

WHAT WOMEN CAN DO IN MINISTRY:
FULL PARTICIPATION WITHIN BIBLICAL BOUNDARIES

Wheaton Theology Conference
James M. Hamilton Jr.
Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Houston Park Place Campus

Introduction

In our culture, we worship diversity with our lips, but it seems that our hearts may be set on uniformity. This grows out of a secular understanding of diversity, which results not in variety but in homogeneity. Rather than celebrating diversity in the clothes worn by men and women, we are offered unisex clothing. Rather than celebrating the diversity of sizes and shapes in which people come, many feel pressure to conform their bodies to a cookie-cutter pattern. Rather than celebrating marriages that are diversified by the incorporation of a male and a female, a vocal minority wishes to eliminate gender-diversity from marriage, and some wish to conduct life as though gender does not exist at all. This attitude is reflected in the recent outcry over some comments made by Larry Summers, president of Harvard University. He reportedly claimed “that the shortage of elite female scientists may stem in part from ‘innate’ differences between men and women.”¹ In a recent editorial in *The Wall Street Journal*, Peggy Noonan comments on where, according to his “open-minded” detractors, Summers went wrong:

His mistake was stepping on the real third rail in American cultural politics. It’s not Social Security. It is attempting to reconcile the indisputable equality of all people with their differentness. The left thinks if we’re all equal we’re all alike. Others say we’re all equal but God made us different, too, and maybe he did that to keep things interesting, and maybe he did it because each human group is meant to reflect an aspect of his nature. Our differentness is meant to teach us his infinite variety and complexity. It’s all about God.²

¹*Washington Post*, Wednesday, January 19, 2005; Page A02, accessed on-line: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A19181-2005Jan18.html>. I owe this reference to a weblog entered by Prof. Dr. Denny Burk, accessed on-line: <http://dennyburk.blogspot.com/2005/01/gender-wars-and-harvard-university.html>. The saga has continued with no-confidence votes: “Harvard Faculty Gives Summers Thumbs Down,” accessed on-line: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7201406/>.

²Peggy Noonan, “I’ll Link to That: Hunter Thompson, Larry Summers, Hillary, Condi, and the Internet’s Patron Saint,” *Wall Street Journal*, Thursday, February 24, 2005, accessed on-line: <http://www.opinionjournal.com/columnists/pnoonan/?id=110006332>.

The issue of gender-diversity is also prominent in some sectors of evangelical Christianity, as witnessed by the occasion of this essay. Christians must indulge in the stimulating diversity of God's creation by affirming male and female as *both* being in the image of God, celebrating gender distinctions rather than emasculating men or de-feminizing women. No one in this discussion wishes to turn night into day or the sun into the moon, and we dare not turn obedience into rebellion and transgression into piety.

My goal here is to seek a biblical understanding of the phrase "full participation in ministry." If this phrase can be informed by what the Bible says about ministry, the next question to be considered is whether the Bible diversifies the phrase "full participation in ministry" according to gender. In other words, does the Bible give some roles to men and not to women? If we can see "full participation in ministry" through lenses given to us from the Bible, and if the Bible places boundaries on men and women, we must then ask how these statements from an ancient book apply in our contemporary context.

I. Seeking a Biblical Meaning of "Full Participation in Ministry"

Christians believe in diversity in the body of Christ. We believe that people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation will worship the slain lamb who is a lion in the age to come (Rev 5:6–13). The fact that people from every tribe will worship shows that ethnic distinctions have not been obliterated by the cross, though all races now stand on equal footing before God. In the past God dealt primarily with one race, but now it is not so (Gal 3:28).

We also believe that the Spirit has gifted believers for ministry (1 Cor 12:4–7). We read that not all believers are given the same gifts (12:8–10), and that all gifts are empowered by the Spirit, who gives as he pleases (12:11). Paul likens the church to a human body, and from his statements about feet accepting their roles as feet and not wishing to be hands (12:15), ears being ears and not thinking themselves less because they neither see nor smell (12:16), and each member recognizing the necessity of the other parts of the body (12:21), we see that Christian ministry is not a monolithic exercise. In fact, from the catalogue of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:28–30 it is clear that not all Christian ministers are apostles, not all are prophets, not all are teachers (see esp. 12:29).

The first thing that we can say for certain, then, about full participation in Christian ministry is that it can be likened to the way that one organ or appendage participates fully in the life of the whole body. Thus, just as we need not see through our fingertips for our hands to be

fully engaged in human life, so also we need not be exercised in every ministry of the church in order to be fully engaged in the ministry of the church. This frees the feet to walk, the eyes to see, the teeth to chew, and the hands to type. I need not perfect the art of typing with my toes, nor need I damage myself by trying to walk on my eyeballs. Each member of the body is fully engaged in life as it serves the whole body in the capacity for which it was designed. And so it is with members of the church. Unfortunately, for many in my own denominational tradition (Southern Baptist), the perception of a call to serve God vocationally has been automatically equated with the “call to preach.” This has often been so even for those who have not been gifted to pastor and teach. We will be most happy and effective when we find the area of service for which we were designed, and we need not fret that we were not designed for other ministries. Let not the sole of the foot lament the lack of taste-buds, nor the armpit the lack of a sense of smell.

The second thing that may be observed from 1 Corinthians 12 about full participation in ministry is that the ministries pursued by the members of the body are assigned to the parts of the body by God. To put this more bluntly, the members of the body do not select for themselves what role they play in the life of the body. We see this when Paul writes in verse 11, “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each individually just as he wills.” The Spirit is the subject of the verbal action throughout this verse—he works in all the gifts named in verses 8–10, distributing these gifts to believers as he, the Spirit, chooses. This concept is restated in verse 18, naming God instead of the Spirit: “But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as he desired” (12:18). The same is seen in 12:24, “But God composed the body, giving greater honor to the member who lacks,” and again in 12:28, “And indeed God appointed in the church . . .” The Spirit gives gifts as he wills, God placed members in the body as he desired to do so, and God has blended the members of the body into a whole. The parts of the body do not choose the roles they will play, rather, they receive the gifts the Spirit chooses to give and they take the place in the body assigned to them by God.

Paul apparently writes these things to the Corinthians to promote a unified (1 Cor 12:25–26), loving (13:1–13), and profitable exercise of spiritual gifts in the church (cf. 14:3–5, 12, 19, 26 “all things must be for edification”). Full participation in ministry is given by the Spirit, pursued under the Lordship of the King Messiah, and empowered by God (1 Cor 12:3, 4–6). So we are safe to conclude that full participation in ministry is for the loving, unified edification of the body to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).

We can also conclude that giftings have not been meted out according to gender.³ This observation is based squarely on Scripture, for Paul explicitly commanded women to teach: “Older women likewise [are to be] . . . teaching what is good, that they might train the younger women to love their husbands, to love children, to be prudent, to be chaste, to be good workers at home, being submissive to their own husbands, in order that the word of God might not be blasphemed” (Titus 2:3–5). My assumption here is that at least some women would be particularly gifted for such teaching ministries, and this assumption is confirmed from observation of gifted women. Thus, it would seem that one of the gifts that is at the center of this discussion—that of teaching—has indeed been given to both males and females. This gift, however, is to be used to unify and edify the body in love.

An important factor in our consideration of full participation in ministry is that Paul’s statements regarding spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12–14 reveal that he expects the exercise of gifts to be regulated by his instructions. This can be seen clearly in 1 Corinthians 14:27–40. For example, two or at most three are to speak in tongues, followed by interpretation. If there is no one to interpret, those gifted with tongues are not to exercise their gift (14:27–28). This indicates that the possession of a gift does not mandate the use of that gift in every circumstance.

What has been observed thus far about full participation in ministry indicates that full participation does not demand that one be engaged in every ministry of the church. Nor does full participation require that one employ one’s gift at every available opportunity. Full participation does require loving, edifying exercise of one’s gifts according to the purpose for which one has been designed by God.

II. Biblical Boundaries for Both Men and Women

What limitations does the Bible place upon men who are engaged in Christian ministry? The stipulations for men in ministry mainly have to do with issues of character (1 Tim 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Pet 5:1–4). It is also clear, however, that Paul expects elders to teach the truth and counter falsehood (Titus 1:9), and that recognition in the church requires adherence to

³In agreement with Gordon D. Fee, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 241. I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Robert Phillips of the Roberts Library at SWBTS for letting me use his personal copy of this volume.

his instructions (1 Cor 14:38, “if one does not recognize this, he is not recognized”). Thus, the boundaries placed upon elders have to do with the fruit their lives produce, in that they can be disqualified by either their own actions or the actions of those who belong to their households (1 Tim 3:2–7; Titus 1:6). There is not an explicit command in Scripture that men not disciple younger women in one-on-one settings, but we can observe that while women are told to train younger women, wisdom indicates that it would not be wise for men to enter into private, one-on-one mentoring relationships with younger women who are not their daughters.⁴ As serious as these boundaries for men in ministry are, they are really not the issue in this discussion, though they are related to the discussion and I will return to them in my conclusion.

A recent contribution to this debate has asserted, “The *differences between men and women* do not justify granting men unique and perpetual prerogatives of leadership and authority not shared by women.”⁵ The question to be considered here is whether the *Bible* regulates the use of the gift of teaching according to gender. If the Bible does this, then perceived differences between men and women (or the lack thereof) may either confirm what the Bible says or be reason to trust God and obey his Word in spite of what we see,⁶ depending upon how the situation seems to us. Those who, like the president of Harvard, perceive differences between the genders will be confirmed. Those who do not perceive such differences will have occasion to trust God, leaning not on their own understanding.

On the positive side we can affirm that the Bible examples, authorizes, and even commands women to be engaged in some teaching ministries. First, from the *example* of Priscilla and Aquila instructing Apollos (Acts 18:26), it seems legitimate for a husband and wife team to

⁴The fact that some in our culture are seeking to legalize homosexual “marriage” also makes the observation that men are not equipped to bear and nurse children germane. The president of Harvard may be in hot water for saying so, but there really are biological differences between men and women.

⁵Rebecca Merrill Groothius and Ronald W. Pierce, “Introduction,” to *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 13 (emphasis added).

⁶When we combine the observation that parents were to teach their children the law (Deut 6:7), with the observation that the “teaching” referred to in Prov 3:1 is described with a form of the Hebrew word תּוֹרָה (*torah*), it seems that the oft cited dictum in Prov 3:5, “trust in Yahweh with all of your heart, and do not lean upon your understanding,” is an explicit call to trust Yahweh and obey his word even if it does not make sense (would the command to release one’s slaves every seven years [Deut 15:12] have seemed a reasonable thing to do?).

give private⁷ instruction to individual men. Perhaps there is even a warrant in this text for a woman to tutor a man in a private setting, but in any case this text does not give us an example of a woman teaching men. Second, from the instructions Paul gives about how women are to pray and prophesy in church in 1 Corinthians 11, we seem to have *authorization* for women to do those things.⁸ Third, from Titus 2:3–5, women are *commanded* to teach younger women.

Paul clearly assumes that women pray and prophesy in the context of the gathered congregation in 1 Corinthians 11, and he does not demand that they cease, though he does regulate the practice in significant ways.⁹ In this text Paul instructs women who pray and prophesy in church to do so with a head covering (11:5). Since this head covering is referred to as a “sign of authority” (11:10),¹⁰ and since the men are not to cover their heads when they pray or prophesy, it seems best to take this as a cultural emblem of femininity. In other words, Paul is instructing the women to cover their heads so that they might be explicitly feminine in the way they pray and prophesy in church. Similarly, the men are to have their heads uncovered in order to be masculine when they pray and prophesy in church (cf. 11:4, 7, 14).

Because men and women are commanded to do opposite things in this passage, it seems that 1 Corinthians 11 allows women to pray and prophesy in church as long as they do so

⁷See BDAG on προσλαμβάνω, 883.3: “Priscilla and Aquila take Apollos aside to teach him undisturbed;” and compare the use of the verb in Matt 16:22 and Mark 8:32.

⁸In agreement with Fee, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” 249.

⁹Limitations of space and time prevent detailed treatment of this passage. For my view, see “Gender Roles and the Glory of God: A Sermon on 1 Corinthians 11:2–12,” *JBMW* 9.2 (2004): 35–39, which is freely available online at <http://www.cbmw.org/journal/editions/9-2.pdf>. Significant contributions to this discussion include Gordon D. Fee, “Praying and Prophesying in the Assemblies: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 142–60, and Thomas R. Schreiner’s response, “A Review of ‘Praying and Prophesying in the Assemblies: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16’ by Gordon Fee,” *JBMW*, forthcoming. See also Schreiner’s essay, “Head Coverings, Prophecies, and the Trinity: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 117–32, which is available free online at <http://www.cbmw.org/rbmw/rbmw.pdf>.

¹⁰Rendered directly, the text reads: “On account of this, a woman ought to have authority upon her head.” This is taken as a “symbol/sign of authority” by the ASV, ESV, NAB, NAS, NET, NIV, NJB, NKJV, and NRSV. Fee argues that the text should be understood as saying “the woman ought to have authority on her head” (155–57), but he fails to refute the seven arguments Schreiner gives in support of the way most English translations render the text (see Schreiner, “Head Coverings, Prophecies, and the Trinity,” 126–27, 131).

in a way that does not play down gender distinctions. It is clear enough what praying in the gathered congregation entails, but the question of what it means to prophesy is more difficult. In my view, from what we see in 1 Corinthians, prophecy is authoritative, spontaneous, Spirit-inspired utterance in the context of the congregation. Once these Spirit-inspired utterances have been made, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14:29 that the others who have not spoken are to evaluate the prophecies. It is of note that in this context Paul makes allowance for a speaking prophet to be interrupted by a *revelation* (ἐὰν . . . ἀποκαλυφθῆ, “if something is revealed”) coming to another prophet who is seated, and in that case the one speaking is to give way to the recipient of the revelation (14:30). The immediate reception of the prophetic word, which allows for one prophet to interrupt another, shows us that prophecy does not consist of prepared remarks growing out of concentrated study of the Scripture. Thus, prophecy seems to be Spirit-inspired, revelatory speech, and the inspired, spontaneous, revelatory character of prophecy distinguishes it from the teaching of the Scriptures.¹¹ Given the language of “passing on/delivering/depositing” “sound teaching” and “traditions” in the NT (see, e.g., Luke 1:2; 1 Cor 11:23; 15:1, 3; 2 Thess 2:15; 2 Tim 1:14; 4:2–3; Titus 1:9; 2:1; Jude 1:3), it seems that teaching derives not from a spontaneous revelation but from what the teacher has “received” from the apostolic teaching that has been “passed on”—whether through direct instruction or through the written word (Luke 1:2; Rom 16: 25[?]; 2 Thess 2:15; 1 Tim 5:18; 2 Tim 3:16; Heb 2:3; 2 Pet 3:15–16).¹²

Paul permits women to pray and prophesy in the church in 1 Corinthians 11, which indicates that his command that the women be silent in 14:34 is to be applied to the evaluation and application of prophecies.¹³ Women can utter prophecies, but they are not to sit in judgment

¹¹Contra Fee, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” 249: “Likewise ‘prophecy’ is Paul’s preferred form of speech addressed to the rest of the community and as such probably stands for all such forms of speech (teaching, revelation, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, etc.; see 1 Cor 14:6).” In 1 Corinthians 14:6, Paul asks, “how will I benefit you, unless I speak to you, whether by revelation or by knowledge or by prophecy or by teaching?” This verse does not present “prophecy” in the way that Fee suggests—as a general term that “stands for all such forms of speech.” Rather, prophecy is named as one of four kinds of speech, and since it is listed third it does not appear that the other three forms of speech are giving examples of different kinds of “prophecies.”

¹²2 Peter 1:20–21 is a fundamental text for the evangelical doctrine of Scripture, and if evangelicals have interpreted it correctly, the making of Scripture is referred to as “prophecy.”

¹³Craig S. Keener (“Learning in the Assemblies: 1 Corinthians 14:34–35,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 163) rejects this view. He suggests that “one cannot simply

on the prophecies delivered by men. When it comes time to judge prophecies, the women are to remain silent. Keener argues that the focus of the silence of the women is on their asking of questions (14:35), but he grants that asking questions is seen in ancient literature to be a means of challenging the authority of a speaker.¹⁴ Keener suggests that the issue is either that “Mediterranean protocol would disapprove of an otherwise honorable woman addressing unrelated men” (166), or that it was inappropriate for women to reveal their ignorance by asking uninformed questions (168). Keener also notes that Paul appeals to the law to support this dictum (14:34), but asserts that “the law nowhere specifically commands either women’s silence or their submission!”¹⁵ We will return to the question of this appeal to “the law” in 1 Corinthians 14:34 in the next section. For now it is enough to observe that Keener’s observation that by asking questions an interpolator might “compete intellectually with an inadequately prepared lecturer”¹⁶ is in harmony with the view that women are not to evaluate prophecies lest they exercise authority over men.

Nowhere in the Bible are women instructed as to how they are to go about teaching or shepherding men. Where this is addressed Paul writes, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to

assume that Paul’s claim that it is ‘shameful’ for a woman to speak in the assembly (1 Cor 14:35) is meant to be transcultural, any more than his earlier injunction to cover their heads (related to shame in 1 Cor 11:5–6) or his later one to greet with a holy kiss” (167). This is both problematic and unpersuasive. The particular manifestation of a principle—head covering for women or a holy kiss in greeting—may be culturally bound, but the principle can nevertheless be obeyed in culturally appropriate ways. Since head coverings could be interpreted as nothing more than fashion statements in our culture, women should be explicit about their femininity and submissive hearts in ways that speak to our culture. Also, though we do not kiss each other in modern western culture, we still need to greet one another warmly. I am more inclined to the view that women should cover their heads when praying and prophesying and that we should cultivate the practice of greeting one another with holy kisses than I am to the position that we can simply bracket these commands out as not normative for us today. See the helpful treatment of this issue by D. A. Carson, “Silent in the Churches: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, available online at <http://www.cbmw.org/rbmw/rbmw.pdf>.

¹⁴Keener, “Learning in the Assemblies,” 164–65, citing Plutarch’s essay *On Lectures*, 11.

¹⁵Keener, “Learning in the Assemblies,” 169–70.

¹⁶Keener, “Learning in the Assemblies,” 165.

have authority over a man” (1 Tim 2:12).¹⁷ We will consider Paul’s appeal to the created order in 1 Timothy 2:13–14 in the next section, but here the following contextual observations are pertinent. First, though this is a letter to Timothy, it was almost surely meant to be read to the church in Ephesus: “The epistle’s conclusion (6:21) makes this dual nature obvious when it says, ‘Grace be with you [plural].’”¹⁸ Second, 1 Timothy 2 appears to provide instructions for worship, addressing prayers in 2:1–8 and the adornment and roles of women in 2:9–15. Each section is introduced by instructions (2:1–2/2:9–12) and followed by theological considerations which provide the basis for the commands and instructions Paul has set forth (2:3–7/2:13–15). Paul states in verse 8 that he intends his instructions to apply “in every place,” and then the instructions regarding women are introduced with ὡσαύτως (“likewise”). This seems to indicate at least that Paul wants these instructions to apply in all the house churches of Ephesus. If Paul intended 1 Timothy to be read in more places than Ephesus, as he expected his other letters to be read in other churches (cf. Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27), then it would seem that Paul intends these instructions to apply everywhere. As Mounce puts it, “The context suggests that Paul is thinking of every place in the world where Christians worship.”¹⁹ Paul’s statements about the roles of men and women in his other letters comport well with the perspective articulated in 1 Timothy 2 (1 Cor 11:2–16; 14:34–35; Col 3:18–19; Eph 5:21–33).

¹⁷The clearest and most convincing treatment of this passage is the one presented by Thomas R. Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15: A Dialogue with Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 105–54. A second edition of this volume is forthcoming. See below for discussion of whether this text is an “ad hoc word to a very case-specific issue in the churches of Ephesus” (as Fee argues, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” 252). To suggest regarding 1 Timothy that “Paul’s posture throughout is corrective rather than didactic” (so Linda L. Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11–15,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 206) is a false dichotomy. Paul is everywhere corrective precisely by being didactic—what people believe and think is reflected in what they do.

¹⁸William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 4: “The letter is private in that it is written to Timothy, but public in that Paul is writing through Timothy to the church.” Bracketed note original to Mounce.

¹⁹Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 107. See esp. 1 Tim 2:13–15; 3:15.

Linda Belleville has argued that 1 Timothy 2:12, when properly interpreted, means “I do not permit a woman to teach a man in a dominating way.”²⁰ When we compare this translation, however, to the syntax of the Greek it purports to represent, it is no exaggeration to say that this is a very interpretive translation. The negated verb ἐπιτρέπω (“I do not permit”) takes the dative direct object γυναικὶ (“for a woman”), and the verbal idea is clarified by two complementary infinitives, διδάσκειν (“to teach”) and ἀυθεντεῖν (“to exercise authority”), both of these infinitives have ἀνδρός (“over a man”) as their object. Belleville’s translation takes the first infinitive as complementing the verb but transforms the second infinitive into an adverbial modifier of the first. Paul is perfectly capable of modifying infinitives, often doing so with prepositional phrases (see 1 Tim 2:4, 8, 9, 12). If he had intended the second infinitive as an adverbial modifier of the first, it is doubtful that his grammar would be what it is. As it is, the text reads, “But I do not permit for a woman to teach [a man]²¹ or to exercise authority over a man” (1 Tim 2:12). Paul’s grammatical structure indicates that it is not merely exercising authority over men that is prohibited but also the teaching of men by women.²²

It is probably not coincidental that the two things Paul says that women are not to do in 1 Timothy 2:12 are the two things for which elders are to be rewarded in 1 Timothy 5:17, “The elders who rule well must be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” The very ministries that Paul says that women are not to do, teaching and exercising authority, are the ministries for which elders are to be honored. When we

²⁰Belleville, “Teaching and Usurping Authority,” 219.

²¹Bracketed words showing that both infinitives are modified by ἀνδρός. So also Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 123. Mounce cites D. J. Moo, “The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11–15: A Rejoinder,” *TJ* 2 (1981), 202, and both also cite Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, § 1634 in explanation of the genitive case of ἀνδρός (ἀυθεντέω takes a genitive direct object, and when two verbs share an object, as here, the case of the object is determined by the nearer verb).

²²The most convincing treatment of the grammar of this text is Andreas J. Köstenberger, “A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Timothy 2:12,” in *Women in the Church*, 81–103. We have noted that Fee regards this as an “ad hoc word to a very case-specific issue in the churches of Ephesus” (“The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” 252). Similarly, Belleville suggests that this was a problem specific to the women in Ephesus (“Teaching and Usurping Authority,” 206, 209, 219, 223). The main problem with this view is that Paul does not explicitly address a particular issue confined only to the women in Ephesus, nor does he indicate that what he says here is not a stipulation to be followed “in every place” (1 Tim 2:8). As will be discussed below, Paul does not explain 1 Tim 2:12 by recourse to the situation in Ephesus but by appeal to Genesis 1–3.

combine this with the observation that when Paul describes the qualifications for the office of elder he mentions teaching and ruling and speaks only with reference to men (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9)—whereas with the office of deacon he addresses women who might be deacons—it seems reasonable to conclude that Paul does not expect women to serve as elders.²³ That the elder/overseer must be qualified for the task of “holding fast the faithful word according to the teaching, in order that he might be able to exhort in healthy teaching and to refute those who speak against it” (Titus 1:9) is difficult to square with Fee’s claim that “in no instance in Paul’s letters does he mention leader(s) who are to be in charge of what takes place.”²⁴

From what Paul says about deacons, again, it seems that women can serve as deacons (1 Tim 3:8–13, esp. v. 11), and this appears more likely when we consider Phoebe (Rom 16:1). It is important to note, however, that whereas Paul calls for elders who are “apt to teach” (1 Tim 3:2), and regularly refers to the elders serving as stewards of God’s house (1 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:7), there are no parallel teaching and governing qualifications for deacons.

Luke Timothy Johnson has suggested that 1 Timothy 2:12 is in “sharp tension with other Pauline declarations of a more egalitarian character, above all Gal 3:28.”²⁵ Judith M. Gundry-Volf, however, has convincingly shown that what Paul presents here is “a model of

²³I want to register an objection to a caricature at this point. Fee writes concerning 1 Tim 2:12, “Whatever else, it does not seem to be dealing with ‘offices’ in the church; at least that certainly cannot be demonstrated, even if one were to wish desperately for it to be so” (“The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” 252). I disagree with Fee on this point because I am compelled by the biblical evidence—as articulated above. I want to embrace whatever the Bible teaches, and so if the Bible did not contain the texts discussed here, I would gladly join the egalitarian cause. Therefore, suggesting that those who take the view I have articulated “wish desperately for it to be so” is unhelpful. I only wish desperately to obey everything the Bible says for the glory of God. Even if Fee were correct that there is no connection to the “offices,” a woman regularly teaching men would almost certainly be excluded by 1 Tim 2:12.

²⁴Fee, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” 251. This text also stands against Belleville’s claim that “teaching in the New Testament period was an activity and not an office” (“Teaching and Usurping Authority,” 221). Fee also minimizes what the NT says about “officers” in the churches earlier, suggesting that elders “eventually came to be called *episkopoi* (overseers)” (243). The problem with this assertion is that the NT uses “elders” interchangeably with “overseers” in several places. See Acts 20:17, where the Ephesian elders meet with Paul and are then referred to as “overseers” in 20:28. Cf. also Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Pet 5:1–2.

²⁵Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 208, cf. also 211.

thought in which equality does not presuppose all-out sameness (dissolution of femininity or/and masculinity) but sameness *in some respects* – with respect to sin and with respect to the way of salvation.”²⁶ The challenge for evangelicals will be holding 1 Timothy 2:12 together with Galatians 3:28. Both males and females participate in baptism—unlike circumcision,²⁷ and in Christian churches we do not separate the women from the men in worship. But we dare not follow Robert Schuller’s advice and read the Bible the way we eat fish—avoiding the parts we find disagreeable.²⁸ We who submit ourselves to the authority of Scripture must do all we can to live as though “*all* Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16) not just the parts we like. Indeed, we must do all we can to like it all (cf. Ps 119:103).

What follows, then, is a summary of the ministries the Bible authorizes women to pursue in New Testament churches. This list focuses on teaching ministries and offices that might be held by women in the church, so it is not exhaustive.²⁹ Nor is it arranged in a manner that intends to rank these ministries in a perceived order of importance. First, women can serve the church as deacons (Rom 16:1; 1 Tim 3:8). Second, women can stand before the gathered congregation and pray or prophesy (1 Cor 11:5). Third, women can partner with their husbands to instruct other men in private situations (Acts 18:26). Fourth, women can teach other women

²⁶Judith M. Gundry-Volf, “Christ and Gender: A Study of Difference and Equality in Gal 3,28,” in *Jesus Christus als die Mitte der Schrift*, ed. C. Landmesser et al., BZNW 86 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 476 (emphasis hers). Similarly E. Earle Ellis, *Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 84–85.

²⁷Gundry-Volf, “Christ and Gender,” 458.

²⁸Transcript of “Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher (November 23, 2001)” available online at: http://www.geocities.com/~dvadi/pi/pi_11232001.html, accessed March 9, 2005. The transcript of Schuller’s full comment reads as follows: “First of all, you can find things in any holy book. I’m a Christian. I believe the Bible. I can find things in the Bible that I don’t like, that I don’t agree with, that I think are not -- what do I do? I tell people who become Christians, the Bible is our holy book, but read the Bible the way you eat fish -- carefully. [Light laughter] Don’t choke on a bone. [Laughter] Pick the food that serves you well.” I owe this reference to Nathan Lino.

²⁹For a lists of ministries relating to authority, teaching, and public visibility ranked from greatest influence to least, see Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 85–90. Grudem points out that these lists are not meant to rank activities according to “value or importance” (85), and he identifies which ministries from these lists, in his view, are open to women on pages 93–97. I am in general agreement with his thoughtful assessment.

(Titus 2:3–5). And fifth, women can teach young males who are not considered “men” by the culture (cf. 2 Tim 1:5; 3:15).³⁰

The boundaries the Bible places upon the ministries women pursue may also be summarized as follows. Again, this list is not exhaustive, as it focuses on the exercise of teaching ministries and offices and does not address the character qualities required of all who minister in the church. First, since Paul says that women are not to exercise authority over men, if women serve as deacons there should not be men under their authority. Second, since Paul says that women are not to teach men, women who are gifted to teach should exercise their gift in the service of children, young males who are not men, and other women, but they are not to teach men.³¹

Summarizing the first two parts of this essay, we have seen that full participation in ministry is not the free exercise of any and every ministerial role or function. Rather, full participation in ministry is realized when a member of the body takes up the ministry assigned by

³⁰Mounce rightly notes that though Paul never says Timothy’s mother and grandmother taught him, this is nevertheless “the apparent meaning of the text” (*Pastoral Epistles*, 123).

³¹Fee (“The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry, 251) suggests that “the two well-known and much-debated texts, 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 and 1 Timothy 2:11–12, seem to stand in open contradiction to the rest of the evidence.” He then proceeds to reassert his view that 1 Cor 14:34–35 was not original to Paul, leaving only 1 Tim 2:11–12, which he claims was “an ad hoc word to a very case-specific issue in the churches of Ephesus” (251–52). When we list the texts which *Discovering Biblical Equality* wrestles with, however, it does not appear that 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12 stand alone. On the contrary, there are other texts in the New Testament which explicitly treat gender in a manner that harmonizes with the two texts Fee isolates. Some come from Paul (1 Cor 11:2–16; Col 3:18–19 and Eph 5:21–33; then there is Paul’s treatment of Gen 1–3, but *Discovering Biblical Equality* does not deal with Titus 2:1–6), and one comes from Peter, 1 Pet 3:1–7. Suddenly the gender statements in 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12 are standing with at least five other passages which offer clear statements on how men and women are to conduct themselves. What is troubling about the essays in *Discovering Biblical Equality* is that once the authors have sifted the data, nothing can have a clear meaning. What the texts appear to say, according to these authors, is not what they mean. Or, in the case of I. Howard Marshall’s essay (“Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage: Colossians 3:18–19 and Ephesians 5:21–33”), the Bible clearly means what it says but it no longer applies: “some culturally specific scriptural teaching and commands are no longer mandatory” (202). Those who submit themselves to the authority of Scripture will seek to conform Christian culture to the commands of the NT, resisting the temptation to transform the Bible into a book the world will approve of.

God under the Lordship of Christ as empowered by the Spirit. We have also seen that 1 Corinthians 11 urges that when women pray and prophesy in church they are to do so in an explicitly feminine way, and that when prophecies are judged women are to remain silent (1 Cor 14:34–35). Finally, we have seen that 1 Timothy 2:12 states that women are neither to teach nor to exercise authority over men.³² Thus, whereas women serve the church in many capacities in the NT—they partner with their husbands to give private instruction, they pray and prophesy in church, they teach younger women and young males who are not men—they neither serve in the capacity of elder nor function as regular teachers of men. This means that women are not the authoritative leaders and teachers of the church. In the third and final section of this essay, we turn to the question of how these biblical boundaries the NT articulates are to be applied in the twenty first century.

III. Full Participation, Biblical Boundaries, and the Church Today

Christians affirm that the Bible is inspired by God, useful to his people, and to be embraced in its entirety. The Bible, for us, is not an oppressor from which we need be liberated. It is liberating to learn from the Bible where freedom from bondage may be found—in obedience. Further, affirming that God created all things good, Christians believe that gender, too, is good, not something to be ignored, minimized, or even obliterated.

When Paul explains why women who pray and prophesy in church should do so with their heads covered, he seems to base his argument on what it means to be male and female. The conjunction γὰρ (“for”) in 1 Corinthians 11:7 indicates that in this verse Paul is offering an explanation that justifies what he has said in the previous verses, and he writes, “For indeed a man ought not to cover his head, being the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man” (1 Cor 11:7). Here Paul explains his call for women to cover their heads by proclaiming that “woman is the glory of man.” By contrast, men are not to cover their heads because they are the “image and glory of God.” This points to a *fundamental difference between the genders*.

³²In the brief compass of this essay it is impossible to deal with all of the exegetical issues regarding this text raised in Professor Howard Marshall’s presentation. It does not seem to me that Marshall has raised new considerations, but he has summarized those that egalitarians generally raise. All of these are convincingly treated in Schreiner’s updated essay on the passage in *Women in the Church* (I am thankful to have seen a pre-publication draft of Schreiner’s essay).

If one were hoping to find indications in 1 Corinthians 11 that these verses are not transcultural, the situation gets worse in verses 8 and 9. Another γὰρ (“for”) indicates that Paul is explaining his appeal to the nature of gender in verse 7 with the words in 11:8, “For man is not from woman, but woman from man.” Paul seems to be pointing to the fact that Adam was not made from Eve, but Eve from Adam. The possible significance of the order will be considered below, but aside from that consideration, in verse 9 yet another γὰρ (“for”) indicates that this verse is explaining at least part of the significance of the fact that the man did not come from the woman but the woman from man: “for also the man was not created on account of the woman but the woman on account of the man” (11:9). Paul’s understanding derives from the words of Genesis 2, where we read that God put Adam in the garden to work it and keep it (2:15) and Eve in the garden to help Adam (2:18). Having given these three reasons—man is the image and glory of God and woman is the glory of man (11:7); woman was created from man not man from woman (11:8); and woman was made for man not man for woman (11:9)—Paul concludes in 11:10, “On account of this a woman ought to have a sign of authority upon her head on account of the angels.” Thus, Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 11 is not based upon Greco-Roman cultural convention, but on the nature of gender and on the pre-fall (Gen 2) created order. These considerations indicate that what Paul calls for here is transcultural.³³

Does this mean that women in our society should wear head coverings? In my judgment, the issue is not head coverings. Paul’s transcultural appeal is not to a particular form of adornment. Paul’s transcultural appeal is to the reality that “Christ is the head of every man, man is the head of woman, and God is the head of Christ” (11:3),³⁴ which is reflected in man

³³I find William J. Webb’s recent suggestion that our understanding of what Paul wrote should be influenced by our estimation of what Paul would have written if he were alive today unconvincing. He writes, “if Paul were alive, he would update his procreation point to argue This updated argument requires those within a modern context to rethink their understanding of biblical anthropology and readjust the relative weighting of male-and-female status accordingly” (“Balancing Paul’s Original-Creation and Pro-Creation Arguments: 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 in Light of Modern Embryology,” *WTJ* 66 [2004], 282–83). The authority of Scripture constrains us to what Paul wrote, and we are not free to decide what he would have written. The danger of such an approach lies in the tendency of the modern scholar to remake Jesus and Paul into his or her own image, as Schweitzer taught us.

³⁴Wayne Grudem’s work on the word κεφαλή (“head”) remains unrefuted and is now conveniently gathered in one place in his *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, see 201–11, 544–51, 552–99.

being the “image and glory of God” and woman being “the glory of man” (11:7). Thus, the issue is *gender*, and what gender portrays. Peggy Noonan got it right: “It’s all about God.” The issue in this passage is not the external head covering but what that head covering represents. For this reason, it does not seem to me that the church in the twenty first century has a responsibility to make sure that when women pray and prophesy in church they do so with their heads covered. But the church does have a responsibility to make sure that when women pray and prophesy they do so in a way that proclaims to the culture their submission to male headship and glad embrace of feminine identity. In other words, it needs to be clear to anyone watching that this female is praying or prophesying as a female. She is not trying to take on the role of a man. So, in my judgment, the *expression* of gender roles—the head covering—is not transcultural. Gender roles themselves, however, are transcultural. The appeal to the nature of gender in 1 Corinthians 11:7, to the order of creation in 11:8, and to the created purpose of the male and female in 11:9 demands that the church reflect the structure of authority outlined in 11:3—God-Christ-Man-Woman.³⁵

The call for women to remain silent when prophecies are judged in 1 Corinthians 14:34 is supported by the statement, “as the law also says.” Paul does not exegete the created order here as he did in 11:7–9, but it seems most plausible that he is referring to the considerations enumerated there. An analogous reference back to previously cited OT material can be seen in 1 Corinthians 4:6. There Paul expresses his desire that his audience will “learn not to go beyond what has been written,” and the reference to “what has been written” appears to point back to the OT texts cited earlier in 1 Corinthians pertaining to boasting and introduced by “it has been written” (1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19–20).³⁶ Paul’s reference in 4:6 to “what has been written,” on this understanding, would parallel the words “as the law also says” in 14:34. Both are pointing back to related interpretation of the OT that has appeared earlier in the letter. Thus, the call for women to be silent when prophecies are evaluated in 14:34 is based on the same transcultural considerations about gender Paul articulated from Genesis 1–2 in 1 Corinthians 11:7–9.³⁷

³⁵See comments in note 13 above.

³⁶So David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 135.

³⁷So also Carson, “Silent in the Churches,” 152. Contra Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 673; Keener, “Learning in the Assemblies,” 165–71.

Paul’s teaching on gender roles is notably consistent.³⁸ His explanation as to why women are not to teach or exercise authority over men in 1 Timothy 2:13–15 is conceptually equivalent to the explanation seen in 1 Corinthians 11. Having stated that women are not to teach men or exercise authority over them in 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul introduces his explanation in 2:13 with, no surprise here, the word γὰρ (“for”). Just as Paul had explained that Adam was created first in 1 Corinthians 11:8, in 1 Timothy 2:13 he writes, “For Adam was formed first, then Eve.” He continues in 2:14, “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, fell into transgression.” By introducing this consideration as an explanation of why he does not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, Paul implies that there is some significance to both the order in which the genders were created and the reality that Eve, not Adam, was deceived and fell into transgression.

Several observations about Genesis 2–3 shed light on why these considerations are significant for Paul. Here I can only enumerate them in the order they appear in Genesis. First, male and female are *both* in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Second, the creation of the male and the female is presented as having taken place at different points (first the man, 2:7, then the woman, 2:22), they are made from different material (the man from dirt, 2:7, the woman from the man’s rib, 2:22), the making of each is described with different verbs (the man is “formed” in 2:7, צַר, the woman is “built” in 2:22, בָּנָה), and they are made for different purposes (the man to work and keep the garden, 2:15, the woman to help the man, 2:18, 20). Third, the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is given to the man in Genesis 2:17 before the creation of the woman is described. Then it is the man to whom God calls, even though it was the woman who ate first, which indicates that it was the man’s responsibility to teach and enforce the commandment.³⁹ This understanding finds support in Romans 5:12, “through one man sin entered the world and death through sin.” Fourth, just as God exercised dominion over his creation in Genesis 1 by naming it (e.g., 1:5, “God called the light day”), the male is exercising his authority over God’s creation by naming the animals (2:19). The male is thus ruling (Gen 1:28) as God’s image-bearing vice-regent. In Genesis 2:23 the male exercises his

³⁸So also Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 206.

³⁹G. K. Beale suggests that part of Adam’s work of keeping the garden included protecting it from unclean influences such as the serpent (*The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004], 69).

authority over the female by naming her just as he has been naming the animals. He does not give her the personal name “Eve” until 3:20, in 2:23 he is “classifying” her, as he has presumably done with the animals.⁴⁰ Fifth, the characters in the narrative appear in the following order in Genesis 2: God (2:2–5), man (2:7), the animals (2:19), then the woman (2:22), with the solidarity of man and woman stressed in 2:23. This order is upended in Genesis 3, with the characters coming on the scene as follows: the snake (3:1a), the woman (3:1b), the man (3:6), and finally God (3:8). This structure lends itself to the conclusion that by approaching the woman the snake is subverting the created order,⁴¹ an order reflected in 1 Corinthians 11:3: God-Christ-man-woman. Based on what we have seen from Genesis, complementary gender roles are not introduced as part of the curse on humanity. Rather, what seems to be introduced in Genesis 3:16 is feminine rebellion against the structure of authority that God has built into his creation.

If the attempt to deceive the woman is in fact a subversion of the created order, this would explain the appeal to the sequence in which the man and woman were made both in 1 Timothy 2:13 and in 1 Corinthians 11:8, with 1 Timothy 2:14 elaborating upon the situation in

⁴⁰The man’s naming of the woman, however, should not be construed as an impersonal exercise of duty, rude superiority, or abstract patriarchy, for the man’s statement upon his receipt of God’s gift of the woman is humanity’s first poem. The man’s spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion communicates tender solidarity, the woman’s origin, his role as her leader (naming her), and her essential equality with him (“flesh of flesh”). Here we see *ontological equality* (“bone of bone,” “flesh of flesh”) and *functional subordination* (“she shall be called woman”).

⁴¹Similarly Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” 145. For a thorough review of the positions taken on 1 Tim 2:13–14, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 130–43. The explanation above seeks to take Paul’s exegesis seriously, and I find it more plausible than Johnson’s. He suggests that Paul’s “logic is flawed,” and that “Paul was not in this case engaging in sober exegesis of Genesis, but supporting his culturally conservative position on the basis of texts that in his eyes demonstrate the greater dignity and intelligence of men and, therefore, the need for women to be silent and subordinate to men” (Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 208). Against the suggestion that Paul’s logic was flawed, it seems to me that Johnson has not appreciated Paul’s understanding of Genesis 1–3. Johnson continues, “I agree that our growth in understanding . . . makes it impossible to regard the statements disqualifying women from public speech and roles of leadership as either true or normative” (*ibid.*, 208–209). We can be grateful to Johnson for his honesty. He is an egalitarian because he thinks that Paul’s judgment was both wrong and untrue.

order to clarify Paul’s point.⁴² Richard Hess argues that “the view that the man’s creation before the woman’s implies his authority over her cannot be sustained by study of the text of Genesis 2, the context of Genesis 1–3, the comparative literature of the ancient Near East or the invocation of putative customs of primogeniture in ancient Israel.”⁴³ But Paul cites the fact that man was made first, along with the facts that woman was made from man and for man, as reason for the ordering of ministry according to gender in the church. Paul bases his understanding of male headship and authority on these features of Genesis 1–3. For evangelicals, the relevant question is: Whose interpretation of Genesis 1–3 is deemed authoritative—that of the modern scholar or that of the Apostle Paul?⁴⁴ For my part, I agree with the conclusion of Douglas Moo: “We must

⁴²We read in 1 Timothy 2:15: “But she shall be saved through childbearing, if they remain in faith and in love and in sanctification with self control.” The singular “she shall be saved” may be a nod to the “seed of the woman” who will crush the head of the “seed of the serpent” (Gen 3:15). But the switch to the plural in the words, “if they remain,” broadens the application of this verse out to all women. By making this conditional upon remaining “in faith,” Paul safeguards against the false conclusion that he is endorsing child-bearing as a meritorious work that earns salvation. He seems to have selected the most feminine thing a woman can do—something men are not equipped for—and stated that women will be saved if they continue in faith and do this, bear children. So what Paul points to here is that women must embrace their feminine identity. Embracing one’s role as a woman is a way to demonstrate faith in God, give evidence of salvation, and honor the Creator who alone has power to determine gender. Here again, Paul is insisting that gender is important. Those who believe are to embrace the role as male or as female that has been assigned to them by God. Similarly, in more detail, Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 148, and Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” 146–53.

⁴³Richard S. Hess, “Equality With and Without Innocence: Genesis 1–3,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 86. By arguing that the citation of “1 Timothy 2:13 as evidence that Paul understood the sequential creation of humanity to imply an intended hierarchy of man over woman” is “problematic” (84), Hess appears to be calling Paul’s own argument into question. It is very difficult to see 1 Tim 2:13–14 as something other than an explanation of 2:12, so to argue against this explanation is not to argue against complementarians but against Paul.

⁴⁴This question arises from my experience with not a few evangelicals who seem willing to say that OT texts do not mean what NT authors say they mean. This is of course a wider issue, which needs careful discussion on a case by case basis. I merely note the point here to register my view that we should start from the assumption that NT exegesis of OT texts is not atomistic, irrational, and illegitimate, but reasonable and hermeneutically sound—once we understand their presuppositions about the OT and what has taken place in Messiah Jesus.

conclude that the restrictions imposed by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:12 are valid for Christians in all places and all times.”⁴⁵

Conclusion

I have argued that a biblical understanding of full participation in ministry does not mean that one exercises one’s gifts in any and every circumstance. Rather, full participation in ministry means exercising one’s gifts under the Lordship of Christ by the power of the Spirit in accordance with one’s role in the body as assigned by the Father. God has also assigned gender to human beings, and the Bible sets parameters on what one may do in ministry according to gender. These boundaries should be understood not as oppressive constraints but as signposts on the way to the broad place in which to roam (Ps 119:45). The way of happiness is the way of holiness, and the way of obedience is the way of freedom. Thus, whether it seems right to us or not, the Bible promises good to us if we hold firm to its commands. This includes Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 2:12, 1 Corinthians 11:2–16, and 14:29–35. What can women do in ministry? Many, many things, but they may not teach men or exercise authority over them.

I promised earlier that I would return to boundaries the Bible provides for men in ministry. The words of Titus 1:9 were cited above, and I revisit them here. Paul writes that an elder/overseer must be one who is “holding fast the faithful word according to the teaching, in order that he might be able to exhort in healthy teaching and to refute those who speak against it” (Titus 1:9). If men do not hold fast to Paul’s teaching, they do not meet the “necessary” (δεῖ, Titus 1:7) qualifications for elders. If men are not able to exhort in sound doctrine, they do not meet the necessary qualifications. If men are not able to rebuke those who speak against sound teaching, they do not meet the qualifications. In view of the New Testament canon, men who wish to minister in the church as elders must hold fast to Paul’s teaching, and this includes Paul’s teaching on gender in 1 Corinthians 11, 14, and 1 Timothy 2. May the Lord raise up men who meet all the qualifications for ministry, both those that pertain to character and those that relate to holding fast to sound teaching, exhorting others in it, and refuting those who contradict. The boundaries the Lord has given to his people may at times seem restrictive, but life and freedom

⁴⁵Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men: 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 188, available online at <http://www.cbmw.org/rbmw/rbmw.pdf>.

and joy are found in glad-hearted obedience. May he make us those for whom his commands are not burdensome (1 John 5:3).⁴⁶

Postscript

Against the better judgment of some, who showed their love for me by taking time to suggest other ways of improving this presentation, I have chosen to leave the essay largely as presented (though seeking to soften its tone at points). This decision was made largely in the hope that readers might experience something of the atmosphere of the conference, where most of the other presentations came to conclusions different from mine. Being in the minority at the conference gave to me the sense of being an outsider who had wandered into an assemblage of people speaking unknown languages (cf. 1 Cor 14:22). From comments made by other presenters, it is also clear that where those who hold my perspective are in the majority, the same sense of being an outsider among people speaking unknown tongues is felt by egalitarians, and thus it seems that many who participate in this conversation are *unable to hear* what concerns those with whom they disagree. Of course we all hear each other, but we all weigh respective considerations differently. I am in hearty agreement with those at the conference—chiefly Timothy George and Sarah Sumner—who called for renewed attempts by the respective sides to listen to one another. Perhaps we could add to this the prayer that God might once again reverse the effects of Babel, as he did on the day of Pentecost long ago, and once again cause the Spirit from on high to fall on us with power that those who speak in different mother tongues might hear and understand one another (Acts 2:7–11). Unless the Lord gives both sides ears to hear and hearts to understand, we will remain those to whom one of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven (unity on this issue) has not been given (Matt 13:11).

⁴⁶I wish to express my gratitude to those who helped me think about this issue at the conference, especially Drs. Stephen Spencer and Bruce Winter. I would also like to thank two of my students, Mrs. Rhenae Abrams and Mr. Brad Smith, and Drs. Stefana Dan Laing, Jay E. Smith, and Thomas R. Schreiner for reading earlier drafts of this essay and making many helpful suggestions.