

An Interpretation of the Biblical Evidence Concerning
The Role of Women in The Church

Greek Exegesis
1005C

A Theological Research Paper

by

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I. Introduction: The Problem

The last 50 years has seen a dramatic change in the role of women in our society. Today's woman has become an active and competing force in the job market as well as a powerful voice in the political and social arena. As a result of this shifting role in our society the Church is being challenged to reevaluate its stance on the role of women in the Church. Questions which must be answered include: To what extent has our traditional understanding of the role of women been influenced by personal and cultural biases? What are the Biblical mandates for the woman's role in the church? Are these universal mandates, or can they be restricted to specific time periods of history? Should these principles be reinterpreted in light of changing cultural circumstances? Answers to these questions will have direct implications on our views to the specific issues of women as pastors, as elders, as deacons, and as Sunday school teachers. It will also influence our understanding and position concerning the role of the husband and of the wife within the home. This paper will attempt to: 1) interpret biblical passages relevant to these issues, 2) determine if the teaching is a universal principle or relevant only to a specific period of history, 3) apply when possible the interpretation to today's culture.

II. New Testament Teaching on the Role of Women in the Church's Ministry

A. Were there deaconesses in the early church and is that a mandate for having them today?

I Timothy 3:11

Who are these women Paul refers to in this verse? Four explanations have been offered: 1) It is a statement to the women in the church in general, 2) The women are deaconesses, 3) It is a command to the wives of deacons and elders, 4) It is a command to deacon's wives only.

The first view, that of women in general, seems less likely due to the restrictions which the immediate context seems to imply. The second view that it refers to deaconesses, has a lot in its favor. Paul does not identify these women as the wives of elders or deacons. It seems that it would have been simple for him to have used an article (the wives) or added "their" to the context if he wanted to identify them as wives. It is also asked by proponents of this view why Paul did use a grammatical construction like he used in 3:4 (σεκνα εχοντα) if he were identifying the wives. The strongest support for this position is found in the structure of the text. A parallel between deacons, elders and women seems to occur in the following ways. γυναικος ωσαντως... shows an immediate connection within the text. This connection or parallel is reinforced by the presumed use of ??? in verse 8 and 11 from elders in verse 2. Further development of this parallel is seen in the requirements for deacons in verse 8 with the requirements for the women in verse 11.¹

¹ James B. Hurley. Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective Zondervan NY, NY 1981 p. 123.

The third view, that is of wives of deacons and elders, seems unlikely due to the distance between the elders and the women. The best explanation is probably that these women are the wives of deacons. The following reasons are posited. 1) Paul does not specifically refer to these women as deaconesses. Concerning the deacons, however, Paul makes it a point to name them by title. Both the elders and deacons are referred to by name twice, but the women are not referred even once by the title of deacon. 2) The disproportionate quantity of material given to these women seems to de-emphasize their function. It seems odd that if Paul considered the office of deaconess worthy to be listed along side the elders and deacons he would have said so little about their qualifications. 3) The parallel structure of verse 11 to verse 8 does not dictate that deaconesses are in view. Paul may be merely stressing the wives of deacons had a large and significant role in the husband's office. The emphasis is not on the position but on the responsibility. 4) Verses 11 and 12 seem to be closely related. Verse 11 gives the command concerning the woman's responsibility to her husband and his ministry. Verse 12 dictates to the deacon his responsibility to the wife and the home. 5) Verse 13 is an admonition for deacons. Did Paul have such low regard for deaconesses so as to exclude them? Would not his comments also apply to such an important group?

In evaluation the above a dogmatic conclusion cannot be made. The first two arguments made in favor of the deaconesses view and the first argument in favor of the deacons wives view

are hypothetical in that they pull from silence. The structure of the text favors the deaconesses' view somewhat, but strong support can be made against it as well. Grammatical Syntax does not seem to favor either. Due to the proportion of the material given to elders and deacons against that given to the women, and because of Paul's closing remarks to deacons in verse 13, the evidence is slightly in favor of the deacon's wives view.

Romans 16:1

The term $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\nu$ has several uses in the New Testament. 1) In its original and common use it carried the idea of waiters at tables John. 2:5,9. 2) It is used in the NT in most cases as a more general idea of serving someone Matthew 20:26; 23:11; Mark. 10:43 etc. 3) It is used in connection to the discharge of certain obligations within the community I Peter 4:10; Roman 11:13; 2 Corinthians 4:1; 6:3. 4) It is used in relation to the gathering of gifts Romans 10:30; 2 Corinthians 8:1-6; 9:1, 12, etc. 5) It is an office I Timothy 3:8, 12; Titus 1:9.

In Romans 16:1 this term is used as a genitive of possession and could be used either to recognize Phoebe as one who serves the saints in a general sense and interpreted "servant of the churches" or Paul may be recognizing her as holding an office in the church. Kittle states in regards to deaconesses, "It is indisputable... that an order of deaconesses did quickly arise in the Church. A part was played here by widows who, on the strength of their chaste conduct on the one

side and loving service on the other, already received official recognition in I Timothy 5:3ff."²

Kittle is no doubt concluding that I Timothy 5:3 refers to deaconesses, which of course is highly disputed. Grammatically and contextually we can not draw a solid conclusion of Romans 16:1 in regards to Paul's use of *διακονον*.

Did deaconesses exist in the early church? There is no doubt that eventually such a group did develop in the early church. The question remains, however, if Paul is making reference to them in these passages. Can we necessarily conclude that because such a group did eventually develop in the early church that they existed at the time of Paul's writing? Does their eventual development prove that such a group was in agreement with the Apostle's doctrines? What happened to these deaconesses and why do they not exist today?

We can not be dogmatic in our conclusions on this issue from these passages. If room is allowed for the establishment of deaconesses in the church today strong considerations must be taken in determining what their responsibilities should be and making sure that they do not extend beyond the biblical imperatives for women.

B. What is the biblical principles for women teaching?

² Kittle, *Theo. Dict. of the New Testament in the discussion of diakonon.*

I Timothy 2:11-15

In verse 11 Paul explains the manner in which a woman is to receive instruction from the man. *μανθανετω* is an imperative of command and is best understood "Let the woman..." and not "A woman should...". The use of *ησυχια* is used to convey the idea of a quiet attitude of receptivity rather than an external oppression to silence as might be suggested by *σιγαω* Luke 14:34. It is not demanded that women be totally hushed, but that they have a quiet spirit while receiving instruction. *εν παση υποσταγη* leaves no room for half heartedness or external observance only.

Not only is the woman to receive instruction with a quiet spirit and in a submissive manner, but she is not to teach or exercise authority over the man. *επιτρεπω* is progressive present. Both *διδασκειν* and *αυθεντειν* are *επεξεγχειραλ* to *επιτρεπω*. What Paul has in mind as constituting *αυθεντειν ανδρος* is not identified. It may possibly be that he intended to leave this open ended for the better judgment of the men. *διδασκειν* should probably be connected with *ανδρος* as well. Here, then, the restriction regarding teaching is to men and does not include other women or children. By restating a woman's responsibility to receive instruction in a silent manner shows how teaching and exercising authority over men stands in contrast to this principle.

The reason why the woman is to have this quiet and submissive spirit is because it is in harmony with God's intended purpose in Creation. In verse 13 Paul states that the order of

creation places man in a position of authority. He has, in a sense, first born rights. Paul also reminds the women that the fall of the human race began with the woman stripping out of her intended boundaries (verse 14).

Titus 2:3-5

In this chapter Paul explains to Titus what he is to teach specific groups within the church. These include older men (verse 2), older women (verses 3-5), the young men (verses 6-8) and bond-slaves (verses 9, 10).

Concerning the older women Paul seems to zero in on those areas where most older women are known to fall into sin and then he deals with areas where they can be most useful to others. First, they are to have a behavior worthy of reverence *ιεροπεπη*. Reverence is not just given to them but earned by their behavior. They are not to teach what is good *καλοδιδασκαλους*. The purpose for this teaching is that they might encourage the young women to 1) love their husbands. Paul recognized that love does not come naturally but must be taught. The older women have the experience in intimate interpersonal relationships to know how to love, how to express that love, and how to teach young women what would otherwise be learned through much sadness and grief. 2) Their experience in practical child rearing can also be used to teach the younger women to love their children. They are also to teach the young women to be

prudent, to be pure, workers at home, kind, and subject to their own husbands. The result of such godly behavior on the part of the older women is that the Word of God is not dishonored.

I Timothy 5:3-16

In chapter 5 Paul instructs Timothy on the manner in which he is to work with older men and women within the body. Concerning widows, he is instructed how he should determine which women should receive welfare from the church. Widows who are truly widows and thus unable to find their substance outside of the assembly are to be recognized (λιτ:τιμα) and provided for. Paul explains that those women who have children or grandchildren should first seek them out and permit the family to practice reverence (ευσεβει) to the earlier generation (lit: ancestor, forefather). Paul felt that the responsibility of the elderly rested first on the family and then on the assembly of believers. He probably had in mind a reference to the law, "Honor your father and your mother..." which was written to adults.

To be considered for this sustenance more was to be considered that just physical need. The widow must also meet certain spiritual standards. She must have "fixed her hope on God". Having been left alone she does not seek out others to meet her needs but rather she looks to God for her support. This is evidenced by her continued prayers and petitions (emphasis) both night and day.

In stark contrast to the woman who turns to God is the one who gives herself to indulgence or sensual pleasure *σπαταλωσα*. Some commentators have suggested that Paul is making a reference to prostitution. This type of woman is not to be accepted. Her life is characterized by Paul as a kind of living death.

In verse 7 Paul instructs Timothy to "Give instruction on these things, as well, that they may be above reproach". This verse is difficult because it is hard to determine 1) who the instructions are to be given to, 2) what the "these things" refer to, 3) who the "they may be above reproach" is referring to. Concerning the first problem, it seems best to understand the instruction as one to be given to the congregation as a whole. The "these things" probably refers to the entire instruction to Timothy on the credentials for a church supported widow. If any of the credentials are not followed for determining who is a widow the church could fall under reproach, either because they are supporting a woman who is not deserving of the honor, or because they are endorsing the irresponsibility of a family who is not taking care of its widow. The last explanation seems most likely in Paul's mind as can be seen in verse 8. Paul considers it a very serious sin, and goes so far as to question one's sincerity in the faith if he is unwilling to take care of his own family members.

Paul further qualifies the true widow as being over 60 years old and having been a one-man-woman which seems to emphasize faithfulness more than that she was only married one time.

She was also to have a reputation of good works. Paul cites five examples for this last point. The result of meeting these qualifications is that the widow was to be placed on the list. We can only speculate what the list refers to. Some have suggested that it refers to a list of women who were employed by the church to minister to the saints. Rather than an employment list, however, it seems better to see it as a kind of welfare list with responsibilities and obligations attached to their privileges. Only women who had specific physical needs and met specific social and spiritual qualifications were excepted on the list so that the number of women included would not become too burdensome a responsibility on the church.

Paul emphatically states that younger widows are not to be placed on the list. He correlates sexual desire as synonymous with youth and notes that these natural desires could cause the young woman to desire remarriage. To do so would bring "condemnation" on them because they would have "set aside their previous pledge. "What this pledge is as vague as the list. To be placed on this list, though, demanded that the woman be willing to pledge herself to certain responsibilities before Christ which omitted future remarriage. A second reason for not putting young women on the list is that doing so would encourage idleness. Idleness is learned by these younger women and appears to be something which may naturally result if they are placed on the list. Being on the list gives them time to go around from house to house, gossiping and being meddlesome, and speaking about things which they should not. For this reason Paul desires the younger women to "get

married, bear children, keep house, and not give the enemy any opportunity for abuse". Paul obviously feels that a woman who is busy does not have time to fall into the temptations of sin and that idleness gives opportunity for sin. Verse 15 illustrates that Paul has already seen what he has stated take place. His counsel has come too late to prevent some reproach from coming down on the church. It seems obvious that some young women had been placed on the list and had broken their pledge.

In verse 16 Paul informs Timothy that women who have widowed mothers or grandmothers are responsible for their care. Just because she is not a man does not negate her responsibility to her family. Throughout this passage Paul seems to be emphasizing that the church is to care for only those widowed women who can not find care from existing family. The church is to co-exist with the family, but it is not to replace its God ordained responsibilities.

This passage speaks of the responsibility of the church and the family to widows. It has been suggested by some that the list in verse 9 identifies these women as holding a specific office in the church. This can not be proven. The context best suggests that it is more a welfare list than an employment list. This is specifically suggested in verse 13. To conclude that these women held a teaching function in the church would be forced.

Conclusion on women teaching in the church

The Scriptures do not reject the women the privilege of teaching in the church within a limited capacity. Teaching other women is especially encouraged of older women who have shown themselves to have a strong testimony. This teaching is primarily one of a role model helping the younger women live a strong Christian walk on a daily basis. The Titus passage does not suggest that she should teach the scriptures in a formal manner. Rather, any formal instruction seems to come from men whom the women are to receive in a quiet and submissive manner. The emphasis is not that the woman should be totally silent, but that she should have a gentle attitude towards the male teacher. Concerning the teaching of children the Scriptures are silent and thus we can conclude that it is probably not prohibited.

III. What does the New Testament teach on the Roll of Women in the Church's Worship

A. Are the women allowed to speak in the worship service?

I Corinthians 14:34-35

Paul uses the imperative ??? which is much stronger than the I Timothy 2 use of ???. In I Timothy Paul's instruction was directed at the woman's inward attitude. Here, however, Paul's comment is toward her outward expression and should be translated "remain silent". Paul increases the force of his statement in the next clause with an emphatic ??? and the statement "they

are not permitted to speak". He then introduces a contrastive ??? followed by the imperative ?????? which is confirmed by his reference to the law. There is no question that Paul wants the women to remain silent.

The problem with this text is centered in the debate over whom Paul is speaking to. The arguments are: 1) The reference refers to women speaking in tongues. This explanation seems improbable in light of verse 35 which does not fit in the context of tongues. 2) It refers to women judging the prophets. Paul has consistently used the conjunctions ???, ???, and ??? to hold the structure of this section together. Here, however, Paul shifts to an imperative without such a connector. It seems more consistent with Paul's thinking to have said something like "for the women ought to..." or : and let the women..." or even better "so let the ..." that to have moved away from the pattern or structure he used within his discussion on prophesy. A second reason for reflecting this view is that it simply appears forced and thus should be questioned under the general rules of hermeneutics. 3) The text is referring to public speaking (Charles Hodge).³ This view ignores verse 35. Paul seems to include in this verse more than simply speaking before a group. In verse 35 we find that the women are not so much as to ask questions in the church. 4) Paul is referring to married women only. This explanation helps to explain the contradiction

³ *Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians Baker Books. p. 304.*

which seems to exist in I Corinthians 11 where Paul speaks to women about prophesying and praying aloud. It also fits with Paul's use of women in I Corinthians 7. The strongest support for this view is Paul's use of ??? in verse 34 which "when it occurs elsewhere in the New Testament with reference to women, it always refers to a married woman who was to be subject to her husband (Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; I Peter 3:1, 5).⁴ This view holds that married women were to remain silent, whereas, single women were permitted to speak provided their heads were covered (I Corinthians 11). The problem with this view is that the headcovering is referred not only in the context of prophesying and praying and seems to be required for women in general, and not just for single women.

5) The last view is that Paul is referring to women in general. This is the most natural explanation for the passage. The married women in verse 35 are considered a subgroup of the larger more general group. The difficulty with this view is attempting to correlate Paul's reference to women prophesying and praying in chapter 11 with the imperative to remain silent here. Two explanations have been posited. The first is that Paul is referring to small gatherings in chapter 11 which meet separate from the main gathering of the church. In these smaller meetings the women were permitted to speak provided they were covered, whereas, in the larger church meeting they

⁴ *David K. Lowery I Corinthians from The Bible Knowledge Commentary Victor Books p.541.*

were to remain silent. The weakness in this view is that the early church appears to have been made up of many small churches. There would have been no real distinction in the types of gathering. The second explanation is that women were permitted to speak when covered provided men were not present. In the normal church setting women were not to speak. At times women met with other women and it was at those times she could speak provided her head was covered.

Acts 21:9; Luke 2:36

These two verses prove that prophetesses did in fact exist in the early church. Anna had a great deal of freedom to speak.

Conclusion on women speaking

To draw a dogmatic conclusion is not possible. The fact that prophetesses existed in the early church is evidenced in Acts 21:9 and that they were given a certain amount of freedom to prophesy is seen in I Corinthians 11. To suggest, however, from these passages that women had a great deal of verbal freedom in the church would contradict Paul's imperative in I Corinthians 14:34-35 for women to remain silent. In the instances in which we see prophetesses in the New Testament they are mentioned as either widows (Luke 2:36) or as virgins (Acts 21:9). The question might be asked if the widows mentioned in I Timothy 5:3-16 may have had some similar function. The answer to this would of course be purely subjective.

In considering I Corinthians 11 it might be asked what women were given the privilege to prophesy in the church. Was prophesy limited to the prophetesses? In light of the evidence of the freedom of Anna in Luke 2:36, the freedom of certain women to prophesy and pray in the church in I Corinthians 11, Paul's imperative for women in general to remain silent in the church in I Corinthians 14 it is my conclusion that I Corinthians 11 is directed primarily to virgins and widows in the church who were known as prophetesses and were given certain privileges as a result of their position. Married women did not have these privileges and were requested to remain silent.

B. To cover or not to cover? I Coronations 11:2-22

The headcovering is the outward expression of the theological principles of subordination, dominance, and equality as expresses in creation and illustrated in the cultural normalities of Paul's day.

In verses 2-6 Paul discusses the meaning of headship and the order of dominance and submission in the world order. He explains it as first God, then Christ, then man and last woman. Because of this order man is not to cover his head while praying and prophesying, yet the woman is.

Beginning in verse 7 Paul explains the reasons why the man is not to cover his head while a woman is to cover hers. The reasons why a man ought not to cover his head are: 1) he is the image and glory of God, 2) the man was not formed out of woman, 3) the man was not created to compliment the woman. The reasons why a woman ought to cover her head are: 1) she is the glory of the man, 2) she was formed out of the body of the man, 3) she was created to compliment the man, 4) the covering is a testimony to the angels.

The key exegetical problem in this section is found in verse 7. Was Paul quoting Genesis 1:26, 27 when he mentioned man as created in God's image but omitted woman who is included in these verses? Paul is probably making a more general reference to the Genesis account as a whole and not specifically to Genesis 1:26, 27. The woman is seen in the image of God except in the specific area of headship. In this sense a comparison can be made between God and Christ, and Man and Woman. Christ is the fullness and image of the Father. Yet, though he is the perfect representation of the Father He is still subordinate to Him. This position neither makes Him inferior to the Father or less than the perfect image of God. The woman is likewise, is positionally equal with man in the eyes of God. This does not deny her functional subordination to the man anymore than Christ was functionally subordinate to the Father. In a general sense both man and woman were created in the image of God, but in the role of rule or sovereignty only man can claim this distinction.

It also teaches that a woman's long hair is a glory to her because it is a natural veil. Probably the most difficult problem in this section is Paul's use of ????. This preposition originally carried the idea of opposite and is usually translated "instead of, in place of, or in behalf of". The term is sometimes translated "for or as" such as is the case in Matthew 5:38 and I Peter 3:9. Paul uses it this way in Romans 12:17 and I Thessalonians 5:15. If Paul was using this term in the first sense then long hair is seen as taking the place of the shawl. If this is the understanding, then this verse is an illustration and is not meant to replace the shawl. In regards to this point, it is interesting to note that Paul used the word ??? meaning "a covering" throughout the earlier verses. Paul does not identify what this covering is. He changes to ??? which is a more specific reference to an object of covering, usually a veil in verse 15. It would be impossible to substitute with the word for hair in the earlier verses and make any sense out of the passage. Hurley's attempt to say hair balled up on the head only adds further complications to the text and for that reason must be rejected as well. For this reason I feel that Paul is speaking in the earlier verses of an actual veil or similar clothing.

The last verse is awkward. Paul seems at first glance to be saying that none of the churches are to cover their women's heads. This seems to be a negation of what came before. Many translators (NAS) have understood ??? as "other". This is, however, not supported by the New Testament elsewhere. The meaning is translated "of such a kind, or such as this" (BAG). ??? is

generally understood to mean "habitual, customary, usual (BAG). Paul is referring here to a standard or customary practice. The best translation would be then "But if one wishes to be quarrelsome (concerning this matter), we have no such practice, neither do the churches of God." The difficulty with this verse is trying to determine who the quarrelsome party is. Earlier in this passage Paul's comments appear to be a rebuke directed at those who were desiring not to cover their heads. It seem logical that from the force of his rebuke he may have expected to receive harsh words back from this group. If this is the case then the "no such practice" is a reference to the act of intentionally not wearing the covering. There may even be a possible reference to their ritualizing their insubordination.

Conclusion on the covering

The headcovering was to be worn by those women who had the privilege to pray and prophesy in the church. That all women did not have this right is taught in I Timothy 2:11-15 where women are commanded to remain silent. My personal understanding and conclusion is that certain virgins and widows in the early church were recognized as prophetesses and that these prophetesses were given rights which other women did not have. It appears from I Corinthians 11 that prophesy and prayer were included in these rights but how much further they were permitted to vocalize is questionable. These women were still required to recognize that in God's created

order they were subject to man. The outward testimony of this recognition was shown in the headcovering.

The specific rights given to these women came to a halt when prophesy died out of the church. Today Paul's imperative for women to remain silent in the church should be the universal principle. The mandate to remain silent is founded in God's intended order of creation and is thus transcultural in its application.

IV. Equality, Misogyny and History

A. Status of Women in the Ancient World

What was the status of Women in the ancient world and how should it influence our understanding of women today? In Jewish culture the woman was to function in a subordinate role within the family structure. A glimpse at the Old Testament genealogies reveals that women were omitted from having a part in the continuation of the name and family line. Only in rare instances are women mentioned as heirs in the family inheritance and then only when men are not born in the family or have died off. The reference to the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11) provides enough information to show that in some circumstances the women were given rights to inheritance. In Ruth also, we find Naomi receiving the rights to her deceased husband's land.

It is interesting that in the Genesis account, prior to the fall Adam calls his wife Woman, "because she was taken out of man." The relationship between the man and woman before the fall was one of co-equality, mutual respectability, and harmony. Each was to function for the emotional, physical, and intellectual satisfaction of the partner. The woman was looked upon by Adam of an extension of himself.

After the fall the harmony between the man and woman was broken. Sin placed a wall within the relationship and tension developed (3:12, 16). The function of the woman begins to change from a partner of co-equality to one of subordination (3:16) and reproduction (3:20). The shift in name from "woman" to "Eve" (Mother of all living) reflects this change. Her responsibilities are shifted from satisfying and completing him to meeting the needs of the children. Jewish literature has revealed to some extent that man resents woman for her part in the fall and for this crippled relationship. This can be illustrated in the following quotations.

"Sin began with woman, and thanks to her we all must die."

Jesus ben Sirach Ecclesiastes 25:13, 16, 19.

"the attitude of man is informed by reason, (that) of woman by sensuality."

NT Philo De Opificio Mundi, 165, as quoted by Oepke in G. Kittle., Theo. Dict. of the (Grand Rapids), 1, p.782

"A woman is inferior to man in every way."

Josephus

"I found one upright man among a thousand, but not one upright woman among them all."

Ecclesiastes 7:28

but He is not inferior the Father, so the wives submission to their husbands does not make them inferior to their husbands. The new modal for marital relationships is Christ and the Church.

B. Submission

Ephesians 5:22f

The verb in verse 22 is implied from the verbal participle ??? in verse 21. Paul first instructs believers to be subject to one another within the context of communal worship. He then instructs the wives to be subject to their own husbands, as to the Lord. The idea is an attitude of voluntary subordination to the spouse. She is to subject herself to her husband in the same manner as she does to the Lord. The reason she is to subject herself to her husband is that the husband is the head of the wife. This relationship of the husband to the wife is parallel in likeness to the relationship of Christ to the church. The statement "He Himself being the savior of the body" is used to confirm both Christ's relationship of love and His right to Headship. As the Church is subject to Christ, so ought the wife to be subject to the husband. This is not a relationship of forced oppression. Neither is it to be viewed as a superior vs. inferior combination. Paul sets up the balance in the following verse. In verse 25 husbands are commanded to love their wives just as Christ loved the Church. Christ is not an overbearing tyrant who harasses the Church into a subordinate role. Rather, Christ gave himself up sacrificially so that the Church might all the more

be glorified with Him. The attitude of the man is to be parallel to His. This love is to be with sacrifice, desiring always to deify the wife that she might be his glory (I Corinthians 11:7). The purpose of Christ's sacrifice was the sanctification of the Church. The husband sanctifies his wife by nurturing her with the Word and the principle therein. The result of Christ's sacrifice is that the Church is made glorious and holy. The result of the husband's sacrificial love for his wife is that her holiness is made his glory.

Colossians 3:18f

The imperative for women to be subject to their husbands is again coupled with Paul's command for men to love their wives. The fact that this must be commanded repeatedly testifies that neither of these attitudes are natural. It has been suggested by some Hebrew scholars that it is contrary to the fallen nature of the woman to subject herself to the husband. In Genesis 3:16 Yaweh completes the curse on the woman with ????. Most translators read this verse, "Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you". The desire is recognized as "sexual" due to the previous context. The last statement, "and he shall rule over you" does not appear to fit in the context. In Genesis 4:7 a similar construction is found in Yaweh's discourse with Cain.

???. The usual translation here is "sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it". In this verse "desire" is understood as "control or reign over" and the following way is conjunctive.

In verse 3:16 a similar understanding is preferred. "Yet your desire shall be for (control over) your husband, but (conjunctive way) he shall rule over you". The woman is here desiring to be the master of the husband. The last statement now fits within the context. In spite of the woman's desire the man still has the God given authority. A battle for control now exists in the relationship and disharmony is the norm.

An understanding of this view sheds a great deal of light on our understanding of the new Testament teachings on subjection. Paul's use of the imperative is a recognition that subjection was not normal for the woman. His illustrations from Genesis when discussing subjection (I Corinthians 11 and I Timothy 2:11-15) shows how closely he connected the issue of subjection with the Creation. The role or function of the man and woman was established prior to the fall. It was only the attitude towards those roles that was corrupted. It is those attitudes that Paul directs his comments.

It is no wonder that Paul couples the command for women to be subject to their husbands with an imperative for men to love their wives. The woman is at constant warfare within herself. On one hand her sin nature pulls her to desire control, while on the other she knows that its God's

desire for her to subject herself to her husband. The intensity of this conflict is increased by a husband who is not understanding. This is why Paul instructs the husbands not to be embittered towards their wives.

I Peter 3:1f

Peter begins verse 1 with a request for women to be subject unto their husband. The phrase "In the same way" connects these verses as a sub-topic of Peter's discourse on subjection as a whole. In 2:13-17 he speaks to Christians in general to be subject to higher authorities. Servants, also, are requested to be submissive to their master in 2:18-20. The manner in which each of these groups, including the women, are to submit is illustrated in Christ's example of suffering. Peter recognizes that such subjection may be encountered with hardships and persecution. nevertheless, their responsibility to God dictates that they submit. This principle is especially stressed with the women. Even if their husbands are disobedient to the Word they are to be submissive. The purpose for this submission is that they might win their husbands to Christ. It is noteworthy that Peter is not referring to submission in an outward form as much as he is an inward attitude which is to manifest itself in chaste and respectful behavior. This is made clear by the subtle phrase "without a word". A truly submissive spirit is quiet and brings forth fruit through actions. The woman Peter describes here does not walk in a martyr's robes mentality desiring others to pity her

circumstances. Her true motivation is for the salvation, sanctification, and maturation of her husband. ??? is a dative of manner. The woman is to conduct her life with fear or reverence and in a chaste manner. The emphasis is not so much on her actions toward her husband, though included, but on the entire sphere of her daily walk.

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In verse 7 Peter admonishes the men to live in a manner understanding of the wives. The women are more fragile than they and so should be treated with respect. Weaker vessel refers to her emotional and physical makeup and not her intellectual. "Grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life" refers to her positional equality with the man in the sphere of Christ. Her weakness is in function only and she is not considered inferior.

C. Galatians 3:28

The reference in this verse is to positional and spiritual equality in the eyes of God. To state that Paul is tearing down all functional differences is absurd in light of other passages. Human distinctions become insignificant in regard to personal access and privileges before God. Within the sphere of the Spirit and our position in Christ there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, slave and free man, male and female. Paul does not deny that there are cultural differences between Jew and Gentile, or role distinctions between freemen and slaves. If Paul is not making distinctions or rather not discussing such distinctions here, how can it be argued from

this verse that role and functional distinctions are broken down in this verse in regards to women and men? Positional distinctions are gone; Functional distinctions are unaffected.

V. Conclusion

_____In the previous pages an attempt has been made to deal objectively and honestly with biblical passages relevant to the issues confronting the role of women in the Church. Concerning the question of deaconesses a dogmatic statement could not be conclude. There is strong evidence that such women did exist in the early stages of the Church. When they became an active part is still open for debate. The reason for their disappearance is also for debate. The reason for their disappearance is also questioned. The mandate here is that Deaconesses are not prohibited in the Church for today provided that their function is restricted to those areas that the scriptures which warrant the participation of women. This means that they are prohibited to teach or take a role where the authority of the man is challenged. Paul seems to leave the question of what constitutes a challenge to the man's authority unanswered. He may have purposely left this for the better judgment of the men.

Women are not to teach men in the church. This does not mean that they can not have an important role in the training of other women or the instruction of children. I Corinthians 11 does

not apply to the area of teaching, but was designated to those who were given the right to pray or prophesy verbally. A headcovering does not give the woman the right to teach men.

Women are not to speak in the Church. I Corinthians 14:34-35 appears to be a general statement to women but specifically to married women. In the early Church some women were given the right to pray and prophecy in the Church (I Corinthians 11). It seems very probable that this group was made up of widows and virgins who were recognized as prophetesses (Acts 21:9; Luke 2:36; and possibly I Timothy 5:3-16). The record of these prophetesses disappears in the Church's history very early. The imperative for today then is not for women to cover their heads but to remain silent.

In the ancient world women were generally viewed as inferior to the man both positionally and functionally. Submission was demanded as a result of this inferiority. In the New Testament women are still commanded to be submissive to their husbands but the reason and purpose changes. Women are now viewed as positionally equal to the man in Christ. She is no longer positionally inferior. Her submission is now out of respect for the intended purpose of God in creation. Submission is viewed as purely functional in nature. The new imperative for men to love their wives places responsibility on the man and helps the woman fulfill her requirement to submit, a difficult project on light of her fallen nature.

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