

A Response to David M. Scholer's Paper
"1 Timothy 2:9-15 & The Place of Women
In the Church's Ministry"

by
J. Paul Tanner, ThM, PhD

December 18, 1998

INTRODUCTION

In 1986, the book *Women, Authority & The Bible* was published as a collection of articles written by various authors who sought to argue that Scripture did not place a restriction on the role of women in the church's ministry as had been traditionally believed and taught. In that work, David M. Scholer wrote a chapter treating the crucial paragraph in 1 Timothy 2 on Paul's prohibition concerning women teaching or exercising authority over men.¹

In Scholer's view, 1 Tim 2:9-15 does not contain general principles applicable for believers of all time, but is rather a historically conditioned and limited text. In other words, Scholer believes that this passage was written as a corrective to a particular situation faced by the early church at Ephesus, and therefore is not binding for the church-at-large today.

Scholer is not unique in attempting to *limit* the scope of application of this passage, but his particular interpretation warrants a careful review and critique for at least a couple of reasons. The first reason is that Scholer's article has influenced some church leaders to reject 1 Tim 2:11-12 as a timeless principle for the church and to adopt a *broader view* of the role of women in the church today . . . even to the point of allowing women pastors as well as women preaching from the pulpit. The second reason stems from a remark made by Dr. Walter L. Liefeld, formerly of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, who applauded Scholer's article as "the finest treatment from this viewpoint of the passage in question" that he had seen.² It is safe to say that Scholer's article has had some degree of influence on others, and therefore deserves close inspection.

Though I found Scholer's article very informative and thought-provoking, in the final analysis I did not find his arguments convincing. Therefore, I hope in the course of this paper to expose what I feel are some of the fallacies in his logic and presentation. In an issue as sensitive as this, I hope that I will be able to do so in a way that is fair, considerate, and respectful. In my personal opinion, I must confess that I side with the traditional opinion that the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is giving (by divine authority) a lasting principle for the church that women are not to teach or exercise authority over men. I think there are some important reasons why this view ought to be maintained which I shall touch upon in my conclusion. Let me clarify, however, that this paper is not so much a defense of the traditional position as it is a critique of Scholer's interpretation of the 1 Timothy 2 passage. Furthermore, I should clarify that I am not choosing to interact with Scholer on every issue

¹ David M. Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15 & The Place of Women in the Church's Ministry," in *Women, Authority & The Bible*, ed. Alvera Michelsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986): 193-219.

² Walter L. Liefeld, "Response," in *Women, Authority & The Bible*, 219.

that he raised in his rather lengthy article. Most of my comments will be restricted to the 1 Timothy 2 passage, though Scholer did interact with several other New Testament passages.

A SUMMARY OF SCHOLER'S POSITION

Scholer's presentation is primarily directed along two lines. On the one hand, he attempts to use the entire context of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 (particularly verse 15) to demonstrate that Paul had in mind a particular form of false-teaching as he wrote these verses, and that his instructions were never meant to limit the participation of women in ministry but only to counteract a certain form of false-teaching that undermined the behavior and conduct appropriate for godly women in the church. In addition to this, Scholer seeks to contend with certain arguments that have been utilized by those who would use this passage to exclude or limit women in ministry.

Scholer maintains that Timothy was facing a particular heresy at the church in Ephesus and that the book of 1 Timothy is essentially written to counter this teaching. In particular, the heretical teaching was aimed at women. Scholer writes,

Therefore, 1 Timothy should be understood as an occasional ad hoc letter directed specifically toward enabling Timothy and the church to avoid and combat the false teachers and teaching in Ephesus. This false teaching appealed strongly to women and led them so astray that traditional values of marriage and the home were seriously violated.³

He surmises that this false teaching aimed at women actually "encouraged them to radically violate appropriate and honorable behavior patterns for women."⁴ Hence, *some* of the women at Ephesus who had been influenced by this false teaching were "abusing the normal opportunities women had within the church to teach and exercise authority."⁵ Therefore, Scholer concludes that Paul's instructions were not meant to silence all women but only those who had been corrupted by this false teaching.

Scholer is correct in asserting that the epistle of 1 Timothy does address the matter of false teaching at Ephesus. This is obvious from the opening of the book in 1:3-4 as well as explicit references at other points in the book (notably 4:1ff. and 6:20-21). The question, however, is whether this is as thorough-going as Scholer would have us believe, and whether or not it pertains to 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in particular.

1 TIMOTHY 2:15 AS SCHOLER'S ENTRY POINT

In order to connect 1 Timothy 2:9-15 to the Ephesian heresy matter, Scholer insists that all the verses in this paragraph (not just verses 11-12!) must be given careful attention, in particular verse 15. The logic behind this is simple: if he can demonstrate that the verses both immediately preceding and following the prohibition in 2:11-12 are concerned with the false-teaching threat, this should substantiate the conclusion that verses 11-12 are also related to the false-teaching problem. Hence (in Scholer's thinking) Paul's instructions are not universal principles but only the Apostle's solution for dealing with a limited problem at that particular time in that particular church. While Scholer's concern for contextual interpretation is commendable, his exegesis yields some questionable results.

³ Scholer, 200.

⁴ Ibid., 203.

⁵ Ibid.

In attempting to address the notoriously difficult verse in 2:15, he attempts to make some sense of the phrase “she shall be saved in childbearing” (*KJV*). He calls the *NIV* translation into question (“But women will be kept safe through childbirth”), insisting that the Greek verb *sōzō* (σώζω) should be given a soteriological nuance. Though he acknowledges that *sōzō* has a wider range of meanings, he insists,

. . . in such Pauline contexts the virtually inevitable sense is that of the salvation of God in Christ. This sense of salvation is confirmed by the next clause, “if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety” (*NIV*), which would make little sense otherwise.”⁶

After dismissing some other alternative interpretations, he goes on to conclude,

In view of the vocabulary, structure and contextual location of 2:15, this conclusion to the discussion of the place of women in the church must mean that women find their place among the saved (assuming, of course, their continuation in faith, love and holiness) through the maternal and domestic roles that were clearly understood to constitute propriety (*sōphrosynē*) for women in the Greco-Roman culture of Paul's day.⁷

Such reasoning raises at least two problems. First, it is simply not logical. What would bearing children contribute to one's salvation in Christ? Second, it creates further theological difficulties. To do justice to the conditional clause (“if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint”), Scholer's conclusion would logically lead to a works-salvation or to a form of Armenianism whereby a woman could lose *her* salvation. Scholer's problem begins with his assessment of *sōzō* (σώζω), in which he assumes “in such Pauline contexts the virtually inevitable sense is that of the salvation of God in Christ.”⁸ The future passive form of the verb in verse 15 (σωθήσεται) demands more attention. When Paul writes of our accomplished salvation (i.e., our justification) from the moment of trusting Christ as Savior (as he does in Eph 2:5,8; 2 Tim 1:9; or Titus 3:5), he tends to use the aorist or perfect tense. Yet the New Testament is just as apt to speak about the process of salvation (i.e., our sanctification) that will not be complete until the moment we stand before Christ. When Paul writes about our future experience at the Judgment Seat of Christ when our “work” will be examined, he says, “but he himself shall be saved [future passive], yet so as through fire” (1 Cor 3:15). We could go on to point out that even in 1 Timothy, Paul uses *sōzō* in a way other than “the salvation of God in Christ” when he writes in 4:16 about insuring salvation for himself and those who hear him. My point in all this is not to insist that the “salvation” (*sōzō*) in 1 Tim 2:15 is *eschatological* or in some sense of sanctification, but to merely point out that Scholer's assumption about *sōzō* in “Pauline contexts” is erroneous.

Of more importance to his thesis is the word *sōphrosunēs* (σωφροσύνης) at the end of verse 15, translated “propriety” by the *NIV*. He observes that the same word occurs in verse 9 as well, which suggests to him that the whole paragraph expresses a concern for propriety in women's behavior. He concludes, then, that Paul is addressing a challenge to their behavior.⁹ Noting other references within 1 Timothy to “women concerns” (e.g., 1 Tim 4:3 and 5:3-16), he postulates that the false teachers were promulgating ungodly views about womanly behavior. This is part of his attempt to rationalize that 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is not merely a passage expressing timeless principles *for all women* but is a correction to the false teaching about women and their behavior that was being experienced by the church at Ephesus.

⁶ Ibid., 196.

⁷ Ibid., 197.

⁸ Ibid., 196.

⁹ Ibid., 197.

While it is true that the epistle of 1 Timothy refers to several matters about women and concerns related to them (e.g., 4:3 "men who forbid marriage"), it is only fair to point out that Scholer's argument is based on a deduction . . . not what is clearly stated in the text. That in itself does not make him wrong, but it does require that more attention be given to the critical passage in 2:9-15 to see if Paul is really writing *in that particular passage* against false teachers who were misleading women in the congregation. Furthermore, the burden is on Scholer to clearly establish that Paul's injunctions were limited to the women who were engaging in false teaching rather than to all women.

DOES 1 TIMOTHY HAVE A SINGULAR CONTROLLING PURPOSE?

Scholer attempts to cite several texts, both in 1 Timothy as well as 2 Timothy, that infer a problem with false teachers at Ephesus. Since the book also mentions several examples of domestic concerns, he concludes that the false teaching "assaulted and abused what was considered appropriate and honorable behavior for women."¹⁰ While there is some degree of truth to this, the problem with Scholer's view is that he wants to read the entire book in this light, especially 1 Tim 2:9-15. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, his observation about Paul's concern for "propriety" in both verse 9 and verse 15 (i.e., both before and after Paul's instructions about women teaching/exercising authority) warrants—in his mind—the conclusion that this paragraph must also be read in the light of the problem with false teaching.

The logic of his deduction not only fails to be convincing, but runs into considerable problems when other data are considered as well. First of all, the double mention of "propriety" in 2:9-15 does not prove that the paragraph as a whole is written to correct problems with false teaching. The point of verses 9-10 is quite simple: God wants women to be more concerned about their internal character than about their external adornment, and this ought to be obvious in the way they dress as well as the good works that flow from their life. For Paul to make such a point does not infer that he is doing so only because false teachers were undermining the values of women. My plea is that the mention of "propriety" not be *over-read*.

The real weakness in Scholer's logic, however, is the difficulty he faces in reconciling his thesis about the book's purpose with both the preceding and following paragraphs to 1 Timothy 2:9-15. I noticed that when he cited evidence from the text for false teaching in 1 Timothy, he did not cite any passage pertaining to chapter two or three. This is a crucial matter, because Scholer is failing to give due regard to the *near context* of 1 Timothy 2:9-15. The preceding paragraph (2:1-7) addresses the need for prayer on behalf of all men, including civil authorities.¹¹ The following paragraph (3:1-7) gives a list of qualifications for church elders. Surely these paragraphs are not merely "ad hoc instructions," limited to this particular church at a time in the first century in light of false teaching! Surely they are timeless principles that churches throughout the ages should seek to honor!

This observation not only weakens Scholer's case that the paragraph in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is "ad hoc," but strongly suggests that the book as a whole cannot be forced into a tight controlling purpose that Scholer has suggested. Paul's statement in chapter 3 "*I write so that you may know how one ought to*

¹⁰ Ibid., 199.

¹¹ By the way, I feel that Scholer is wrong to not begin the second paragraph of 1 Timothy 2 with verse eight, a point that Liefeld has also criticized him for: "But in the Greek syntax, verse 9 is a dependent clause, subordinate to verse 8" (W. Liefeld, "A Response," 220).

conduct himself in the household of God" (though it may not be the only reflection of Paul's purpose) certainly lends weight to the notion that Paul is not writing against false teaching alone.

My point is this: the book does exhibit other purposes besides a correction of false teaching. Since both the preceding and following paragraphs to 1 Timothy 2:9-15 (the *near context*) are not aimed at correcting false teaching, it is only reasonable to request that proof . . . credible proof . . . be brought forward to read 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in such a way. Yet that is just the problem—this passage makes no straight-forward statement about false teachers.

Not only are we lacking confirmation in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 that false teaching is specifically being countered, but the very point Scholer is trying to make (women should not be restricted in ministry) is directly at odds with the very paragraph that follows. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, the following paragraph (which Paul prefaces with the remark "It is a trustworthy statement"), qualifications are given for church elders. A fair reading of the text clearly implies that men are in view. This is reflected in statements like "the husband of one wife" and especially in the concern for being able to manage his own home and family: "He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)" Thus, Scholer has a two-fold problem: his view lacks clear evidence that 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is written to counter false teaching, while at the same time there is evidence from the near context against him. I would conclude that the evidence favors the view that the content of chapters two and three of 1 Timothy concerns practical church administration, and that these teachings are normative for churches everywhere.

CONCERNS ABOUT SCHOLER'S EXEGESIS OF 1 TIMOTHY 2:9-15

Scholer seeks to buttress his case by pointing out what he would consider to be fallacies in the exegesis of those who hold to the traditional interpretation. He insists that all the verses in the paragraph must be given their due weight, and that the traditional interpretation is weak because it cannot adequately account for the details.

Verses 9—10

One such case is brought forward in regard to verses 9-10 about the women's adornment. He charges, "Nevertheless, most evangelicals, including those who see 2:11-12 as warrant for limiting women in ministry, take the injunctions against women's adornment in 2:9-10 to be culturally relative and do not seek to apply them in the unqualified terms in which they are stated." He seems to infer that these verses are basically ignored. While examples could possibly be brought forward of individuals who have done so, it is hardly sustainable to reason that this is a problem *per se* for the traditional interpretation. I am not convinced the passage is demanding that women go to the extent of wearing no jewelry at all. As stated earlier in this paper, Paul is most likely arguing that women should concern themselves with character and good works *more than* external adornment. Duane Litfin (who holds to the traditional interpretation) has not skirted the issue about verses 9-10 in his commentary on 1 Timothy. He writes,

For their adornment they should not emphasize the external, but the internal. . . . These terms stress . . . an appearance that is simple, moderate, judicious, and free from ostentation. The specifics mentioned (braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes) are not wrong in themselves, but become inappropriate when they indicate misplaced values (cf. 1 Peter 3:3). . . . Christians must be careful about letting a pagan culture set their fashions. Instead of

stressing external beauty, according to the world's standards, Christian women should manifest a different set of values.¹²

Contrary to Scholer, the traditional interpretation does not force one to dismiss these injunctions on account of being "culturally relative." Scholer's own view (that the verses are best explained as a counter to the false teachers who promoted external extravagance) lacks validation. There is nothing about these verses that would not make them suitable as "normative principles" for women. I agree with Scholer that these verses provide a call for "high moral standards" among women, but as such this can be accommodated to the traditional interpretation as well as his own, and therefore proves nothing one way or the other.

Verses 11—12

When he comes to the matter of verses 11-12, Scholer attempts to dismiss the straight-forward reading by a retreat to his "false teaching" hypothesis. He writes, "Rather, the instructions of 2:11-12 are directed against women who, having been touched or captivated by false teachings, are abusing the normal opportunities women had within the church to teach and exercise authority." This is totally an argument from silence, because nowhere in 1 Timothy is there any statement to the effect that there were *normal opportunities* for women to teach and exercise authority in the church (I assume we are talking here about the assembled gathering of the church in which both men and women were present).

Any serious exegesis of 1 Tim 2:11-12 has to grapple with the meaning of *authentein* (αὐθεντεῖν) in verse 12, translated "to exercise authority over" by the *NASB* and "to have authority over" by the *NIV*. As this is the only occurrence of the word in the NT, much debate has arisen over its exact meaning (and there is no shortage of discussion on the matter). The *KJV* had translated the phrase "nor to usurp authority over, which would imply something much different from the *NASB* and *NIV*. In light of the lack of evidence, Scholer dismisses the matter rather quickly with the comment,

The word is not frequently used in ancient Greek literature. The precise meaning of *authentein* and its use in 2:12 cannot be completely resolved at this time.¹³

His comments, unfortunately, tend to give the impression that we have almost no evidence, and therefore can make no reasonable conclusions. Yet this is not the case. Dr. Henry Baldwin, in one of the most thorough studies to date, has been able to utilize the computer database of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* to identify and study at least eighty-two references to *authentein* in extra-biblical literature.¹⁴ Scholer may claim that *authentein* is "not frequently used," but we certainly do have a sizeable amount of data to work with. From this data, Baldwin has been able to construct an accurate range of meanings for *authentein*. Thomas Schreiner, collaborating in the same book with Baldwin, went on to reason why the meaning "exercise authority" is the appropriate translation and understanding of this verb in this particular context.¹⁵

¹² A Duane Litfin, "1 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, Inc., 1983), 735.

¹³ Scholer, 205.

¹⁴ Henry Scott Baldwin, "A Difficult Word: αὐθεντέω in 1 Timothy 2:12," 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 Books, 1995). Baldwin has provided an appendix at the end of this book listing all the occurrences of αὐθεντέω from ancient Greek literature through the twelfth century AD.

¹⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15: A Dialogue with Scholarship," in *Women in the Church* [see esp. pp 130-34].

Though Scholer claimed on the one hand that the "precise meaning of *authentēin* and its use in 2:12 cannot be completely resolved at this time," he nevertheless felt justified in dismissing the possibility of *authentēin* meaning "exercise authority over." He states,

If Paul were referring to the normal exercise of authority, his otherwise constant *exousia/exousiazō* ("authority/to exercise authority") vocabulary would most likely have been used. The choice of such an unusual term itself indicates that Paul intended a different nuance or meaning.¹⁶

This type of reasoning, however, does not hold water. The same thing could be said about any of the occurrences we have of *authentēin* in extra-biblical literature. Yet we can document contexts in which *authentēin* clearly means "exercise authority over." Why then did these other authors not use the Greek verb *exousia* when they too had the choice of which verb to utilize? Schreiner answers Scholer's argument. Noting that *authentēin* and *ezousiazein* have overlapping semantic fields, he points out that "The expression "have authority" (ἐχέειν ἐξουσίαν) does not convey the same meaning as "exercise authority," since it focuses on possession of authority instead of use (cf. Rom. 9:21; 1 Cor. 7:37; 9:4,5,6; 11:10; 2 Thess. 3:9)."¹⁷

Scholer would like to see *authentēin* have a negative connotation such as "domineer" or "usurp authority," as others have attempted to assert. If that were the case, then Paul would not be prohibiting women from *exercising authority* over men, but only from unduly usurping authority. Such a nuance, even though it may be part of the word's semantic range of meanings, finds no support in this context . . . and it is context that determines the proper nuance for any word!¹⁸ Furthermore, Paul's prohibition is not simply against *authentēin* but also against "teaching" (διδάσκειν). The latter is certainly a positive activity, not a negative one, thus implying that *authentēin* should be seen in the same way.¹⁹

Verses 13—14

Verses 13-14 have traditionally been understood as *reasons* why Paul makes the prohibition against women in verses 11-12. The Greek conjunction γὰρ at the head of verse 13 has been understood to have its normal "causal" function. These verses, despite the difficulty of Paul's point in verse 14, are important to the understanding of the preceding verses. The point of verse 13 is rather clear: the fact that God created the man first has implications about *authority* in the relationship, a point that Paul has made elsewhere (1 Cor 11:7-10). Douglas Moo elaborates the connection:

This is an extremely important indicator of how Paul understood the prohibitions in verse 12. For by rooting these prohibitions in the circumstances of creation rather than in the circumstances of the fall, Paul shows that he does not consider these restrictions to be the product of the curse and presumably, therefore, to be phased out by redemption. And by citing creation rather than a local situation or cultural circumstance as his basis for the prohibitions,

¹⁶ Scholer, 205.

¹⁷ Schreiner, 132.

¹⁸ For the semantic range of meaning for ἀυθεντέω, see Baldwin, 73-79. Baldwin reports that there is only one case where the meaning "to domineer/play the tyrant" is clearly substantiated (75).

¹⁹ The Greek verb for teaching (διδάσκειν) is used fifteen times in the Pauline literature. Paul always uses the term in a positive way (i.e., authorized teaching), with the one exception of Titus 1:11. In that case, however, the context clearly establishes that false-teaching is in view, because he refers directly to "rebellious men" who contradict sound doctrine and apostolic teaching.

Paul makes it clear that, while these local or cultural issues may have provided the *context* of the issue, they do not provide the *reason* for his advice. His *reason* for the prohibitions of verse 12 is the created role relationship of man and woman, and we may justly conclude that these prohibitions are applicable as long as this reason remains true.²⁰

Obviously, then, if this is a *reason* for Paul's statement in verses 11-12 (i.e., that women should not teach or exercise authority over men because this would violate the divine pattern of authority roles from creation), then Scholer's thesis suffers a fatal blow.

Realizing this, Scholer attempts to circumvent the problem by classifying the Greek conjunction $\gamma\alpha\rho$ as "explanatory" rather than "causal."²¹ He goes on to say, "Thus, 1 Timothy 2:13-14 should be understood as an explanatory rationale for verses 11-12 that uses data from Genesis 2—3 selectively to suit the needs of the argument at hand."²² I feel that Scholer is quite wrong here, and even Liefeld faults him for this.²³ Although the conjunction $\gamma\alpha\rho$ can be "explanatory" rather than "causal" (e.g., Mt 19:12), the "explanatory" option is most unlikely in the case of 1 Tim 2:13. What would verse 13 be explaining? The conjunction needs to be seen in relation to the main verb of verse 12 ("I do not allow"). Verse 13 does not explain why Paul can prohibit something; rather, it gives the reason why he does so.

AN APPEAL TO CONTROLLING TEXTS

Following his analysis of the 1 Timothy 2 passage itself, Scholer attempts to draw upon hermeneutical considerations to support his case. I cannot refrain from pointing out that he has actually violated one of the primary axioms of exegesis, namely, consideration of *near context*. As I have mentioned already, neither the preceding nor following paragraph supports his thesis that Paul is writing 1 Timothy 2:9-15 to counter a "false teaching" agenda. Nevertheless, as Scholer takes up the matter of hermeneutics, he wants to argue that 1 Timothy 2 must be interpreted in light of other NT texts (a valid approach, as such). More specifically, however, Scholer feels that Galatians 3:28 ought to be the "controlling text" for 1 Timothy 2:11-12, as though the *basic principle* for women is in the Galatians passage (and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 ought to be brought into conformity with that). He even quotes F. F. Bruce to the effect that "if restrictions on it are found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus [e.g., 1 Tim 2:11-12] . . . they are to be understood in relation to Gal. 3:28, and not *vice versa*."²⁴

The problem with this line of reasoning is that it amounts to "comparing apples and oranges." Galatians 3:28 is not talking about the same thing as 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Galatians 3:28 is not dealing with the matters of *teaching* and *exercising authority* in the church, but with justification. "In Christ, there is neither male nor female"—but this pertains to their equal standing before God as a result of Christ's atonement and justification. They are equal heirs in their *justified status*, and this is evidenced by the fact that both receive the same Holy Spirit. In like manner, there is neither "slave

²⁰ Douglas Moo, "What Does it Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11-15," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood; A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 190-91.

²¹ Scholer, 208.

²² *Ibid.*, 211.

²³ Liefeld, 223. After acknowledging the convincing studies of Moo on the usage of the conjunction $\gamma\alpha\rho$, Liefeld notes, "If it is causal here, it seriously affects Scholer's argument" (223).

²⁴ Scholer, 213; citing F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 190.

nor free," but Paul obviously recognizes that slave and free have different functional differences in this age (though they are on an equal plane in terms of their spiritual standing before God). Consider Ephesians and Colossians, for example, where eschatological considerations impact the love and care slave and master exhibit for one another, but do not change their roles or status in this age.

CONCLUSION

When examined closely, Scholer's interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is found to be exegetically weak and unconvincing. His main contention is that the book of 1 Timothy has a singular purpose to correct false teaching and that this paragraph in 1 Timothy 2 is only a directive to women who had come under the influence of false teaching that challenged domestic roles. According to Scholer, only these women who are the spokes-persons for this false teaching are commanded not to teach or usurp authority. The main problem with Scholer's view is that he has no clear or even implicit statement from the book that affirms his thesis. Even if he could establish that the passage in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 was written with a particular concern for false teaching that was affecting women (which is doubtful in light of the preceding and following paragraphs), that would not demand that the command in verses 11-12 be limited to women who propagated the false teaching. The text does not make that assertion. Scholer's thesis rides on too much assumption. On the other hand, the traditional interpretation that verses 11-12 are a timeless principle applicable for all women has much more to commend it. Like the preceding and following paragraphs, this is divine counsel for all churches of all time. Furthermore, the causal conjunction initiating verse 13 indicates that the reason for the restriction is related to God's order with creation, not to a local situation involving false teaching.

There has never been a time in history when the family has come under such attack as it has today. Although there are many contributing reasons for this, part of the problem stems from an abandonment of the roles that God has ordained for husbands and wives. We live in a generation when men are walking away in droves from their responsibilities to marriage. What we need are men who are willing to take responsibility to be godly leaders in their homes. The church, however, also has a responsibility to reflect the biblical roles that God has ordained. We need churches that are led by godly men and in which role distinctions are recognized. The role of elders and pastors has been assigned to men. Likewise, the teaching of the Word of God (which also reflects authority lines) has been assigned to men. If the church does not honor what God has ordained, we stand in danger of sending a signal to those in the church that the principles for the roles of men and women are optional. In so doing, we are guilty of contributing to the breakdown of families.

1 Timothy 2 and 3 gives a coherent message when understood in light of gender "roles" that must be honored. Men have a tendency to relegate the matter of prayer to women. Women face the temptation of being critical of men who lead (or should be leading) the local church. Being unsatisfied with the state of things, some women may even want to take the "reins" themselves by assuming the position of "teacher" or a place of exercising authority. In 1 Timothy 2—3, Paul seeks to correct these dangerous tendencies. In 1 Timothy 2:1-7, he insists on the central importance of prayer in the life of the church. Then in 1 Timothy 2:8-15, he clarifies the roles that men and women are to play in the church. In verse 8, he states very frankly that the men are to take responsibility for prayer in the public assembly of the church. Rather than being contentious with one another (as men can be!), men ought to be leading in the matter of prayer "without wrath and dissension." The women may grow impatient with male leadership in the church (or question their ability to teach), but they are not on this account to take over the public ministry of the Word or the exercise of authority in the church. Of course, Paul would never condone a haphazard appointment of men to such responsible positions as the teaching of the Word and the governing of the church. For that reason, the next

paragraph (1 Tim 3:1-7) clarifies that the church must be careful to select spiritually qualified men to lead the church as elders/overseers.²⁵

We may not understand fully at this point why God chose to establish authority within the family unit with the husband appointed to be the spiritual leader of the family and the wife (though a co-heir of the grace of life) asked to submit to his leadership. One stated reason is that the authority structure of the home is suppose to reflect the larger family circle, namely, the body of Christ of which He is the head. Ephesians 5:23 states, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body." This preference of male leadership is also to be reflected in the local church . . . a practice consistent with the Old Testament in which the priesthood was limited to males and with Christ's own example of choosing twelve men as Apostles. The unbelieving world may scoff at such an arrangement as being "behind the times" or even as chauvinistic, but the Lordship of Christ beckons us to carry out His orders faithfully. So, let us make every effort to honor God's authority by holding firm to the principle that godly men are to lead the church as pastors and elders and that spiritually gifted men are to assume the place of publicly proclaiming the Word of God.

Finally, it should be noted that what is at stake in this discussion is not, as it is often (wrongly) portrayed, "should women be in ministry?". Paul's prohibitions in 1 Timothy 2 are narrowly focused on eldership and the public proclamation of the Word. His concerns are for proper gender roles *at the highest levels of authority* in the local church. His restrictions on teaching arise because, as is evidenced throughout the Pastoral Epistles, the preaching of the Word in the public assembly is directly connected with the exercise of authority, oversight, and leadership in the church. But what Paul does *not* permit is very limited in scope compared to what he positively envisions for women in ministry. Women are commanded to teach other women and children (Tit 2:3-4). Along with men, women are to be actively involved in service (Phil 4:2-3) and to help meet the material needs of the saints (Col 4:15). Women are frequently praised to the whole congregation as models of Christ-like ministry (Rom 16:1-2,6,12). Above all, they are to influence the future of the next generation in the church through their commitment in the domestic sphere (1 Tim 2:15; Tit 2:5). The church desperately needs spiritually gifted women for such a broad range of vitally important tasks.

²⁵ Paul uses the term "overseer" in 1 Timothy 3:1-2, but in a parallel passage on qualifications in Titus 1:5 he uses the term "elder." The same office is in view, though each word reflects a slightly different aspect of this position. Furthermore, in Paul's farewell speech to Ephesus in Acts 20:17-38, he uses both terms in referring to the same church leaders. Not only that, but he says they have been called to "shepherd" (i.e., *pastor*) the church of God.