to Junia and the other women coworkers named here that women exercised authority over men contrary to the Pauline admonition in 1 Tim. 2:12.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 796–97.

<sup>206</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 33:739. Bird also doubts “that Andronicus and Junia were big ‘A’ apostles in the sense that they were called and commissioned by the risen Lord since we have no evidence for such a commission. Therefore, it is more likely that they were little ‘a’ apostles in the sense of delegates sent out from a church much in the same way that Titus was an ‘apostle’ of the Asian churches (2 Cor 8:23) and Epaphraditus was an ‘apostle’ of the Philippians church (Phil 2:25). According to Ben Witherington, ‘it would appear that Paul means that Andronicus and Junia were engaged in evangelism and church planting as itinerants.’” *Romans*, 523.

<sup>207</sup> Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1069.

<sup>208</sup> Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 895. “Chrysostom (ca. AD 344-407), even though he typically disparages women in church leadership, confirms that Junia was an apostle: ‘Even to be an apostle is great, but to be prominent among them . . .—consider how wonderful a song of honor that is. For they were prominent because of their works, because of their successes. Glory be! How great the wisdom of this woman that she was even deemed worthy of the apostle’s title.’” Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 66–67.

<sup>209</sup> Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 68.

<sup>210</sup> Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 900.

<sup>211</sup> “These references to women in Christian ministry reflect the fact that women believers in Jesus were engaged during the earliest days of nascent Christianity in ministries that were just as God-ordained and just as important as the ministries of believing men.” Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1071; “I have to confess that it was a close reading of Romans 16:1-16 that led me to a complete turnaround on my views concerning the roles of women in the church. . . . The fact that Junia is specifically identified as an apostle here is no small thing. Not only that, but it was reading about and reflecting on Phoebe—in particular her place in the Pauline circle, the reason why Paul chose her to deliver this letter, and imagining what subsequent role she might have played in the Roman churches ahead of Paul’s visit—that . . . led me to affirm the role of women in the teaching ministries of the church.” Bird, *Romans*, 526.

practice of the early church was in line with its egalitarian beliefs: Paul practiced what he preached. But why all the conjecture? Why the nit-picking of every word and phrase when it appears Paul praises a woman in ecclesial leadership? Chauvinist scholarship has for too long diminished the women Paul held in such high esteem. It is time we render women leaders their due.