

THE INTERPRETATION OF 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15:
A REJOINDER

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Debate over an issue such as the role of women in Christian ministry is frequently frustrating because of broad disagreements over what constitutes evidence (all of Scripture, part of Scripture, church history?) and the proper methodology to be employed. It is therefore refreshing to engage in debate with someone like Philip Payne, who, like myself, accepts the authority of all Scripture and argues on the basis of accepted exegetical methodology. Real progress is possible when such agreement allows the conflicting interpretations of the evidence to be presented clearly and in sharp relief. I hope that this rejoinder to Payne's reply will further stimulate sincere and reverent discussion of one of the contemporary church's most divisive issues.

I will say at the outset that I remain convinced that the general interpretation of the passage which I set out in my article is correct. Many of Payne's criticisms pertain to minor matters which hardly affect the over-all interpretation. Others would certainly critically weaken my general interpretation; but, interestingly, I find these to be the least acceptable of his alternative suggestions. Payne's criticisms fall essentially into three areas: exegetical points; the role of women in the NT church generally; and the situation in the Ephesian church. These basic areas provide the outline of my reply. As much as possible I will follow the order of Payne's criticisms, so that the reader can more readily evaluate the conflicting opinions. I also encourage the reader to become familiar with the argument of the original article.

I. EXEGETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

ἡσυχία

Payne criticizes my translation of this word as "silence" because: 1) the usual meaning of the term in the NT is "quiet"; 2) Paul uses *ἡσυχία* elsewhere to mean "quiet" and employs *σιγάω* when he denotes "silence"; and 3) the context supports the meaning "quiet." As to 1), each of the major NT lexicons (BAG, Thayer, Abbot-Smith) gives "silence" as the definition for *ἡσυχία* in three of its four NT occurrences (1 Tim 2:11-12 included). What Payne apparently means when he says that the lexicons give "quiet" as the "primary meaning" is that they list it first. But such a statement is at least misleading

when one is trying to establish the most common *usage* of a term.¹ 2) is not quite accurate either; while Paul clearly uses *ἡσυχία* to mean “quietness” in 2 Thess 3:12 (not “quiet” as Payne says), he does not use *σιγάω* to mean “silence” because *σιγάω* is, of course, a verb. In fact, it is interesting to note that Paul never uses the noun form of *σιγάω* – *ἡσυχία* is the only word in his known vocabulary which could clearly denote silence. Point 3) is of course a subjective consideration, but I would still maintain that the context and structure make the rendering “silence” more likely than that of “quietness.”²

ἐπιτρέπω

Against my contention that the use of the verb *ἐπιτρέπω* in the present tense implies nothing as to the universal nature of Paul’s prohibition, Payne contends that the formulation does suggest such a restriction. Before re-examining some of the evidence, it is worth noting the real point at issue—what the construction *allows*. I do not seek to establish the universal extension of the prohibitions on the basis of this construction, nor does Payne claim that the nature of the construction clearly limits the extent. We both specifically state that other factors will have to be regarded as conclusive. In other words, I can readily agree to Payne’s view of the force of *ἐπιτρέπω* without in any way jeopardizing my view that the prohibitions are universal. It is because the issue is not crucial, as Payne admits, that I did not devote more attention to it in my article.

As a matter of fact, however, I think Payne overstates the case for finding a personal and temporal restriction in the use of the term *ἐπιτρέπω* in 1 Tim 2:12. He gives the impression that Paul consistently distinguished his personal advice from “permanently valid instruction” when such is not the case. It is only rarely that Paul makes such a differentiation—and when he does, it is precarious to infer any less *authority*: the words are still the words of the Apostle Paul, writing inspired Scripture. There appears to be a hidden disjunctive premise in Payne’s argumentation here: *either* Paul’s personal advice *or* universally valid principles. But, of course, Paul is usually giving both.

It must be admitted that the verb *ἐπιτρέπω* is not often used in Scripture of universally applicable commandments. Fourteen of the eighteen NT occurrences clearly involve a temporally limited situation. But, on the other hand, in each of these occurrences the scope of *ἐπιτρέπω* is necessarily limited by the context. For example, when Jesus “gives permission” to the Gadarene demons to enter the swine (Mark 5:13), a universal application is plainly impossible. The point to be made here is that *ἐπιτρέπω* is never used of a permission or prohibition which *could* be universal but is restricted. In other words, the sense

¹I am mystified by Payne’s accusation that in n. 15, p.64, I give the impression that *ἡσυχία* and *ἡσυχίον* are not normally translated in English versions by “quiet.” I say nothing about English translations nor about the general meaning of the terms in the NT in that footnote.

²James B. Hurley says: “*ἡσυχία* does mean silence but carries with it connotations of peacefulness and restfulness” (*Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* [Leicester: InterVarsity, 1981] 200). Hurley’s book, which appeared after my initial article, is an important study bearing on many issues discussed in this rejoinder.

of temporal limitation does not adhere to the word as such.

Paul's use of the present indicative in exhortations and commands is also relatively rare. But it is not true that he usually gives a specific indicator of universality when he uses this construction. In fact, of the twelve examples I have found in which Paul uses the first singular indicative to give what looks like universal advice,³ only two (1 Tim 2:1 and 8) have a "universalizing qualifier" and these are not related to the temporal question at issue. The church in every age has taken Paul's first person singular exhortation in Rom 12:1 ("I am beseeching you, brothers, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices . . .") as applicable without a "universalizing indicator." It seems to me that Payne has framed the question wrongly in assuming that Paul uses the present tense to restrict his advice. It is not so much the temporal limitation which the tense can suggest which leads Paul to use the construction, but the note of personal appeal which is implied. And, as I asserted in my article, the personal address to Timothy, in which advice for a current situation was being given, virtually demands the use of the present tense. Therefore, I would reiterate the position taken in the article: the first person present of *ἐπιτρέπω* allows for a limited application but does not constitute clear evidence for it.

διδάσκω

I seek to make three crucial points with respect to the nature of teaching in the NT: 1) that teaching involves authority; 2) that teaching is restricted to particular individuals; and 3) that the NT nowhere depicts women as teachers of men. Each of these points must be reexamined in the light of Payne's criticisms.

Payne tries to show that the teacher possesses no inherent authority by adducing examples of various types of false teaching in the NT. Syllogistically, Payne's argument can be represented thus:

No false teaching possesses "inherent" authority for the church
Some teaching is false teaching
Therefore no teaching possesses "inherent" authority for the church

It is obvious that the argument is invalid since the minor term (teaching) is distributed in the conclusion, but not in the premises. In other words, to show that some (e.g., false) teaching does not possess inherent authority is very far from proving that *all* teaching is without such authority. One could equally well conclude that apostles have no authority because of the existence of false apostles. That no human teacher possesses authority over the church no matter what he says is of course true; but I would continue to maintain that the teacher who is faithfully transmitting the will of God to the church possesses authority in that activity. Ultimately, the issue here involves the semantic range of *διδάσκω*. Payne's point has validity if a broad meaning is given *διδάσκω*. But when the word is used in its distinctive NT sense, as in 1 Tim 2:12, his argument lacks cogency.

On the second point, Payne is certainly correct in arguing that teaching was not restricted to the "elder-overseer" in the NT church (which, contra the

³Rom 12:1, 3; 1 Cor 4:16; 2 Cor 5:20; Gal 5:2, 3; Eph 4:1; 1 Thess 4:1, 5:14; 2 Thess 3:6; 1 Tim 2:1, 8.

impression Payne gives, I never suggest—I mention the restriction only with respect to the Pastorals, where indeed such a delimitation does find support). But Payne fails to show that teaching, in the narrow sense, was an activity open to *anyone*. And as long as he fails to prove that, a restriction of the activity, such as I have argued for in 1 Timothy 2, remains a viable option. It does not suffice to note that the gift of teaching is given by the sovereign will of God's Spirit, for that only moves the question back one stage: on whom is it the Spirit's will to bestow this gift? Nor do the verses cited by Payne prove a general and unrestricted teaching activity in the church. Two (Col 3:16 and 1 Cor 14:26) I treat briefly in my article; Payne adduces no evidence to overthrow the interpretations suggested there. 2 Tim 2:2, in fact, clearly implies *some* kind of restriction of those who can teach, since only qualified individuals are to be trained for this ministry. While Titus 2:3 envisages a teaching ministry for "older women," this may involve nothing more than "the advice and encouragement they can give privately, by word and example."⁴ In any case, the teaching activity of these women is explicitly restricted to the younger women (2:4-5).

This brings us naturally to the third point: that the NT does not depict women as teachers of men. The only example Payne can adduce to the contrary is Priscilla; yet she is never said to "teach" *anyone* in the NT. When carefully examined, Payne's case for viewing Priscilla as a "teacher" boils down to this: Priscilla with her husband Aquila are presented as having taken Apollos aside upon his arrival in Ephesus and "explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). Contrary to Payne's statement on p. 174, Luke does *not* say that Priscilla was "directly involved in teaching Apollos." We do not know the respective roles played in the instruction of Apollos by Priscilla and Aquila; and it is perhaps instructive in this respect that Priscilla is never mentioned without her husband in the NT. Although Priscilla's name comes first four of the six times this couple is mentioned in Scripture, indicating perhaps that Priscilla had the dominant personality, nothing is proved thereby about their respective roles. That Priscilla was respected, engaged in active ministry and was hospitable enough to invite the church at Ephesus to meet in their home hardly constitutes evidence that she exercised a teaching ministry. In general, the extensive reference made to Priscilla in the discussion over the role of women in the church reminds one of Churchill's famous statement, which I paraphrase to suit the present case: Seldom have so many made so much out of so little.

Finally, two minor points may be briefly mentioned. Payne's suggestion that my position prevents women from engaging in activities such as the writing of hymns or theological books assumes a meaning of "teach" considerably broader than I suggest anywhere in my article. The contemporary Christian activities which are encompassed by the *biblical* sense of "teach" are not easy to specify, but it seems to me evident that the biblical meaning is narrower than current usage. Secondly, the contention that taking *ἀνδρός* as the

⁴J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981 [=1963]) 240; cf. also Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 193.

object of διδάσκειν as well as ἀθεντεῖν involves “more rationalization than exegesis” is difficult to understand. For, first, the construction is a perfectly natural one; in Greek, objects and qualifiers of words which occur only with the second in a series must often be taken with the first also (cf. Acts 8:21 where as in 1 Tim 2:12, οὐδέ is used).⁵ Furthermore, as I argue in the article, the context of male-female relationships, the use of ὑποταγή and the parallel text in 1 Cor 14:33b-34 all suggest that it is the teaching of *men* which Paul prohibits to women. And the false teaching with which Titus is contending on Crete seems so similar to that against which Paul warns Timothy that it is unlikely Paul would give conflicting advice to these two “pastors” on the same subject. Yet he explicitly commands Titus to allow the older women to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3). This factor also strongly suggests that Paul’s prohibition of teaching in 1 Timothy is not absolute, but confined to the female/male context.

ἀθεντεῖν

Payne’s criticisms on this point can be quickly dealt with, since he adduces no new evidence. The very fact that the word does occur so infrequently constitutes reason for giving it a general rather than a particular connotation; “have authority over” rather than “lord it over” or “domineer.” Nor does Payne’s appeal to Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos* 157 (n. 34 of my article) support the more restricted meaning: clearly the word is used there in the sense of natural and proper authority. It is worth adding, in light of Payne’s critique, that a gap in my own research has been filled by George W. Knight III of Covenant Seminary. He has studied all the occurrences of ἀθεντεῖν (including the two I was unable to locate) and concurs in the definition I have given the word. He says: “(I) find that the meaning ‘have authority over’ is the clear meaning and the alternative ‘domineer’ suggested by Arndt and Gingrich seems to have no warrant in the literature.”⁶

γάρ

Payne’s attempt to prove that the γάρ introducing vv 13-14 is “explanatory” rather than “illative” founders on two points: grammar and context. To be sure, grammar allows for the interpretation which Payne gives to γάρ. All the major lexicons and grammars give “explanation” as a possible meaning for a γάρ clause. But what Payne fails to mention is that the usage is rare. BAG cites only twelve examples of the explanatory force of γάρ in the NT, in agreement with Dana and Mantey; Thayer likewise gives a small number of such examples and Zerwick cites only 14 instances in Paul where the conjunction does *not* have its usual causal force.⁷ Payne appeals to Robertson for the view

⁵Cf. Herbert Weir Smyth (*Greek Grammar* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920] §1634. He notes that the object, in such instances, will take the case demanded by the nearer verb—as in 1 Tim 2:12.

⁶Private communication from Dr. Knight, Nov. 26, 1980. His study of ἀθεντεῖν is due to appear in *NTS*.

⁷BAG 151; H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1927) 243; Thayer 110; Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Press, 1963) §473.

that the “causal” meaning of *γάρ* is not primary, but Robertson stands virtually alone in this opinion. For example, Liddell-Scott characterize *γάρ* simply as “a causal conjunction”; BDF list it under the heading “Causal coordinating conjunctions”; Dana and Mantey say it is “most frequently used in the illative sense, introducing a reason.”⁸ Thayer and BAG introduce the causal meaning first and cite by far the most examples under that heading. Therefore the first thing which must be said is that Payne is attempting to establish a meaning for *γάρ* which is relatively rare.

Another difficulty standing in the way of Payne’s interpretation of *γάρ* here is the fact that the sequence exhibited in 1 Tim 2:12-13—an imperatival verb or idea followed by a phrase or sentence beginning with *γάρ*—is common in Paul and usually involves a movement from command (or prohibition) to the *reason* for the command (or prohibition). In the Pastorals alone, for instance, an imperatival or imperatival idea is followed 21 times by a clause introduced with *γάρ*—and in each case the causal idea appears to be required.⁹

But, finally, it must be questioned whether Payne’s interpretation *does*, in fact, utilize an explanatory *γάρ*. For he views vv 13-14 as illustrative of “how serious the consequences can be when a woman deceived by false teaching conveys it to others.” Now this interpretation appears to imply a *causal* function for *γάρ*: the disastrous consequences which stemmed from *one* woman’s false teaching constitutes the *reason* why Paul prohibits women in Ephesus from spreading false teaching. In any case, Payne’s interpretation departs from the “explanatory” force of *γάρ* which he seeks to ground in the lexicons and grammars. A check of the examples these sources cite shows that they intend by “explanation” an explication of a previous statement. This is *not* what Payne argues for in 1 Tim 2:13.

Finally, I find Payne’s general explanation of the purpose of vv 13-14 difficult to square with the text itself. Essentially, he claims that Paul adduces Eve simply as an example of “what can happen when women are deceived and warning lest deception of women in the Ephesian church lead to their fall.” I find three problems with this view. First, it requires us to read the notion of “false teaching” into the text. If Paul were prohibiting women from teaching because they were teaching *falsely*, nothing would have been easier than for him to have said so. In that case, we would have expected Paul to cite the consequences of Eve’s “teaching” of Adam in the garden. What he *does* mention, her creation *after* Adam and the fact that she, not he, was deceived, are only with much ingenuity translated into statements about false teaching. That women were engaged in spreading the false teaching prevalent in the Ephesian church may be true. But certainly *men* were also active in spreading the error (1 Tim 1:19-20; 2 Tim 1:15(?); 2:17-18). If Paul were here concerned with the problem of false teaching *per se*, surely he would have prohibited *all* false teachers from addressing the church, not just the women. Furthermore, the instructions in 1 Timothy 2 clearly involve the worship service. The problem of

⁸LSJ 338; BDF 235; *A Manual Grammar* 243.

⁹1 Tim 3:13; 4:5, 8, 16; 5:4, 11, 15; 2 Tim 1:7; 2:7, 16; 3:6; 4:3, 6, 10, 11, 15; Titus 1:10; 2:11; 3:3, 9, 12.

the false teachers is foreign to the context.

Secondly, Payne fails to explain why, if Eve as an example of a false teacher is adduced, Paul *begins* by asserting her secondary place in the order of creation. His failure to integrate this statement into his interpretation at this point casts grave doubt on his interpretation's validity. Elsewhere he suggests that the verse may function as an attempt to affirm the "essential equality of men and women." While I certainly agree that men and women are "essentially" equal, I would have to question whether a sentence possessing so strong a temporal element as 1 Tim 2:13 has this as its purpose. The sequence *πρώτος . . . εἶτα* is one of the strongest temporal indicators in the Greek language. Had Paul wanted to affirm equality, in the face of teaching which stressed that only Adam was "formed" (*πλάσσω*), his strong assertion of priority would be entirely out of place.

Thirdly, Payne fails to utilize the clearest parallel text. While he alludes to 2 Cor 11:3 as a case in which Paul appeals to Eve as exemplary, he ignores the closer parallel in 1 Cor 11:7-9. That passage, like 1 Tim 2:12-15, focuses on the created order of male-female and seems plainly to view this order as indicative of the woman's subordinate position. But if Paul argues from creation with that purpose in 1 Corinthians 11, it is likely, all things being equal, that Paul uses the argument with the same purpose in 1 Timothy 2.

Finally, I am constrained to point out two misrepresentations in Payne's depiction of my interpretation on this point. The first is a serious case of partial quotation. At the beginning of Payne's discussion (p. 175), he quotes me as saying that Eve's deception was "causative of the nature of women in general . . ." In fact, as a glance at the relevant point in my article shows, I say: "it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Paul cites Eve's failure as exemplary and *perhaps* causative of the nature of women in general . . ." However, the difficulties with viewing v 14 as a statement about the nature of women are real. I am now inclined to see the reference as a means of suggesting the *difference* between Adam and Eve in the fall—he sinned openly; she was deceived. With this in mind, Paul may be seeking to suggest the need to restore the pre-fall situation in which the man bears responsibility for religious teaching.¹⁰ A second misrepresentation is his characterization of my interpretation of v 14 as an assumption. In fact, I seek to argue the position carefully, noting alternative viewpoints and specifically stating in my conclusion that "ambiguities remain."

σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας

Payne's detailed and lengthy treatment of this clause is justified in light of

¹⁰Cf. for this view Hurley, *Man and Woman* 214-16. Some later gnostic texts interpret Eve's eating of the fruit in the garden as a *positive* step—for by doing so, she gains access to knowledge (*γνώσις*), the central feature of the gnostic system and the means of salvation (cf. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginning of Christianity* [2nd ed.; Boston: Beacon, 1963] 93). Could it be that some of the Ephesian false teachers were arguing in a similar manner, stimulating Paul's categorical assertion: "Eve was *deceived* and became a *sinner*"? While admittedly hypothetical, problematic in terms of dating, and inadequate as an *entire* explanation of the verse, since it fails to account for the contrast between Adam and Eve, it may be that this tradition was partially responsible for the statement.

the difficulties it presents, but it must be placed in perspective with respect to the issue in question. In disagreement with Payne's statement on p. 178, I do not think the meaning given to this difficult phrase decisively affects the basic sense of the passage. Indeed, I could readily accept Payne's position on this phrase without altering anything in my interpretation of vv 12-14. But in fact, despite Payne's fine defense of what appears to me the second best interpretation, I still favor the position argued in my article.

On the lexical question, Payne is correct in noting the lack of support for the meaning "child-bearing" for *τεκνογονία* (although, contra the impression he gives, Moulton-Milligan do mention the possibility—and two of the best commentaries on the Pastorals suggest this nuance¹¹). But it must be said, first, that the term occurs rarely and hence is difficult to define precisely (BAG [who include the references from LSJ] give five occurrences of the noun and five of the cognate verb); and, second, I only *suggest* the possibility of this rendering—it is not "my interpretation." With respect to the larger issue, the scarcity of occurrences renders it impossible to make a decision on the grounds of lexical evidence *alone*. Hence Payne asserts that the context decisively favors his view: it is "Paul's obvious concern to highlight the role of woman both in the fall (2:14) and in salvation (2:15)." But is this "obvious"? Ostensibly, the emphasis in v 15 falls on "she will be saved," i.e. on the *salvation* of Christian woman rather than on her contribution to the *securing* of salvation. Such an emphasis acts as a natural contrast (*δέ*) to v 14, also: although woman fell into "transgression," her ultimate salvation is nevertheless possible. And the general context focuses on activities appropriate for Christian women (modest dress, good deeds, submissive learning and worship conduct, faith, love and holiness with propriety) rather than on "affirmations" of women. The interpretation of *διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας* as asserting another such appropriate activity makes excellent sense.¹²

It does not seem to me that the theological objection to my view is telling. Payne himself characterizes the virtues of "faith, love and holiness with propriety" as "conditions which necessarily accompany and give evidence of salvation" (p. 181). If these can be "necessary accompaniments" to salvation, why is it objectionable to view faithfulness to a God-ordained role as another? That this concept is not only possible theologically, but actually intended by Paul, is suggested by 1 Tim 4:14-15, a passage offering substantial similarities to 1 Tim 2:15: "Take heed to yourself and to teaching; remain in them. By doing this you will save (*σώσεις*) yourself and those who hear you." A theological difficulty of his own which Payne must confront is the excessive stress upon Mary which his interpretation suggests. *τεκνογονία*, according to the lexicons (and cf. 1 Tim 5:14) denotes the *woman's* role in giving birth, not the birth as such. Is Mary's role in the birth of Christ therefore the means (*διὰ*, according to Payne's view) of salvation?

¹¹C. Spicq, *Les Épîtres Pastorales*, 4th ed. (Paris: Gabalda, 1969) 399-401; M. Dibelius and H. Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) 48.

¹²Hurley (*Man and Woman* 223) supports this view of *τεκνογονία*, although he interprets *σωθήσεται* as "kept safe from seizing man's roles."

Payne's questioning of the possibility that *διά* can mean "efficient cause" appears to arise from a problem of nomenclature. By "efficient cause," I, following M. Harris, intended to denote "the medium through which an action passes before its accomplishment."¹³ Gal 5:6 is a good example of this usage of *διά*: "The only thing that counts is faith working through (*διά*) love." Understood in this sense, the preposition suggests the idea of *mediation*, a usage consistently supported in the grammars.

The presence of the article with *τεκνογονίας* does not lend support to either view. Certainly the generic idea is a real possibility. Far from being "an unusual way of expressing the generic idea" (Payne), two of the most respected Greek grammars give the generic force of the article as one of its two major purposes.¹⁴ And Payne's statement that the LXX and NT furnish no other examples of *τεκνογονία* or related words such as *τεκνογονεῖν* with the generic article loses something of its force when it is noted that the noun in fact occurs nowhere else in the NT and LXX.

On the whole, then, I find the view defended in my article to have lexical, grammatical and theological support as great or greater than Payne's alternative. What is decisive, in my opinion, are contextual considerations: not only is Paul in 1 Tim 2:8-14 concerned preeminently with the appropriate sphere of the Christian woman's activities, this is a major theme in the letter as a whole--cf. especially 5:2-16, where the verb *τεκνογονεῖν* is used.

II. THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE NT

Under the heading "Logical Weaknesses in Moo's Article," Payne includes criticisms having to do with two basic issues: the role of women in NT ministry and the background of 1 Timothy. I will organize my discussion of these criticisms according to these two central issues.

Payne argues that the approved prophetic activity of women in the NT constitutes evidence that women taught men and exercised authority over them (p. 184). As the necessary premise for this argument, he claims that the NT prophet taught and exercised an authority as great, if not greater than the teacher. Now at this point I would like to clear up a misconception which the brevity of my discussion in the article could easily create. It is not my intention to contest the authority which a word of prophecy possesses for the church. Contrary to Payne's suggestion on p. 184, I never deny that the prophet is engaged in "the authoritative proclamation of God's will." Once again, a partial quotation obscures the real point of contrast I seek to make between the teacher and prophet. In full, my sentence reads: "Teaching," as we have seen, involves the careful transmission of the Christian tradition and the authoritative proclamation of God's will, *based on that tradition and study of the Scriptures*" (emphasis added). It is with that statement *as a whole* that I

¹³M. J. Harris, "Appendix: Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976-78).3.1182.

¹⁴Smyth, *Greek Grammar* 286-7; BDF §252. A. T. Robertson (*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* [Nashville: Broadman, 1934] 756-7) lists the generic idea as one of three basic uses of the article.

contrast the activity of the prophet.

The point which I want to make is that the authority of the prophet, far more than that of the teacher, is a *derived* authority. The prophet is one who utters "revelations" (1 Cor 14:30); he is subject to the scrutiny of the whole congregation (1 Cor 14:32)¹⁵—in short, his activity is more distinctly "vertical" than that of the teacher whose activity is more directly related to the Scripture and tradition. In other words, prophesying, as more directly "pneumatic" than teaching, involves an authority relationship between the prophet and his hearers less personal than is the case with teachers. This greater personal authority of the teacher is the reason, I would contend, why Paul allows women to prophesy with men present, but not to teach them. Thus, Payne's conclusion that the references to female prophets in the NT contradict "the view that women should not be in positions of authority over men" does not follow.

Equally contestable is his claim that these references contradict the view that women should not teach men. The problem here is that Payne fails to take into account the semantic range of the term "teach." In a general sense, of course, this word can be applied to virtually anything from which a person can learn—including experiences, a child's behavior or a professor's lecture. In this sense, it cannot be doubted that the prophet "teaches." But Paul does not usually use the word "teach" with such a broad meaning, as is evidenced by the fact that he consistently distinguishes teaching from other, related, activities such as prophesying, preaching, and evangelizing (cf. 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). This distinction makes it obvious that, in terms of *pauline* usage, "prophesying" is simply not equivalent to "teaching." Therefore the approval Paul gives to female prophets is in no way contradictory to his prohibition of their teaching men.

Payne accuses me of "forced and narrow interpretations of passage after passage" (p. 196) which describe the ministry of women in the NT. I freely admit that the interpretation of some of these texts is difficult (and a glance at my article [p.76] will demonstrate that I qualify a number of my decisions with "probably" or "perhaps"), but I would maintain that none of the interpretations I advocate is "forced or narrow."

Payne quite justifiably criticizes me for suggesting that the name 'Ιουβία (assuming it is not 'Ιουβία) in Rom 16:7 is a shortened form of Judianus. At some point in the line of transmission an error has crept in: the name should be Junianus. But for Payne to characterize the derivation of the name 'Ιουβία from the male name 'Ιουβιάς as "speculation based on the assumption that a woman could not have held the position of an apostle" is less than fair to the scholars who argue just that.¹⁶ Not only is the lexical evidence unclear, it is also pos-

¹⁵For the view which sees the entire congregation as involved in the judging of prophetic speech, see especially Wayne Arden Grudem, "The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 12-14," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cambridge University, 1978) 72-7.

¹⁶Among them: BAG; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (5th ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902) 422-3; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 379; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (2nd ed.; Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1979) 444-5.

sible (though not, perhaps probable) that the crucial descriptive phrase should be rendered “who are esteemed by the apostles.”¹⁷ Furthermore, *ἀπόστολος* here is probably *not* used in the technical sense of an eyewitness and authoritative proclaimer of Christ, but is to be understood in the more general sense, “messenger,” which the word sometimes has in the NT (cf. 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25).¹⁸ These questions, taken together, surely demonstrate the inadmissibility of citing Rom 16:7 as conclusive proof of the authoritative position occupied by some women in the NT church. Such problematic and “indirect” verses must, according to accepted hermeneutical procedure, be explained in the light of clearer and more directly relevant texts.

Even less conclusive for the issue is the fact that Phoebe is characterized as a *διάκονος* and *προστάτις* (Rom 16:1-2). Payne’s assertion that “The burden of proof lies on those who would translate *διάκονος* here ‘servant’ while translating it ‘minister’ or ‘deacon’ in every other NT passage in which it occurs” is no doubt valid, but pointless. For, in fact, no scholar I know of suggests that *διάκονος* should be rendered as “minister” or “deacon” in every NT text except Rom 16:1. Of the 28 occurrences of *διάκονος* in the NT, only 7 are translated “minister” or “deacon” in NIV, 10 in NASB and 12 in RSV. Even the King James Version, which in antiquated English generally renders *διάκονος* as “minister,” does not go so far as to characterize the servants at the wedding feast in Cana as “ministers” (John 2:5,9). The fact is that in only three of Paul’s 20 uses of *διάκονος* does he refer to a particular church officer (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8,12).¹⁹ Paul normally uses the term in a general way to designate one who serves the risen Christ – and leadership connotations are notably absent. That Phoebe may have held the official position of “deacon” or “deaconess” in the church at Cenchrea is entirely possible; but it would surely be a “forced and narrow” interpretation to insist too strongly on the point.

The second term used by Paul with reference to Phoebe is *προστάτις*, the rare feminine form of *προστάτης*. According to Moulton-Milligan, this word is “common in various connotations,”²⁰ some of which are mentioned by Payne. That the term *could* mean “leader” in Rom 16:2 is without question: in addition to the references Payne cites, three of the eight occurrences of *προστάτης* in the LXX clearly denote a leadership role (1 Esdr 2:12; Sir 45:24; 2 Macc 3:4). But I would argue that the translation “helper” or perhaps “protector” is more acceptable. Ryrie’s statement, which Payne approvingly quotes, to the effect that the cognate verb *προϊστήμι* always includes the idea of authority in the NT is not accurate. In Titus 3:8 and 3:14 the verb rather

¹⁷Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1884).2.372-3; Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950 [=1886]) 449; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965).2.230.

¹⁸Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980 [=1979]) 97; Hurley, *Man and Woman* 121-2.

¹⁹In agreement with this, see *TDNT*.2.89.

²⁰p.551.

clearly means “engage in” or “devote oneself to”;²¹ the idea of authority is absent. The verb *προϊστήμι* in 1 Thess 5:12 may also lack any connotation of authority.²² Even more to the point is Rom 12:8. While many understand the substantival participle *προϊστάμενος* to denote an activity of leadership, it is probably better to see here a reference to the administrator of charitable work.²³ If this is so, strong support for a similar translation of *προστάτης* in Rom 16:2 is given, since Rom 12:8 is the only occurrence of the cognate verb in Romans.

Another reason for translating *προστάτης* as “helper” or “protector” is the construction in which the term occurs. The indefiniteness of the objects in the statement “Phoebe became a *προστάτης* of many and of me myself” renders the translation “helper” or “protector” more probable than that of “leader.” That is, if Phoebe had been a “leader,” one would have expected Paul to state the *specific* group over which she exercised authority (e.g., “leader in or of the church at Cenchrea”).

Finally, while Payne is correct in pointing out that *προστάτης* is not directly cognate to the verb *παραστήτε* (“help”) used earlier in the verse, it remains probable that Paul intends a correspondence: “*Help* Phoebe . . . because she has been a *helper* of many and of me.”²⁴ For these reasons, it is best, following the great majority of translations, lexicons and commentaries,²⁵ to reject any connotation of leadership or authority in the term *προστάτης* in Rom 16:2. It is without doubt that “Phoebe was some sort of minister in the church at Cenchrea” (Payne, quoting Barrett), but what her ministry was, as Barrett goes on to say, is not clear. The evidence would suggest that Phoebe was a wealthy church member who used her material goods for the welfare and protection of other believers. Perhaps she supervised the charitable work at Cenchrea (cf. Rom 12:8). Such a position would *not* involve the teaching of men or an authoritative position over them.

The question of Phoebe’s role in the church at Cenchrea has raised the issue of the NT diaconate to which Payne devotes some attention. That 1 Tim 3:11

²¹BAG.

²²TDNT.6.701-702.

²³C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975, 1978).2.626-7; cf. also TDNT.6.701.

²⁴Sanday-Headlam, *Romans* 417; Murray, *Romans* 227; Cranfield, *Romans* 2.782.

²⁵Translations: NIV, RSV, ASV, NASB, and Amplified render “helper”; KJV “Succourer”; Goodspeed, Charles B. Williams and Beck “protector”; NEB and TEV “good friend”; TCNT “Staunch friend”; Moffat “been a help”; Berkeley “assistant”; Jerusalem Bible “looked after”; Phillips “been of great assistance.” Lexicons: BAG give “protectress, patroness, help”; Abbot-Smith “patroness, protector”; Thayer “a female guardian, protectress, patroness, caring for the affairs of others and aiding them with her resources.” The following commentators avoid any suggestion of authority in the text, usually suggesting the translation “protector,” “patroness” or “helper”: Althaus, Barrett, Best, Black, Bruce, Calvin, Cranfield, Denney, Dodd, Gifford, Godet, Hodge, Käsemann, Leenhardt, Liddon, Meyer, Michel, Murray, Sanday-Headlam, Schlier. In fact, I have found *no* translation, lexicon or commentary which defends a translation connoting authority for *προστάτης* in Rom 16:2. And cf. also Jewett, *The Ordination of Women* 70 and Hurley, *Man and Woman* 123-4.

refers to female deacons, as Payne argues, seems to me probable. But the inference which he draws from this, that women can therefore be engaged in teaching and preaching, does not follow. The basis for this inference rests solely on the fact that two of the disciples chosen in Acts 6:1-6 to supervise the daily distribution of food are also pictured as speaking publicly (Stephen, Acts 6:8-10; 7:1-53) and baptizing (Philip, Acts 8:26-40). In syllogistic form the argument is:

The seven men appointed in Acts 6:1-6 were deacons (the unstated premise)
 Some of the men mentioned in Acts 6:1-6 spoke publicly and baptized
 Therefore deacons (including women) can ["presumably"] speak publicly and baptize

The truth of the first premise is open to serious question. Luke does not call the seven "deacons" and the cognate verb *διακονέω* is used in its most basic sense, "wait on tables" (v 2), while the cognate noun *διακονία* is applied to the apostles but *not* to the seven chosen men (v 4). Leon Morris is probably correct in refusing to see in this passage the order of deacons as it was later constituted.²⁶ A further weakness in Payne's argument is the implicit assumption that all the activities of Stephen and Philip were related to their appointment in Acts 6. But this is an unjustified assumption. As Lightfoot says, "... the work of teaching must be traced rather to the capacity of the individual officer than to the direct functions of the office."²⁷

Although little specific evidence is available, scholars are generally agreed that the diaconate in the NT (seen clearly in Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-12 and Rom 16:1[?]) had as its basic function the administration of the financial, and especially the charitable, affairs of the community.²⁸ Indicative of the limited role of the deacon is the fact that while the elder/overseer had to possess an aptitude for teaching (1 Tim 3:2) and was involved in "ruling, preaching and teaching" (1 Tim 5:17; cf. Titus 1:9), no such qualifications or activities are posited for the deacons. This means that the existence of female deacons in the pauline churches does not contradict the view according to which he forbade women from teaching or exercising authority over men. The latter two activities are simply not part of the deacon's ministry.

Did women occupy the office of elder/overseer, an office which, as we have seen, includes the activities of ruling and teaching? Payne suggests that they did, adducing two arguments in support of this position: 1) the lack of distinctive masculine terminology in the key texts, 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9; 2) the fact that virtually all the qualifications of the elder listed in these texts are paralleled in descriptions of women. Strictly speaking, Payne's first point is

²⁶*Ministers of God* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1964) 82-8; cf. also *TDNT*.2.90. For the opposite view, see J. B. Lightfoot, "The Christian Ministry," in *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1953 [=1913]) 188-9.

²⁷"The Christian Ministry" 190.

²⁸Lightfoot, "The Christian Ministry," 187-91; Morris, *Ministers of God* 90; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 459; *TDNT*.2.90; W. A. Heide, "Deacon," in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (revised; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979-) 1.882.

not true, for one of the first qualifications for the elder/overseer listed in both 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 is that he must be "the husband of one wife." However, the phrase is a difficult one and may mean, as Payne supposes, that the male elder/overseer must be faithful to his wife, without excluding unmarried men or females from the office. But while it would be going too far to argue that the phrase clearly excludes women, it *does* suggest that Paul had men in mind as he wrote. The use of the distinctly masculine form is unexpected were Paul seriously thinking here of a female elder/overseer. That Paul uses the same phrase in v 12, after mentioning female deacons, is no argument against this view because it is probable that he specifically addresses the *male* deacon in v 12.²⁹

As to the second point, it is important to recognize the rather general and unexceptional nature of the requirements listed.³⁰ Most of them are virtues which every believer, female or male, minister or laymen, should possess. The parallels adduced by Payne do not, therefore, prove that a woman was qualified to be an elder/overseer, only that many of the requirements for this office were also qualities required of Christian women.

And while one must be initially impressed by an argument which adduces "mathematical" odds in its favor of thirty quintillion to one, further examination dissipates this reaction. In fact, Payne's argument from vocabulary frequency is a good example of the old dictum "You can prove anything you want with statistics." Specifically, Payne's reasoning suffers from four errors.

First, he includes in his list five pairs of items which are not comparable—the first, third, seventh, eighth and tenth.³¹ (If "husband of one wife" and "wife of one husband" [number three in the list] are "nearly identical" either marriage as we know it or the English language is in severe danger.³²) Second, Payne errs in presenting an incomplete statistical picture. For a meaningful comparison, both similarities and differences would have to be correlated and conclusions then drawn. Third, by using the entire NT as his data base, Payne seriously distorts the statistical picture, which would be meaningful only if calculated on the basis of the unique vocabulary of the Pastorals. Fourth, Payne ignores the fact that the texts which he is using as a sample have a very similar purpose—to give qualities which Christians, confronted with the situation of first century Ephesus, should possess. Payne's procedure is analogous to comparing the vocabulary in an article in *Time* on religion in the Egyptian Coptic Church with one on religion in Scotland and concluding, when a significant correlation emerged, that the one must be *part of* the other. To

²⁹Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles* 84. So also most commentators.

³⁰As Guthrie says: "... the required standards, particularly the negative ones. . . , do not lead us to suppose that the usual aspirant for office was of a particularly high quality, since no exceptional virtues are demanded" (*Pastoral Epistles* 80).

³¹The first pair cannot be compared because the two terms are used in different ways; the other pairs must be excluded because the terms involved in each case are not close enough in meaning and/or form.

³²Payne would presumably claim that the similarity in *form* gives a basis for comparison. But in an argument involving gender (female overseers), gender distinctive language cannot be ignored.

put the last two objections another way, Payne's statistics have meaning *only* if, as he puts it, "pure chance" was the operative procedure in producing these texts—or as if each word of the Greek NT had been written on a separate sheet of paper, which sheets were then thrown into a barrel, drawn out one by one, and written down in that order.

I am not saying that Payne's statistics prove *nothing*. But what do they "prove"? With the necessary subtractions mentioned above, Payne's argument can be represented thus:

- 1) six words, some of them unusual, occur in 36 lines describing x
- 2) these same six words occur in 11 lines describing y

All that this argument allows us to conclude validly is that x and y are probably related in some manner. But whether x is part of y (as Payne claims) or x and y are both parts of z (z being all Christians) even quintillion quintillions cannot tell us.

With respect to the question of a female elder/overseer, then, Payne's argument is essentially negative: Paul says nothing in the lists of qualifications which would clearly *exclude* women. Accepting this argument only moves the argument back a stage, however, for the question must then become: does the NT prohibit women from any activities inherent to the office of elder/overseer? We would answer yes: teaching and ruling the church are basic functions of the elder/overseer, yet for a woman to do these would be to violate Paul's prohibition in 1 Tim 2:12. Payne's reference to the elder/overseer would have force only if strong support for the presence of female elders in the pauline churches was forthcoming. Not only is such evidence lacking, some indications to the contrary exist: the phrase "husband of one wife" and the fact that female elders are not mentioned separately, as female deacons are. It is significant that Paul Jewett, who strongly favors the ordination of women, can state as a "general consensus" that women were not admitted to the office of elder/overseer in the NT period.³³

Finally to be considered under the heading "The Ministry of Women in the NT" are texts in which Paul refers generally to ministries of Christian women. I have already made reference to Priscilla, Phoebe and Junia/Junianus; the other references fall into two categories: 1) references to Christian women generally; 2) references to Paul's female co-workers. The first group can be quickly dismissed. Surely the simple *mention* of Christian women (Lydia in Acts 16; Julia and the sister of Nereus in Rom 16:15), women who opened their homes for church meetings (Acts 12:12; Col 4:15; Phlm 2; Rom 16:3-5) or a woman who was "like a mother" to Paul (Rom 16:13) proves nothing about women in official ruling or teaching positions. The references to women who labored in the work of the gospel or who worked with Paul are also inconclusive. For Payne's case to stand, he would have to demonstrate that the language employed with reference to these women *clearly* implies the activities of teaching or ruling. I therefore list below all the pauline references which may imply the ministry of a woman, categorizing them according to the language

³³The *Ordination of Women: An Essay on the Office of Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 71.

employed in each case:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) With a form of ἀπόστολος
Rom 16:7 – Junia (?) | 2) With a form of διάκονος and
προστάτις – Rom 16:1-2 – Phoebe |
| 3) With a form of κοπιᾶω
Rom 16:6 – Mary
Rom 16:12 – (<i>bis</i>) | 4) With a form of συνεργός
Rom 16:3 – Priscilla
Phil 4:2-3 – Euodia and Syntyche |
| 5) With a form of συναθλέω
Phil 4:2-3 – Euodia and Syntyche | 6) “ <i>Risked her life</i> ”
Rom 16:4 – Priscilla |
| 7) “ <i>in prison with</i> ”
Rom 16:7 – Junia (?) | |

I have already argued that the references in categories 1) and 2) do not prove that women taught or had authority over men; the same, of course, is true of category 7) if Ἰουνιά is a masculine name. Certainly nothing can be concluded from the fact that Priscilla “risked her life” for Paul; such a situation could have resulted from any number of different activities. Thus there remains the evidence from categories 3), 4) and 5). As to 3), the verb κοπιᾶω is employed fourteen times in the pauline corpus. While it sometimes designates Paul’s own missionary efforts, it is also used of his labors at tent-making (1 Cor 4:12), of the secular labor to which all Christians should devote themselves (Eph 4:28) and of the “hard-working farmer” (2 Tim 2:6). In two other places κοπιᾶω denotes general Christian ministry or service (1 Cor 15:10; 1 Thess 5:12). That κοπιᾶω is not a technical term for the ministry of teaching or ruling is therefore plain; its use with reference to Christian women proves only that they were engaged in some form of Christian ministry or service. Paul uses συνεργός 12 times and, like κοπιᾶω, in a non-technical sense. Many of Paul’s companions are designated his “fellow-workers,” as is the entire Corinthian church (2 Cor 1:24). As Cranfield notes, the term suggests “missionary activity and those other activities which are directly ancillary to it,” and evidences Paul’s lack of a “superiority” complex.³⁴ That the reference to Euodia and Syntyche as those “who struggled with me” also fails to prove Payne’s point is demonstrated by the fact that the same verb (in its only other pauline occurrence) is used in an exhortation to the Philippian church as a whole (Phil 1:27).³⁵

That women exercised important, indeed indispensable, ministries in the NT church is indisputable. That Paul in no manner deprecated these ministries is equally clear. But that Paul recognized women who engaged in ministries of

³⁴Romans 2.785.

³⁵Contra W. Derek Thomas, “The Place of Women in the Church at Philippi,” *ExpTim* 83 (1971-1972) 119.

teaching men or ruling over men is a view which finds little support in Paul.³⁶ Even if one were to decide that, taken by itself, Rom 16:7, let us say, *probably* indicated the existence of a female apostle, my position would not be overturned (as Payne suggests—cf. p. 183). Any attempt to systematize biblical teaching involves the reading of individual texts in light of the larger picture. Particularly is this necessary when an “indirect,” non-didactic text, such as those studied in this section, is involved. Presumably Payne would not reject the doctrine of inerrancy because one historical difficulty was found. Neither should one’s view of the proper role of women in church, established on the basis of clear didactic passages, be overturned because of one possibly discrepant text.³⁷

One final comment might be made. Some writers on this issue argue as if any restriction on the ministry of women somehow deprecates their position in the church. “Ministry” becomes subtly defined in terms of the more “public” activities such as preaching and teaching. While the term is sometimes so employed in the contemporary church, it is imperative to recognize that this is a significant departure from NT usage. For Paul, *all* ministries were significant and not to be slighted. “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you.’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you.’” On the contrary, those

³⁶Brief reference may be made here to Payne’s contention (n. 28) that the existence of a document such as *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, which focuses on the missionary activities of the woman Thecla, is difficult to explain if Paul had been opposed to the ministry of women. This logic would compel us also to find evidence in Paul that he did not oppose the baptism of animals (referred to in the same book, *The Acts of Paul*) or virginity among married couples (which receives Paul’s blessing in *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 5). The latter activity Paul, of course, directly opposed (1 Cor 7:5). The point is that appeal to this apocryphal book, which evidences clear “semi-Gnostic tendencies” (Dibelius-Conzelmann, *Pastorals* 66), is clearly inadmissible in terms of evidence for the life and theology of Paul. Note the comment of W. Schneemelcher: “. . . we can show by a comparison with the authentic Paul how far this Christianity [exhibited in *The Acts of Paul*] of the closing second century has departed from the Apostle” (*New Testament Apocrypha* [ed. Edgar Hennecke; Westminster; Philadelphia, 1965].2.350). Interestingly, E. Margaret Howe agrees in finding the portrayal of Paul in *The Acts of Paul* as significantly different from the canonical Paul, but claims that the apocryphal work presents a more “conservative” picture than the more “libertarian” attitudes Howe attributes to Paul (“Interpretations of Paul in the Acts of Paul and Thecla,” *Pauline Studies* [ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 33-49).

³⁷Nor do the prominent women in the OT constitute a difficulty for the position. First of all, of course, the progress of revelation must be allowed for: what God allowed in the OT dispensation might no longer be permissible. But, apart from that, the OT examples cited by Payne involve functions which are not parallel to the teaching and/or ruling position in the NT church:

1) Queens, whether pagan or Jewish, exercise primarily *political* authority—and surely Payne does not want seriously to suggest that the existence of the Queen of Sheba proves anything about the role of women in the NT church!

2) Prophetesses, such as Miriam and Huldah can be regarded as essentially parallel to NT prophetesses.

3) Deborah, also a prophetess, who “judged all Israel,” is in a unique category. But the judges, as Eichrodt notes, were not primarily involved in religious activity (*Theology*.1. 306).

In this regard, it is perhaps significant that women could not be priests—the primary regular religious authorities of the OT. See the discussion in Hurley (*Man and Woman* 31-57).

parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor" (1 Cor 12:21-33a). To argue, as I do, that women are barred from *some* ministries, is not to say that women cannot be "ministers" (in the NT sense) nor to suggest that their ministry is somehow less significant. The impression sometimes given that women do not "minister" or minister in less significant ways than men is an attitude against which women properly protest.

III. THE BACKGROUND OF 1 TIMOTHY

Reading the letters of the NT has been likened to listening to one end of a telephone conversation: only one party in the dialogue can be heard and misunderstanding easily occurs without knowledge of the other side of the conversation. For instance, if someone were to overhear me instructing my wife over the telephone to "Burn the Bible" he might think that I was in danger of committing apostasy. But if my wife had just said previously to my command, "Your old Bible, which has been on the basement floor, is full of bugs," such a conclusion would clearly be in error. It is often claimed that a similar situation is encountered with respect to the prohibitions in 1 Tim 2:12. We misunderstand these injunctions as absolute and eternally normative because we fail to recognize the problem which occasioned the advice. Were these problems adequately understood, it would become clear that Paul's commands to Timothy were intended to meet the needs of a particular situation and cannot be extrapolated as valid for the church in every place and age.

Toward this end, Payne offers a detailed reconstruction of the problems plaguing the Ephesian church. When the nature of these problems are properly understood, claims Payne, it can be seen that Paul's prohibitions in 1 Tim 2:12 were directed toward those problems. Therefore, he concludes, it is not necessarily legitimate to apply Paul's advice in the local Ephesian situation to the church at large. Specifically, Payne isolates four problems which, he claims, led to Paul's advice to Timothy:

- 1) A libertarian faction in the church had attracted a number of women to its principles, and these women were now involved in teaching these principles.
- 2) Another faction at the other extreme, a Judaizing group, was upset at the prominent role of women in the service, especially since they were engaged in false teaching. Paul seeks a compromise by commanding the women to learn but forbidding them from teaching.
- 3) The immodest dress of women, perhaps adopted under the influence of priestesses in the Artemis cult, led to an evil reputation for the church when they officiated in services.
- 4) The lack of opportunities for women to learn the Scriptures rendered them unfit for a teaching position.

Payne's first two points, his most important, are based on his theory that the false teachers against whom Paul writes were composed of *two separate factions within the church: a Judaizing group and a libertine group*. It is admittedly not easy to reconstruct the heretical teaching which is combatted in 1 Timothy; and we must indeed be careful not to assume that only one type of false teaching was involved. But there are sound reasons for rejecting Payne's reconstruction.

First, the evidence for libertine tendencies among the false teachers is not

very plentiful. *None* of the descriptions of the false teachers in 1 Timothy clearly alludes to this feature. Contrast with this the very clear and candid depiction of such tendencies in false teachers when they *did* occur (Phil 3:18-19; 2 Peter 2; Jude). Most of Payne's evidence for a libertine group comes from Paul's positive commands and exhortations, but unless we have clear indication that Paul is directing his advice *against* false teaching, these texts demand no such conclusion. Rather than mentioning immorality as an aspect of the false teachers, Paul again and again points to the speculative, meaningless and "intellectualistic" character of their teaching. Paul's consistent stress on these features is highly unusual had a significant group of teachers primarily characterized by libertinistic tendencies been operating in the church.

Second, at least one key aspect of the heretical teaching is difficult to integrate into Payne's reconstruction, viz. the asceticism mentioned in 1 Tim 4:3. Payne suggests that this was a feature of the Judaizers' teaching. But while ample evidence for the avoidance of food and even abstention from marriage among Jews exists, it is unlikely that "Judaizers" were responsible for the teaching in this case. The strength of Paul's reaction (vv 1-2) and the emphasis on the "natural" goodness of created things (vv 3-5) imply that the false teachers based their asceticism on a dualistic cosmology which regarded material things as evil *per se*. But such dualism is *not* typical of a "Judaizing" approach. Further suggesting that Judaizers are not in view here is the tolerance Paul elsewhere exhibits toward Jewish asceticism (cf. Romans 14). Since, then, the ascetic teaching is probably not of "Judaistic" origin and *cannot* be a feature of the "libertine" group, Payne's theory is unable to account for it.

An explanation for this dualistic asceticism *does* lie to hand and leads us to offer a simpler and more plausible alternative to Payne's hypothesis. The false teaching was a "Gnosticizing form of Jewish Christianity."³⁸ Such a syncretistic Judaism was a well-known feature of middle first century Asia Minor. For example, the Colossian heresy, with its apparent stress on intermediaries, its philosophical tendencies (2:8) and its ascetic teaching (2:16-23), is closely parallel to many features of the Ephesian heresy. And each of the elements which Paul associates with the false teachers in 1 Timothy can be naturally related to this kind of Jewish syncretism. Even the seemingly contradictory libertinistic and ascetic tendencies can stem from this same heresy, since the disregard for the material world led to both extremes in Jewish-gnostic groups. Since this theory is able to explain all the evidence, it should, as the simpler explanation, be preferred over Payne's hypothesis.

That only one group of false teachers was involved is suggested also by the similarity in language with which Paul characterizes them throughout

³⁸Kelly, *Pastoral Epistles* 12; Spicq, *Épîtres Pastorales* 91-117; A. F. Wall, "Gnosticism," *The New Bible Dictionary* (ed. J. D. Douglas; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 474. While it is improper to speak of gnosticism *as such* as early as the Pastorals (c. A.D. 62-64 on the supposition that they are pauline) (cf. especially Edwin Yamauchi *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Evidence* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973]), clear trends in a "gnostic" direction did exist (R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968] 44). Hence it is customary to speak of "incipient" or proto-gnosticism at this point.

1 Timothy. “Controversies” are ascribed to them in 1 Tim 1:4 and 6:4; “myths” in 1:4 and 4:7; “wandering away” in 1:6 and 6:21. Such evidence does not, of course, prove that all the passages relate to one group, since two groups could have some things in common. But it is suggestive when taken with the other considerations.

A further reason for thinking that only one group was involved is Paul’s failure in 1 Timothy to say *anything* about church unity. Were two “extremist” groups operating within the church, as Payne contends, it is almost inconceivable that Paul would have refrained from exhorting the church to unity in the faith (see for example Paul’s extended discussion in 1 Cor 1-6).

Finally, it must be questioned whether these false teachers, whether belonging to one group or many, were within the church, as Payne’s argument requires. Those involved in the false teaching have “wandered away from the faith” (6:21), have “abandoned the faith” (6:21) and are following “deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (4:1). Hymenaeus and Alexander, two notorious false teachers, have been “handed over to Satan” (1:20). Such characterizations must at least raise some doubt about whether the false teachers were involved in the life of the church.

The arguments put forth in the preceding section undermine Payne’s first two explanations of the *local* purpose for the teaching of 1 Tim 2:12. But more must be said on each of them. Payne’s contention that women were involved in *teaching* the heresy is not well established. His only evidence is the fact that women appear to have been involved in the heresy as well as men. Now it is almost certain that women *did* come under the influence of false teaching and I certainly would not dogmatically assert that they were not teaching it. But it remains the fact that no *clear* evidence for the participation of Christian women in teaching the Ephesian heresy exists. Nor does the text under discussion furnish any such evidence. I have already demonstrated the improbability of finding any reference to false teaching in the allusion to Eve (vv 13-14; see above, pp. 202-3). At another point in his reply (p. 190), Payne contends that the very prohibition against teaching (v 12) implies that women were teaching falsely. Of course, this does not follow. All that the prohibition implies is that women were teaching or seeking to teach men—not that they were teaching *false* doctrine. Apparently Payne assumes the very point in contention: that Paul would not have forbidden women to teach men *per se*. In essence, then, what Payne suggests we do is to view Paul’s prohibition in 1 Tim 2:12 as based *primarily* on a situation for which we have no clear evidence. One wonders how much normative Scripture would be left for the church were such a method widely practiced.

The second local factor which Payne cites is the concern of conservative Jewish brethren. Now I have already cast doubt on the existence of any such group in the Ephesian church. But let us grant for a moment that such a group did, in fact, exist. Would Paul have prohibited women from teaching because the Jewish element was offended? I would not think it *impossible* that Paul may have done that, but it seems to me unlikely. Certainly Paul consistently showed a willingness to compromise on non-essentials, as Payne points out. But it is worth asking whether the legitimate exercise of ministry can be fairly characterized as a “non-essential.” Payne himself suggests the impropriety of a woman failing to use a God-given gift for the upbuilding of the church (p. 197).

In addition to that, Paul did not usually flatly prohibit activities which he considered to be within the sphere of legitimate Christian liberty. If such activity constituted a threat to others, he exhorted voluntary abstention on the basis of Christian love (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8-10), an approach quite different from the straightforward commands of 1 Tim 2:12. Finally, at the risk of being repetitious, it should be noted that nothing about the sensibilities of Jewish brethren is said either in 1 Timothy 2 or anywhere in the Pastoral letters.

Another factor contributing to the prohibitions of 1 Timothy 2:12, Payne suggests, was the immodest dress the Ephesian women had assumed. Now we certainly possess evidence, and in the immediate context (vv 9-10), that this was a problem. But Paul does *not* link this issue with the prohibitions of v 12. Related to this is Payne's suggestion that the prominence in Ephesus of the priestesses at the Temple of Artemis, many of them undoubtedly of low moral caliber, would have led to scandal if women in the churches officiated in similar dress. While this is no doubt true, it goes beyond anything in the text to suggest that the Christian women were imitating these priestesses in the matter of apparel. In any case, Payne characterizes the problem of dress as "contributory" and hence dependent on the more basic problems of false teaching and Judaizers' scruples.

The final local factor adduced by Payne is the lack of opportunities for women to become well-instructed in the faith. While there were undoubtedly some restrictions, it is nevertheless clear that women possessed sufficient competency to teach other women and children (Titus 2:3-4). And one wonders how Payne can reconcile this point with his stress on the significant ministries of many NT women. Furthermore, Paul's command that the women be taught implies their equal access with men to the source of knowledge of the faith. Again, the flat prohibition of women from teaching appears far more than necessary to prevent the many untrained women from teaching.

Our examination of the four local factors advanced by Payne in order to explain the prohibitions of 1 Tim 2:12 is now complete. We conclude that his reconstruction of the Ephesians' side of the "conversation" lacks sufficient evidence in the texts and fails to provide an adequate explanation of the nature of Paul's "reply." Yet sound hermeneutical procedure would require that there be very good evidence for any local situation which is held up as a factor limiting the application of a biblical command. Otherwise, one could limit the applicability of virtually *any* biblical text simply by suggesting possible local circumstances behind it.

Clearly, however, there did exist in the Ephesian church some local factors on which Timothy required advice from his "father" in the faith. If we look again at the passage, 2:9-15, we note that it is devoted entirely to one topic: the proper demeanor of Christian women in the worship service. Since we have evidence that some form of proto-gnostic/Jewish heresy was being propagated at Ephesus; since we know that such heresies often deprecated "traditional" marriage and family values, often involving a confusion in male/female role relationships; and since we have concrete evidence that these specific problems were present at Ephesus (1 Tim 4:1-6; 5:1-16), this heretical teaching is almost certainly the local factor which gave occasion to this teaching. Modest dress (v 9), the importance of good deeds (v 10), submissive learning (v 11), abstinence from improper roles in the church (v 12) and devotion to godly roles

and virtues (v 15) are commanded by Paul in opposition to the heretics, who were more interested in “knowledge” (γνῶσις) than virtue and who were probably advocating emancipation from customary male/female role relationships.³⁹ Such a background satisfactorily accounts for the text and has the advantage over Payne’s theory of clear support in 1 Timothy itself.

Having suggested a plausible local context for Paul’s teaching, it is necessary to investigate further the significance of such local factors for the general applicability of a text such as 1 Tim 2:12. The effort expended in detecting local circumstances behind certain NT texts appears often to have as its motivation the assumption that the demonstration of such factors constitutes evidence that the text in question cannot be applied universally. Thus the implicit argument is:

Teaching occasioned by a local situation is not universally applicable

The teaching in question is occasioned by a local situation

Therefore the teaching in question is not universally applicable

Now the problem with this argument lies in the absolute nature of the first premise. Clearly much teaching, even teaching which has as its *only* purpose to deal with a particular local situation, is universally applicable. Thus, for example, Paul’s teaching on the radical opposition of faith and works as means of salvation in Galatians is obviously tied very closely to a particular situation—the attraction for the Galatians of a specific Judaizing heresy. Equally obviously, it does not follow that his teaching lacks universal validity.

The point, then, is this: *the isolation of local circumstances as the occasion for a particular teaching does not, by itself, indicate anything about the normative nature of that teaching.* Other factors must be taken into account in order to make such a determination. Now, I want to make it clear that I am *not* accusing Payne of utilizing the improper methodology outlined above. His purpose in adducing local factors is to demonstrate that one cannot *assume* that Paul’s teaching will be universally applicable. The legitimacy of this point may be granted (although I would not agree that the burden of proof lies on the one who seeks to prove universal applicability, as he suggests on p. 190). But what Payne fails to do is to provide convincing reasons for *not* taking Paul’s teaching as normative: as we have seen, it is illegitimate to *assume* that a teaching is not generally applicable simply because local circumstances exist. Or, to put it positively, what are the circumstances in which Paul’s teaching *is* applicable?

In order to answer this, it will be helpful to distinguish between what I will call “occasion” and “situation.” An illustration will help explain what I mean by these terms. If I were to give my three year old son the command “Don’t open the door!” while driving a car, I would not intend the command to have universal validity—when we arrived home I would expect him to open the door. What had the effect of nullifying the command was the *change in situation*—the situation had changed from a car in motion to a car at rest. Other changes in situation could conceivably affect the applicability of the command also. For instance, when my son becomes an adult there may well be occasion for

³⁹On the letter point, note Robert J. Karris, “The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles,” *JBL* 92 (1973) 560,563; Dibelius-Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles* 66.

him to open a car door while the vehicle is in motion. But anytime my son, as a child, is riding in a moving car, the command is applicable—not just for the one occasion which is being discussed. Thus I am suggesting a distinction between occasion and situation according to which the former denotes the specific *reason* for a given command or teaching (in this case the motion of my son's hand toward the car door while traveling on Grand Avenue on July 23, 1981) while the latter denotes the general situation for which a given command or teaching is always applicable (children riding in a car which is in motion). "Situation," as I am using it, may be further defined as that set of circumstances to which an author or speaker intends his words to apply.

It is this all-important distinction between what I am calling "occasion" and "situation" which is so often neglected in discussion of issues such as the one before us. To argue that a given teaching has a specific occasion (which, indeed, virtually all NT teaching has) is by no means to preclude the possibility that there exist situations beyond that occasion in which the teaching may be applicable. Thus the determination of "situation" is the crucial step in deciding the extent of applicability of a teaching or command. How can one determine the extent of that "situation"? Several criteria are helpful:

1) A situation will often extend beyond the immediate occasion when the activity or state under discussion is such that it can recur or is constant. Thus the activity of my son's stretching out his hand toward a car door can (and does!) recur, suggesting that my command for that activity is to be applied beyond its immediate occasion.

2) The explicit basis for a command or teaching can furnish an important clue. If that basis is by nature local or temporary, the situation may well be similarly restricted. But if the basis is general, it may be that the situation is also general.

3) If the same teaching or command is found on other "occasions" it can be inferred that the situation extends beyond any local context. Similarly, if a particular teaching or command is found in only one place, or if teaching in other contexts is found to *contradict* the words in question, it *may* be that the situation is restricted to that context.

4) The ostensible purpose for which the document in question was written is also important. Does the author indicate a *restricted* or *general* application of his teaching and advice?

What can be concluded when these criteria are applied to 1 Tim 2:12? The *activity* regulated is the proper role relationship of men and women as they relate to the offices of teaching and ruling in the Christian church. Defined in this way, it can be readily seen that support is given to the view which sees the situation to be universal, since the activities in question exist anywhere men and women meet for worship. (While our perception of teaching in the secular world may change, the teaching God has ordained to be done in the church remains the same.) The same conclusion follows from the application of the second criterion. Far from suggesting that the basis for his prohibitions is the immediate context in the Ephesian church, Paul explicitly grounds his teaching in the divinely ordained role relationships as exemplified in creation. This universal basis manifestly argues for a universal situation: it is because of the unchanging created relationship of man and woman, not because of temporary local factors, that Paul teaches as he does. Thirdly, although a large number of

parallel texts cannot be adduced, Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 is very similar to the teaching in 1 Timothy 2. And the fact that Paul gave such similar advice in two very different contexts again strongly suggests that the situation involved extends beyond any immediate local set of circumstances. Furthermore, an important negative point is the fact that no clear evidence which is *contradictory* to Paul's teaching in 1 Tim 2:12 has been found. Finally, as Hurley points out, Paul's purpose in writing 1 Timothy is not simply to give Timothy instructions for the local Ephesian situation.⁴⁰ 1 Tim 3:14-15 reads: "Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." Thus, Paul's explicit purpose is to give advice on the proper conduct of affairs in the Ephesian church, but *as part of the universal church*.

In sum, then, the application of each of the four criteria to 1 Tim 2:12 points unambiguously to the general nature of the situation involved there.⁴¹ While Paul's advice to Timothy is undoubtedly occasioned by specific circumstances in the first century Ephesian church, and is directed primarily to those circumstances, the "situation" in which Paul's advice is applicable extends far beyond that occasion, embracing every Christian worship service in which men and women descended from Adam and Eve participate. It is only by advocating dubious exegetical positions or by mistaking "occasion" for "situation" or by reading alien elements into the text that such a conclusion can be evaded.

The results of our investigation into Payne's reconstruction of the local circumstances behind 1 Timothy may be summarized as follows:

- 1) The local circumstances he isolates are generally not well evidenced and are in any case not referred to in the context under discussion.
- 2) Whatever local circumstances be discovered, these do not form the totality of contexts (the "situation") in which the prohibitions may be applicable.
- 3) When explicit evidence from the context and the rest of the NT is employed, it appears almost certain that the teaching of 1 Tim 2:12 has a "universal" situation in view.

Conclusion

Most works advocating a full range of ministerial functions for women have little difficulty with 1 Tim 2:12: 1 Timothy is viewed as a sub-pauline, second century document which possesses little or no authority for the contemporary church. Evangelicals who share this position re women, on the other hand, must suggest exegetical/hermeneutical factors by which the text can be squared with this view. Philip Payne's response to my article is an impressive attempt to establish such factors. I have made it clear that I am unconvinced by his argu-

⁴⁰*Man and Woman* 196.

⁴¹It is the application of these criteria which distinguishes the commands of v 12 from those in vv 1 and 8 and renders inaccurate Payne's accusation of inconsistency (cf. p. 189).

ments,⁴² but I want to thank him for stimulating my thinking on the topic and for moving forward the discussion on this issue among evangelicals. As the debate continues, may God be honored by the carefulness of our scholarship, the charitableness of our discussions and the sincerity of our desire to know his mind.

⁴²It is interesting to note that Paul Jewett, an outspoken advocate of the broader view, admits the impossibility of proving this view exegetically (see *The Ordination of Women* 67-8).