

Women, Ministry, and Redeemer

Reference: James R. Beck, ed, *Two Views On Women in Ministry*, revised edition (Zondervan, 2005)

CURRENT STATE OF THE DEBATE

A. Three positions regarding Biblical exegesis.

A simple reading of the New Testament, particularly St Paul's writing, seems to forbid women from some kinds of functions in the church. There are really only three basic positions to take these texts:

1. 1st position: ***Paul was teaching that women couldn't have authority in the churches--and he was right.*** This view a) maintains the inerrancy of the Bible, and b) forbids ordination to women.
2. 2nd position: ***Paul was not teaching that women couldn't have authority in the church. That misunderstands the texts' meaning.*** This view a) maintains the inerrancy of the Bible, and b) opens all offices to women
3. 3rd position: ***Paul taught that women couldn't have authority in the churches—but he was wrong. Or, at least, we see things differently now.*** This view a) questions the traditional authority/sufficiency of Scripture, and b) opens all offices to women.

Comment: Notice that there are two ways to argue for women's ordination, and they are not alike. The first one (#2 above) is wrong (I believe,) but it doesn't undermine the inerrancy of the Bible. The second one (#3 above) however, is based on the fallibility of the Bible. No one holding this view could believe in the inerrancy of the Scripture. Therefore, the second approach is spiritually destructive. If the Bible is wrong about this subject, then we have shifted from a place where the Biblical text sits in judgment over popular opinion, spirit of the age, and subjective convictions to the place where some other standard is used by which we judge the Bible.

B. Six positions regarding church practice.

Within each of these three basic exegetical positions, there are two sub-divisions which lead to significant differences in actual church practice. I am giving them names rather arbitrarily.

(Within #1 above-views below believe the Bible forbids women some roles and functions in the church)

1. Traditional. This view says that women not only cannot have authority—cannot be elders, bishops, or ministers—but also cannot teach males (at least, not adult males.) In this view women are also usually excluded from public praying, reading, or speaking in worship services. This view is based on the position that Paul is forbidding *two* separate things in 1 Tim 2:12—a) no teaching *and* b) no authority. For an example see Thomas Schreiner in the book mentioned above, *Two Views*. This is the view held by the great majority of people who do not believe in women's ordination, certainly the great majority of people in the PCA.

2. Moderated traditional. (This is Redeemer's position over the years, so I give it a bit more treatment.) This view says that women cannot have authoritative offices—elder, bishops, or ministers—which bring disciplinary authority. But this doesn't mean they can't teach. In this view, anything that a non-ordained male can do, a woman can do. This position is based on the fact that 1 Timothy 2:12 is a 'hendiadys', a grammatical construction in which the two words modify each other to get across a single idea. (For example, '*with all your soul and with all your strength.*') In this view, Paul is forbidding *teaching authority*, namely authority over the doctrine and practice of the church. Teaching a Sunday school class, for example, is not authoritative teaching. As evidence of this interpretation, 1 Cor 11 clearly shows that women prophesy (speak, teach) and pray in public worship. 1 Cor 11 is difficult to square

with the traditional view. For an example of this view, see Craig Blomberg in *Two Views*. Another person who holds this view is John Stott, who allows women priests but not women bishops, since ultimately the bishop (in the Episcopal church) holds all the authority cards.

(Within #2 above—views below deny the Biblical texts are forbidding authority to women in the church)

3. Family-Church distinction. Gordon Hugenberger, pastor of Park Street Church, Boston and professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell, has a fairly unique position. He asserts that in 1 Tim 2 and 1 Cor 11 and 14 the word 'women' should always be translated 'wives,' and that these passages are only telling wives to submit to their husbands, not that all women should submit to male leadership in the church. This view has not exegetically convinced many people, but it is highly attractive in many ways. It holds to the traditional view of Genesis 1 and 2—that there are created gender differences, and that in marriage a wife should submit to the headship of her husband. But it also leaves open all roles and offices to women in the church. An example of Hugenberger's exegesis and argument can be found at the Park Street website.

4. Evangelical Egalitarian. This view holds that Paul's prohibitions in 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2 were only for that particular time and place, not for all churches and all times and places. The argument is that each church had distinct problems with how women were conducting themselves in the church, and Paul was coming down on them because they were excessively stubborn, domineering, or outspoken. For a good example of this view see Linda Belleville or Craig Keener in *Two Views*. This is the majority position among those in the evangelical world who support women's ordination.

(Within #3 above- views below believe the Biblical teachings were wrong or outdated.)

5. Pragmatic Feminists. John Stackhouse's influential new book *Finally Feminist* calls itself a 'pragmatic Christian' approach. Stackhouse's thesis is this: a) Jesus only chose male apostles and Paul forbid women to have authoritative offices, but if they had not, the gospel would never spread in that patriarchal time and place. Indeed, it would have been missionally *wrong* to ordain women. No one would have listened to the Word. b) But the Bible also teaches egalitarianism (Gal 3:28- *In Christ there is no male or female*) which now we must practice now, since we are in a new era. Today, it is wrong to *not* ordain women because now *that* is a stumbling block for listeners to the gospel. In short, the Bible contains both patriarchy and egalitarianism in tension with each other. Patriarchy within the Bible and church used to make sense, but it doesn't today. Stackhouse's position is similar to that of W. Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals*, who argues the Biblical position on is similar to its position on slavery. The Bible (he says) condones slavery and yet also gives a basis for the end of slavery. So we leave some teachings in the Bible behind as history progresses. Some things the Bible positively teaches are no longer binding on us today. Jesus' and Paul's exclusion of women from authoritative positions is one of them.

6. Traditional Feminists. This view holds that the Bible is not 'ambiguous' or conflicted on women at all, but rather reflects patriarchal and oppressive views of women in many of its parts. These 'texts of terror' must be abandoned now. This is probably the majority view of professors and scholars in mainline Protestant seminaries.

C. What is at stake

With views #5 and #6, the authority of the Scripture is clearly at stake. View #5 is especially worrisome to me, since it is growing among people in evangelical circles.

With view #4, the majority 'egalitarian' view, I think what is at stake is the *functional* authority of Scripture. Of course, this charge makes many people in this camp bristle—since they do believe in inerrancy and they are trying only to discern the author's original intent. But this view essentially says that some things in the New Testament were only for that day and time, not for now. But here's the problem: no one has yet explained how to draw a bright line through the New Testament to discover what principles and practices were 'only for that day' and which were not. After all, *all* the New Testament epistles were written to a specific group of people in a specific cultural and historic situation. None of them were theological treatises—they were pastoral letters. Any lay person hearing that I

Timothy 2 does not apply to women today, but only to the women in Ephesus, has the right to ask—'well, then what about all the other things Paul says?' 'Oh, they are different,' comes the reply. 'How? In what way?' is the counter-question. And a hard question to answer it is!

With the 'complementarian' views, however, other things are at stake. When I read many of the works of writers in this camp, I find something strange. They do very detailed and fastidious exegetical work to show us that Paul forbids *some* kind of authority and role in the church to women. That, I think, is clear. But then they jump immediately to assert all sorts of specific tasks that women can and cannot do in the church—or at all. They may argue that women should not work outside the home, that they can teach male children but not males over 12, etc. But nowhere does the Bible give such details. The Bible leaves us a lot of freedom here, but many writers assume very traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity that (I believe) can't be supported in the Bible. Also, once they work out in their own churches what the role of women should be, they are quite condemning of any church that has a less restrictive policy than theirs.

This tendency on the part of complementarian writers only makes the whole position more unpersuasive. It even has made me reluctant to call Redeemer a 'complementarian church.' Indeed, most complementarians believe Redeemer is way too 'loose' with regard to women's role. So, in summary, I think that the over-heated rhetoric of the complementarian camp is a great danger. Not only does it undermine the credibility of the historic church position on women, but it may create a haven for true sexists and bigots. By no means do I think any of the complementarian writers themselves are such—but their tone might make it easy for sexists to justify themselves.

A BIBLICAL CASE FOR REDEEMER'S PRACTICE

A. The role of women in each stage of redemptive history.

1. Creation. In Genesis 1 we see both male and female made in God's image, and both being given 'dominion' over the earth (1:26-28) But in Genesis 2 we see woman is created as an 'ezer "helper". On the one hand, the word always means someone who ordinarily brings resources that the 'helpee' does not have. That is why God can be called our *ezer* (Ex 18:4, Ps33:20.) So a helper is not an inherently inferior being—in fact, she or he may be superior in many ways. But careful study of the Hebrew word indicates that a 'helper' in each context comes to the aid of someone else who bears prime responsibility for the activity in question. That is way the man is never said to be the 'helper' of the wife. In other words, though the wife's help of her husband is based on being stronger than he in many ways, he has the primary responsibility for the family. The context of Genesis 1-3, of course, is a husband and a wife, and therefore it is not safe to confidently assume that all women are to be helpers to all men. But Paul builds his case on the irreversibility of gender roles in the church on the creation of Adam and Eve. (*Man did not come from woman...neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.*" 1 Cor 11:8-9.)

2. Israel. Many have pointed out that women in Israel served as both prophets (Ex 15:20-21; 2 Kgs 22:11-20) and civil magistrates (Deborah, Judges 4) but never as priests (Exodus 28; Leviticus 9.) Here again is an interesting balance. The word 'helper' affirms the resources and dignity of women and yet establishes male leadership. So here we see that women are not precluded from all public leadership. They receive revelations as prophets and exercise civil leadership. And yet at one crucial point God forbids women any access to the priesthood. Again we see neither a claim of the inherent inferiority of women nor a complete egalitarian interchangeability. (Note: Some have claimed that women couldn't serve as priests because their menstrual cycle made them ritually unclean each month. But it was God who made these rules, and besides, there were many things that made males unclean as well.) We cannot draw a simple inference as to what the preclusion from the priesthood means to the Christian church today. Are prophets like pastors? Are priests like elders? No and no. But what we can see is that in both creation and the post-fall, pre-Christ era of redemptive history, God affirmed women yet reserved some leadership roles only for men.

3. Jesus. Much has (rightly!) been made of Jesus' affirmation of women. Jesus receives Mary as a disciple, sitting at his feet (Luke 10:38-42) and women traveled as disciples along with the apostles (Luke 8:3.) Jesus' teaching on divorce is striking in that it treated men and women equally, at a time in which there was a double standard for the genders (Mt 5:32; Mk 10:11-12.) All of the first witnesses to the resurrection were women. Jesus' first gave the message of the good news to women. There is much, much more that we could say about Jesus' affirmation of women, of course, but again there is a kind of paradox. In spite of all this remarkable affirmation, Jesus did not choose a woman as one of the twelve apostles. As noted previously, many say that this restriction on women was only an adaptation to the patriarchy of Jesus' day. If (it is said) Jesus allowed female apostles the gospel would never have spread. But there are insurmountable problems with this view. **a)** First, the *content* of gospel itself was enormously offensive and outrageous to both Jewish and pagan minds. Jesus claimed to be divine—a towering offense to Jews. Jesus claimed to be the only Lord—a towering offense to the pagans. And then there was the idea of the kingdom of grace, not works. All of these things made the gospel not just hard but *impossible* to accept without the work of the Holy Spirit. The offensiveness of women preachers would have been tiny compared with the offense of the gospel itself. **b)** Even apart from the content of the gospel, it is highly questionable to assume that no religion could have 'gotten off the ground' with female leadership. Remember that many pagan cults had women priestesses. Would women apostles really have been so impossible to accept? I am no historian, but my guess is that a scholar could find many female priests and teachers among ancient religions. **c)** Lastly, we see in the gospels we see Jesus outraging people with his view of the Mosaic laws obsolescence, with claims about himself, with his inclusion of Gentiles and women and tax collectors. In short, he is *never* afraid to scandalize people when it is a matter of principle. This must mean that precluding women from the apostleship was not a violation of justice. If it is an injustice to exclude women from church leadership, why did Jesus do so? If it was an injustice, Jesus would never have done it, and would have let the chips fall where they may. That was his practice on every other subject.

In short, we see again a remarkable parallel to the other stages of redemptive history. There is a remarkable openness and affirmation to women despite the surrounding patriarchal culture. Yet Jesus restricted the final authoritative leadership of his church to men. If we say Jesus was 'a man of his time, acting unjustly,' then where do we get our standard of 'justice' if not from Jesus? If on the other hand we say that it was not unjust for the church to preclude women from ministry in the Bible but it is now, again, where do you get your standard for 'justice', if it is not from the Bible?

4. The church. Women were full members of the covenant community, evidently electing Matthias (Acts 1:12-26) as apostle. They were either deacons, deaconesses, or screened-and-appointed deaconing wives-1 Tim 3:11; Rom 16:2).¹ The daughters of Phillip prophesied (Acts 21:9), and women routinely prayed and spoke as part of public worship (1 Cor 11:5). Priscilla led a house church with her husband (Rom 16:4,5), instructed Apollos (Acts 18:26). Euodia and Syntyche are listed with Clement as evangelistic 'associates' of Paul (Phil 4:2-3). In general, the church provided women with more scope for their gifts and public prominence than was the case in broader society. That is the best explanation for why Paul urged them to not discard traditional head-coverings, the sign (in that culture) that they still considered themselves under their husband's authority.

Yet, there was not a complete *inter-changeability* between men and women in the church. Following Jesus, Paul lays down a rule that in the early church elders were to be men (1 Tim 3:1-3), and women are forbidden to "*teach or have authority*" over men (1 Tim 2:11).

¹ The 'women' of 1 Timothy 3:11 are screened with criteria. The conservative interpretation is that these were not women-deacons but the wives of deacons. But even if that were the case, elders' wives were not screened; there are no lists of criteria for elders' wives. Why would that be? If anything, one would think it more important for elders' wives to be mature Christians than deacons' wives. The only reasonable answer is that the women of v.11 were being screened for service--for diaconal ministry. Thus even a conservative interpretation (that these were deacons' wives) should concede that women were screened and appointed by the congregation to do deaconing ministry in the early church.)

Conclusion: There is a consistent pattern. In Genesis there is an indication of both female equality and male leadership in marriage. In Israel, women had many roles of leadership but were not allowed to be priests mediating forgiveness of sins through sacrifices. In the gospels, Jesus cultivates women in many remarkable ways, but again, some major part of leadership (arguably, the highest level) is kept from women. In the early church women play many significant roles but they never appear as elder-bishops. *"In light of this consistent pattern, it is hard to escape the twin conclusions that 1) male headship is a timeless, God-ordained principle at least for home and church, but 2) unlike its manifestation in [egalitarian] secular society or [hierarchical] religion, among God's people it is limited to the very highest office and even then is transformed into a model of loving servant hood that puts others, especially women, above self."* (Craig Blomberg, in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, p.181.

This is an unchanging, consistent pattern in the life of God's people's. And while God's coming on Mt Sinai and then in Jesus Christ brought massive changes to community life (between the OT and the NT) nothing like that has happened since apostolic times that we could say has brought about a new stage in redemptive history. So our view, against women's ordination, does not rely simply on a couple of proof texts (as important as 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 are) but on the entire sweep of redemptive history and the whole Bible.

B. The example of the Trinity.

In the Trinity the Son and the Spirit are at the same time equal to the Father and yet subordinate to Him. Jesus says both "The Father and I are one" (John 10.30) and "The Father is greater than I" (John 14.28). In Philippians 2:6-8 we are told Jesus voluntarily gave up his equal status to become a servant of God.

1. The Pattern in Marriage

1 Cor 11:3 says the Father's 'headship' over Christ is analogous to man's 'headship' over woman. This shows 'headship' involves the voluntary submission of an equal to an equal. Phil 2:6. The Trinity, then, disproves the idea that 'equality and submission are contradictions'. 1 Cor 11:3 says Christ's 'headship' over us is analogous to man's 'headship' over woman. This shows 'headship' is used only to serve and build up the other sacrificially Eph 5:25. Christ's servant-lordship disproves the idea that 'authority and service are contradictions'.

"Many Christians thus speak of a wife's being equal to her husband in personhood, but subordinate in function. However, this is just playing word games and is a contradiction in terms. Equality and subordination are contradictions."-L.Scanzoni, N.Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be* (Word,1974), p. 110

But if Jesus was equal to the Father in being and nonetheless became voluntarily and temporarily subordinate to the Father in role--why would it be either inherently a) contradictory or b) unjust for women to do the same in marriage or in the church? Submission to God's pattern in cross-gender sexuality and marriage ("the dance") involves us in a deep "mystery" which points to both the character and salvation of God. Eph 5:32. Male-female roles manifest the Trinity in its inner relationships and its redemptive purposes. The particular way headship in marriage is *practiced* may vary widely from culture to culture.

2. The Pattern in Society

There is a lack of Biblical evidence that all women in general were to submit to all men in general in society. For example, there is no indication in the text that Deborah was breaking a law (or that God was suspending a law) when she assumed the judgeship ("presidency") of Israel in Judges 4. The pattern of male headship-female submission is muted in society in general, but is explicitly practiced only in the family and the church.

Why would this be so? Here's my speculation. Because in the world, 'authority' is virtually always self-interested and coercive. Unregenerate persons seeking to practice male headship will inevitably use it in

worldly ways. It is safe to practice the pattern of male-female roles in family and church because there we have recourse to repentance, grace, and the Word to inform such concepts as 'authority' in the gospel.

3. The Pattern in the Church (See also below part C.)

The Christian church gave women a much greater role in the life of the community than was enjoyed in Judaism or paganism. (See R.Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*.) Women were full members of the covenant community (Acts 1:14). They were deaconesses (I Tim.3:11; Romans 16:2); this meant they were ministry leaders, initiating and supervising ministries. Women lead evangelistic, discipling, educational, and teaching ministries. Tabitha (Acts 9:30) was a leader of mercy ministry to the poor, while Euodia and Syntyche (Phil.4:2,3) were Paul's evangelistic associates. Priscilla disciplined and instructed Apollos (Acts 18:26) and led a house church (Rom.16:4,5). Junia (Rom 16:7) was an apostle in the sense of being a missionary with her husband Andronicus. As in the Old Testament (Exodus 15), women were prophets and did prophesy. They spoke and prayed in public worship (I Cor.11:5).

But women are told to '*keep silent*' in the church (1 Cor 14:35.) This cannot mean literal verbal 'wordlessness' because 1 Cor 11:5ff. assumes they speak in public. The context of 1 Cor 14:35 isn't public ministry in general but the evaluation of the doctrine of teachers and speakers ("*judging the prophets*"--1 Cor 14:29). In other words, they could speak publicly in worship, but when the doctrinal discipline of the public teachers was going on, they were to keep silent.

Women are also forbidden to *teach or have authority* (1 Timothy 2:11-12.) The critical question about this text is—is Paul forbidding *two* distinct, separate things to women (*teaching* and *exercising authority*) or is this phrase a 'hendiadys'—one idea using two phrases. If it is a hendiadys, it means Paul is forbidding 'teaching with authority' or teaching-authority, not all public instruction. Again (as in 1 Cor 14:35) the evidence is that this is one, not two ideas. **a)** The first reason for believing it is textual. The conjunction *oude* (which joins 'teach' and 'have authority') often joins together expressions that are mutually defining. (See Philip Payne's *Oude in 1 Timothy 2:12*.) **b)** The second reason for believing it is con-textual (that is—trying to make sense of it in light of all the other Biblical texts.) There are plenty of Scriptural examples of women doing some kind of public teaching/speaking (1 Cor 11, Priscilla, female prophesying, etc) Egalitarians like to say that this proves women had authority/office—but function does not necessarily imply office. It makes much more sense to say that the hints we have of female teaching/speaking fit in fine with 1 Timothy 2 if it is a hendiadys. If 2:12 is not a hendiadys you have to do a lot of torturous exegetical work to deny almost any public ministry function by women. But as we showed above, there's lots of evidence that women did public ministry. And remember (again) that Paul assumed women were 'prophesying' in worship (1 Cor 11:5). So the 'teaching' forbidden in 1 Tim 2:11 cannot be all public speaking or instruction. It must be a certain kind, namely, teaching that has bears with it disciplinary power—namely the teaching of a bishop or elder, who along with the teaching has the ability to discipline.

The Trinitarian pattern of headship fits neither the traditionalist nor the radical feminist point of view. The latter rejects the idea that subordination can ever co-exist with equality (though this is the basis of the Trinity). The former believes subordination assumes inequality (i.e. wives should submit to their husbands because they are "weaker"). In a sense, both reject the truly Biblical concept of headship on the same ground--i.e. they think submission and equality are irreconcilable.

Conclusion: We believe men and women are equal in dignity, worth and value. We would also believe that women can lead, can speak and teach the Word publicly including to men in most situations. However, we also think that is exegetically and logically inescapable that there is *some* kind of authority in Christ's headship of the church and in the Father's headship of the Son--though that headship is given and received in mutually self-sacrificial delight and love. To us, this means that men and women are being called into 'the dance' of the Trinity, of loving authority and sacrificial submission. The only way to do that is to find a very safe place (a good marriage, a good church) and work out a culturally

appropriate way to express and practice both gender distinction and mutuality. Every church and marriage will work out the details differently. We accept the fact that this 'principle of non-interchangeability' will be worked out differently in every church (and marriage) depending on church polity, temperament, and culture.

C. The key Pauline texts.

1 Cor 11: 2-16

- Paul is teaching that during worship women participate in public worship (praying, prophesying (speaking.) This was radical for the time, but in doing so Paul urged that they should visibly show that Christian women were still under authority of their husbands. That is why they were urged to wear veils, which was a cultural sign that they were wives loyal to their husbands.
- The text says, then: *Be careful not to send the wrong cultural signals—and giving the world the impression that you've thrown off the principle of husband-authority.* In that cultural context, the head covering was a way to demonstrate the principle of husband-authority. In the same way a 'holy kiss' in one cultural context gets across the principle of love and affection. This leads us to the conclusion that in some other culture some other physical signal might be necessary. The principle (of male authority) is trans-cultural, though the physical-cultural public signal for it might change.
- The text doesn't speak to office or roles in the church, but implicitly approves women participating and leading in public worship. It is possible (on some views) that prophecy has ceased--but praying hasn't! So women were leading in worship.

1 Cor 14:33-38

- Whatever else Paul is saying here, 'women keep silent' can't mean literally 'women don't open your mouth in public worship/meetings' because 1 Cor 11 assumes that they do.
- What is Paul forbidding then? It is the evaluation of prophecy—the teaching and preaching in the gathered church. (The word 'laleo' *speak* seems to be referring to prophecy.) This means Paul is not telling women to be silent all the time, but only when the prophets are being judged. We conclude that in the area of final authority—in doctrinal/moral discipline over what is heresy and what is sound doctrine--women defer to male leaders.
- Paul says that women are not allowed to speak "as the law says" (v.34) almost certainly meaning the Hebrew Bible in toto. (There is nowhere that Paul ever refers to his own teachings as 'the law.')
- Since there is no one specific place in the Hebrew Bible where women are commanded to silence, Paul must be extrapolating from the whole sweep of redemptive history (see above.)
- Here are two alternative views:
 - Some say this is just Paul asking wives to submit to husbands—it is not applicable to roles inside the church. Indeed, such silence at that time would certainly have shown wives' submission to their husbands, that that can't exhaust the reason for the prohibition. It can't only mean wives should be quiet to let their husbands decide, because not all women were married (e.g. the widows.) To preclude *all* women (even the unmarried ones) from participating in the judgment of prophets is not applying the rule of male headship only to wives relationship to their husbands but women church-members' relationship to men.
 - Some say the Corinthian women were having a particular problem. They were being swayed by heresy or they were asking disruptive, argumentative questions in the meetings during prophecy-judgment. But this is a highly sexist argument. Why would only women be duped and not men? Has there ever been a heresy in which only women were deceived and not men? No.

1 Timothy 2:8-15

- 1 Timothy 3 excludes women from the office of elder. Men and women both do deaconing together (whether 'women' in 1 Tim 3:11 is 'deacons wives' or 'women deacons' is a moot issue—they are being screened for deacon work and so they do it.) There is no provision for female elders.
- Many people say Paul is only speaking to that particular church because women were under the influence of heresy, but the same objection mentioned above holds. Why would only the women be duped by a heresy? Some insist that the Ephesian women were uniquely under the influence of the

Artemis cult but that is not an easy case to make historically. And why is this so similar to the prohibition Paul makes to the Corinthian women? And finally, the appeal to creation in v.13 roots this prohibition in the created order not a contextual exception.

- 'Authentein' simply means 'to exercise authority.' There have been exhaustive studies that show that pairs of infinitives are always joined together as two positive or two negatives. If 'teach' doesn't mean 'illegitimate, heretical teaching' (and it doesn't!) then 'have authority' can't mean to 'domineer, abuse'.

D. The issue of slavery.

It is common to argue that since the Bible condoned slavery and now we know *that* was wrong, so in the same way the Bible discriminated against women and now we know *that* was wrong. But this line of reasoning is a grave mistake, and, ironically recapitulates the same mistakes that led to the Civil War!

1. When we think of 'slavery' today we think of the African slave trade as practiced in Brazil, the Caribbean, and the southern US in the 17th through 19th centuries (and in some parts of the world still today.) So when we see the word 'slavery' in the Bible (as in 'slaves-obey your masters') it is natural to think that the Bible is supporting what African slavery. By contrast most 'slaves' in the 1st century Rome were more like indentured servants. Slavery in the Greco-Roman world was an extremely complex phenomenon. Consider these facts. In the first century: a) Slaves were not distinguishable from others by race, speech, or clothing. They looked and lived like most everyone else, and were not segregated off from the rest of society in any way. b) Slaves were often more educated than their owners and many times held very high managerial positions. c) From a financial standpoint, slaves made the same wages as free laborers, and therefore were not usually poor. d) People could sell themselves into slavery (because, for some, becoming a slave of a wealthy family was a way to improve one's condition economically.) Also, slaves could accrue enough personal capital to buy themselves out. Some slaves owned other slaves. e) Very few slaves were slaves for life. Most could reasonably hope to be manumitted within 10-15 years or by their late thirties at the latest. (See Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ*, pp.44, 70, for more details.) It was mainly galley slaves—criminals sentenced to slavery for crimes—that experienced what we moderns think of as 'slavery.' By contrast, New World slavery was race-based, so all slaves were easily identifiable. Its default mode was slavery-for-life, unlike that of first-century slavery. Also, the entire African slave trade was begun and resourced through kidnapping.

2. The New Testament writers, while never actively endorsing slavery, treated the broad complex reality of 1st century slavery as a fact of life. But even in the 1st century context the New Testament writers' teaching on the equality of all people in Christ created an environment in which, at least within the church, slavery withered and died. Paul regularly told Christian slave-owners that their slaves were equal to them in the sight of God and had to be treated as brothers (1 Cor 7:22-23; the whole book of Philemon.) This undermined and weakened the institution of slavery among Christians very quickly.

3. But when New World slavery arose, though the church was deeply divided, Christians led the fight in the United Kingdom and the U.S. to have it abolished. The Bible unconditionally condemns kidnapping people for slavery and trafficking in slaves (1 Tim 1:9-11; cf. Deut 24:7.) This is one of the reasons that, while the early Christians did not go on a campaign to abolish first century slavery completely, later Christians did so when confronted with race-based, kidnapping-fueled African slavery, which could not be squared in with Biblical teaching.

4. It was pro-slavery Christians in the South in the 19th century (such as James Henley Thornwell) who insisted that brutal African race-based, kidnapping-fueled slavery of the 17th-19th century was essentially the same as the slavery in the NT and OT, and that therefore the Bible condoned the practice of slavery in the U.S. Because they refused to listen to the many valid arguments to the contrary, the terrible Civil War was fought. All this is laid out in Mark Noll's, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*. It is ironic writers like Webb, Stackhouse, and others simply assume the same view of the Bible-and-slavery as the pro-slavery, segregationist writers and thinkers of the 19th-century South.

5. Despite how complicated this subject is, it is important for Christians today to think this out. Many critics of Christianity simply assumed that the Bible wrongly endorsed slavery and, therefore, it may be wrong about other things it teaches. That is not the case.

Conclusion on the Biblical case: The main exegetical reason for our (moderated traditionalist view): We don't know how to draw a line through the NT to discover what principles and practices were 'only for that day' and what are still for us today. Paul is forbidding *something* to women to express differing gender roles as a manifestation of the inner life of the Triune God. We think we have some leeway to determine what that 'something' is. The Bible doesn't nail that down with absolute exactness, and we think that is deliberate. There is some freedom here. But we are not free to discard the restriction on women's ministry at all. If we say this restriction was 'unjust' or 'not for our time' the question arises: which of the rest of the New Testament is obsolete and which is not, and by what standard (and it will have to be an extra-Biblical standard) will you judge it?

We have tried to show that our view is based on the broad sweep of the whole Bible and the very heart of the attributes of God, not just on a couple of texts.

PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES AT REDEEMER

A. Practices.

Let's summarize. Throughout the Bible we do see a balance (not a contradiction) between two themes with regard to women. On the one hand, the Bible teaches the full equality of women with men and denounces the abuse and oppression of women. On the other hand, the Bible recognizes some role differentiation, because in every stage of redemptive history some authoritative office was not open for women. In the OT women were prophets, judges, queens but never priests. In the NT women were prophets and teachers, they prayed and spoke in worship, yet they were not elders. Redeemer takes the position that women are therefore not to serve as ruling or teaching (pastor) elders. But anything in the church that a non-elder male can do, a woman can do.

- On the one hand, Paul is forbidding *something* to women in the church as a way to help men and women practice gender role differentiation in the church. This can't be denied. And if we don't follow Paul as authoritative here, why follow him elsewhere? Why should our current culture/times be allowed to relativize this part of his teaching and not relativize other things? If we choose what part of the Bible's teaching is 'out of date', are we not elevating our own cultural moment to having absolute normativity?
- On the other hand, it really doesn't appear that women were excluded from anything other than the office of elder (with the ability to 'judge the prophets'--i.e. have final say over church doctrine.) There were no women elders in either the Old or New Testament. But women were prophets, they prayed and spoke in worship, they were co-working missionary associates, they did diaconal ministry. If a church tries to limit a woman's literal speaking to men, it touches off a sad and endless debate about to whom and where she can speak. Can she speak to boys but not men? Then how young do they have to be, and how do you avoid being arbitrary here? Can she 'share' but not 'teach'? Then how will you define the difference?

B. Attitudes.

It is just as important to let the Biblical balances shape our attitude as our actions. This means at Redeemer we appeal and pray that there be:

- Gospel-based attitudes between men and women. Surely Gen 1:26-27 (teaching that women are equally in the image of God and given dominion over the creation) and Galatians 3:28 ("*there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*") mean that in the church women should be treated as equally capable, wise, and strong persons. The natural self-justifying nature of the human heart means that sexist attitudes will never be fully

eradicated. Nevertheless, we should work against them. Redeemer must be a place where neither men nor women make demeaning, sexist comments and jokes about the other gender when in private or in same-sex groups.

- Gospel-based attitudes between people who differ over women's role. Those *against* women's ordination often are condemning and cold to those who differ with them. They refuse to look at opponents the way Presbyterians look at Baptists, and so on. On the other hand, those who *do* believe in women's ordination may be similarly unaccepting. They may look at opponents as being little short of (or the same as) racist. Redeemer, however, aims to be a place where--despite our institutional policy against women's ordination--people with different views on this can live together with mutual respect. There are a large number of issues on which God in his providence has not seen fit to give the church unity of mind. God has given us unity with regard to all the doctrines of the Apostles' Creed--the deity of Christ, the Triune God, the need for grace for forgiveness, and so on. But we can't agree on many others, such as baptism, church government, tongues and miracles, the authority of the Pope. The reason for this is that there are very good arguments on both sides of each one of these issues. Both sides are able to root their belief in tradition, reason, Biblical text, theological themes, and so on. It is highly unlikely that the *whole* church will ever go Catholic or charismatic or Baptist, etc. Women's ordination is one of these ongoing divisions. The church will likely never come to consensus about it. We must treat it as important, but not a cause for abrasive condemnations. We want people with different views on this to be able to live together in Redeemer. That would make us very, very unusual. If we can stay together as a church community despite these differences we will model to the world at large a much needed picture of the unity of the church.