

Reaction to CTRE's Study Document¹

"Ordaining Women for Pastoral Ministry?"

Alexander Vieira

This document has been digitized, formatted for consistency, and edited for grammar and readability. See christiannewsmissouri.com for original and other versions. —Editor of Christian News

Recently, the President Pastor of the IELB sent everyone a study document from CTRE[†] on the ordination of women for pastoral ministry. In the email message, we receive an honorable task: this document should be "studied by pastors, congregations, and districts." And the manifestations that would result from these studies could be sent to CTRE as "suggestions for alteration, clarification of doubts or other manifestations".

With this invitation and challenge in mind, I put "on paper" some reactions, doubts, and suggestions, which will be sent to CTRE, having gone through discussions between pastors with whom I have closer contact (district and others). This text has two purposes: 1) to interact directly with the CTRE study document, with questions and suggestions, and 2) to offer a study of the relevant texts for the topic with new argumentative lines that can serve as a challenge for our present understanding of the ordination of women, so that we can grow in our knowledge of the Word of God, and in the exdisplay of the truths of Holy Scripture.

Introduction

Before I begin the reaction, I want to say: the Bible is the Word of God! Repeating and explaining: the Bible is authoritative in ALL matters, and any doctrine that is under discussion must have this confession as a principle. I know this is obvious, but I begin by stating my TOTAL submission to the Word of God in the Bible because the CTRE document begins with a subtle suggestion that opinions (or bible readings and understandings) distinct from those that are exposed in the document have their origin in social, feminist movements and not in exegetical interpretations that seek to be faithful and consistent with biblical witness. Certainly there are many who argue in favor of the ordination of women because they are based on non-biblical arguments, but care must be

1. Like the CTRE study document, this text will have the format of a study document, not an academic paper.

[†] The CTRE is the equivalent of the LCMS' CTCR (Committee on Theology and Church Relations) in the IELB (*Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil*), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil. The IELB "started as a mission of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and was the Brazilian District of that body," until it became "an independent church body in 1980. It has about 240,000 members and "is a member of the International Lutheran Council" (Wikipedia).

taken not to create a caricature of those who think differently from us, as if they were interested in going against the Word of God.

Furthermore, arguing that the contrary point of view is a result of cultural influences leads to questioning about the influences that may exist on ourselves; in this case, on those who are against the ordination of women. One might say, "What led the church here not to ordain women were reflections from a macho culture." As an argument in favor of this observation is the fact that even in the IELB, recently, women could not vote in assemblies or have leadership positions. This shows that even those who are against the ordination of women was at some point and can still be influenced by the culture of the time when it comes to the role of women in the church. We must argue with caution, demonstrating by the Word what God wants for his church.

At the end of the introduction of the CTRE document, it is written that the position contrary to ours is "a denial of biblical authority". Again, this statement does not serve everyone who defies our doctrine. There are numerous arguments in favor of the ordination of women who presuppose, and emphasize, biblical authority. It is with these arguments that we need to deal with, and not only with those which do not submit to the Word of God in the Bible.

Why this long introduction? Because I intend to raise questions that, beforehand, would disqualify me as someone who "denies biblical authority", or who is simply repeating what the culture of the time imposes. Then again, I say: the Bible is the Word of God! Repeating and explaining: the Bible is authoritative in ALL questions, and any doctrine that is under discussion must have this confession as a principle.

The CTRE Document

The main texts for the prohibition of the ordination of women for pastoral ministry are 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2. These texts are mentioned briefly in the document. However, most of the argument is focused on explaining *why* God forbade it, not on the demonstration that he forbade. It is not always clear the criteria that are used for the selection of texts that are relevant in this discussion.

- Why, for example, do the texts on the subordination of women to men (which support the conclusion that the prohibition is something of the Creator's will) have greater relevance for teaching women about ordination to pastoral ministry than texts on the doctrine of the ministry itself?
- Why, early on, is it important to remember that there were no priestess women in the Old Testament, and this fact has no direct relevance to the subject discussed?
- At the same time, why not bring to the discussion the prophesy[ing] women of the Bible? What is the relationship between the authority of the role of the prophets for pastoral ministry?

Pastoral ministry or subordination of women?

Sometimes the impression that remains is that the document is less about the ordination of women to ministry and more about the submission of women to the man. The study document seems to assume what the American CTCR tries to demonstrate: that the subordination of women in creation is an established doctrine, and that this is the hermeneutic lens for reading the texts that speak of the service of women in the church. We see this, for example, in the following words: "The creational pattern of the male sex as the head requires that women do not have the formal position of the public authoritative teaching office in the church, that is, the office of pastor."² From this understanding, one reads about the "co-operators" of the Apostle Paul, about women who served in various leadership capacities in the church, about those who taught, prophesied, and led in some way the people of God, and it comes to the conclusion that all of them, without exception, were subordinate to the leadership of some man, for "none of these women appear in the New Testament with an independent responsibility."³ It is not clear how this categorical statement is taught from biblical texts. It seems that the biblical passages that speak of women are interpreted from the pre-established idea that they *could not have independent responsibility because of course they need to be subordinate*. Many questions arise from this type of approach. Some of them are: in addition to the apostles (perhaps), which pastors have an independent responsibility? What would this independent responsibility be in the Christian's ministry and life (since every Christian must submit to others)?

Defining the scope of the "order of creation"

If the subordination of women in creation is the basic premise against female ministry, could we not, as a church, explain better and in detail what is our understanding of the "order of creation" and its consequences? For example, the American CTCR, even recognizing that there were women leaders exercising leadership positions in certain situations⁴, understands that the Apostle Paul teaches, from creation, that "for order and unity in the family there must be leadership, and the primary responsibility for such leadership lies with the father and husband."⁵ Similarly, when analyzing Paul's argument from creation in 1 Tim 2, the document says that "the leadership of the office of official, public preaching belongs to men. A woman taking on this office is wrong because she is a woman, not because women would exercise in the wrong way or because they have fewer gifts and abilities."⁶

The argumentative line on the role of women according to creation has received necessary refinements. Above, as we have seen, it is expressed that the woman would have all the conditions to exercise the pastoral function, but the order of creation forbids her. However, it is not uncommon to see the argument of the order of creation applied to the nature of the woman to explain [the] why of her *function*. An example of this in our church is what we find

2. CTCR, *Women in the Church*: *Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice*, 1985], 37.

3. CTRE, 11.

4. CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 5-6.

5. CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 29.

6. CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 36.

in Donald Schüler, *The Function of Women in the Church*. Despite recognizing the equality and value of man and woman before the Creator, when he applies the argument of the order of creation to the theology of the ministry, the author makes categorical statements in explaining the text of 1 Tim 2:9-15. According to him, for having created man first, "God has manifested that leadership rests with the man. If in the home, the head must be male... there is no reason why worship should be different."⁷ Here we see the statement that the order of creation defines that man must have leadership, both in the home and in the church.

By continuing his exposition of Paul's argument in 1 Tim 2, the author deals with the issue of the fall into sin. At this point, Schüler states that when Satan tempted the woman, perverting "the divine order," he "assigned the woman a responsibility for which she was neither emotionally nor psychologically prepared." Soon after, the author says that "Eve's transgression suggests that the woman, as a leader, is more exposed to deception." According to Schüler, "because of this, Paul finds it inconvenient to place [her] in a function of teacher responsibility in a definitive way." By forbidding women from teaching, Paul would be protecting them "from the danger to which they are exposed." The fact that is clear, from the order of creation and fall, is that "the congregation must be in a solid direction as much as the church and the home."⁸

We see in the paragraph above that there was (and perhaps still [is] among many Christians) the idea that, whether by virtue of creation or fall, the nature of the woman is less prepared to assume leadership roles than that of man (created first, tempted second).

What is evident in this line of argument, whether in Schüler's most problematic approach or in the more moderate approach of the CTCR, is that the order of creation implies *leadership*. However, I suggest that this inference precisely needs to be better explored, because the relationship between *order* and *leadership* is not so evident in the pages of the Bible (especially in the accounts of the creation and fall in Genesis).

After explaining that the order of creation defines who should be a leader according to God's will, it is also necessary to explain why pastoral ministry is considered as *above the prophets* as a leadership office. It is generally said that [female] prophets had no permanent function, but only occasional, and not related to worship,⁹ while pastoral ministry and teaching are lasting functions of continuing teaching. The problem with this argument is that it does not recognize that the time *factor* does not decrease or increase the *leadership* of a given function. When Paul writes that the church is built "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph 2:20), we could hardly say that the function of the "prophets" would be subordinated to *the authority or leadership* of today's pastor [because] they served at specific times and not in worship.¹⁰

In the form of questions: what is the order of creation and how far does it extend? Why does it imply *man's leadership*? And why, apparently, the function of pastoral ministry is

7. Schüler, *The Role of Women in the Church*, 35.

8. Schüler, *The Role of Women in the Church*, 36. All direct quotations in this paragraph can be found on the same page as Schüler's article.

9. Schüler, *The Role of Women in the Church*, 39.

10. Likewise, the Son God became incarnated and accomplished the work of salvation in the world at a very specific and occasional time, if we compare with his eternal existence, and certainly this does not imply in the slightest authority.

a function of *leadership* and *authority* that cannot be assumed by women, while the role of prophet and teaching outside of worship can? We know that the Bible sees no problem in having women speak with authority on God's part, for he revealed to the prophetes[ses] of the OT [Old Testament] and the NT [New Testament] what to speak in his name; similarly, we know that women taught (and we understand that they still can) at various times. The big question is *why not in public worship?* We need to explain clearly how our understanding of ministry does not end up seeing worship as a service of God where authority lies in his Word (prophesying women spoke with this authority) and in teaching him (women can teach elsewhere) and goes on to convey the idea that worship is a service of men (human beings, and male).

Much of our understanding of the relationship between man and woman from creation is based on passages that speak that man is the head of the woman. The most obvious question to ask is whether every time the term "head" is used it has the meaning of *authority* of one and implies subordination of the other. In 1 Cor 11 the Apostle Paul says that "man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ." To say only, like Augustus Lopes, that this verse teaches a functional distinction, but not in essence is not enough. What is the biblical message conveyed through these words? We generally recognize that *Christ is equal to God ontologically, but is subordinate in the economy of salvation, just as the woman is equal to man ontologically but is functionally subordinated.* But what are the implications of this analogy? What did God mean through Paul?

- Has Christ always *been* subordinate, from eternal generation, or only for a specific period? The way we explain the distinction of function *and* essence between man and woman from these verses is that since *creation* functions (leadership, submission) are defined. It is difficult to distinguish what is functional from what is the essence;
- When God said, "Let us make the human being in our image, according to our likeness" (Gen 1:26), what kind of intertrinitarian relationships (if any) would be reflected in the human being? One of the things was dominance and action in creation;
- "God is the head of Christ," and yet they do the same works. Creation is attributed to both, for example (or God *did through Christ*). From the creation of the woman in Gen 2, the Bible gives the idea that Adam's "correspondent" would also do the things he could do (which Gen 1 had already made clear). How can we say that the fact that man is the head of the woman, like God, who is the head of Christ, excludes women from public education?

Since the "flagship" argument in the CTRE document is the issue of women's submission because of the order of creation, some comments and additional questions are necessary:

- It is imperative to offer a profound exegesis of the account of creation where this submission is demonstrated as part of God's good creation, and what it means today;

- The study document states: "The point is that men and women are different from each other and therefore must have different roles at home and in the church."¹¹ Again, since this is a doctrinal statement, it would be opportune to explain: in addition to obvious issues such as motherhood/fatherhood, where else should we observe how the differences between man and woman dictate the roles they can play "in the house and in the church"? What other examples (besides ministry) do the authors have in mind?

The legitimacy of the explanation on "order of creation" for the theology of the ministry

It is necessary to recognize that just understanding and explaining the "order of creation" is not enough to decide the question of the ordination of women. Even if our understanding of creation and authority can be biblically demonstrated, it will be necessary to offer the reasons why *the order of creation is decisive for the understanding of ministry*. It is clear that there is a relationship between teaching in the church and creation and fall. We see this clearly in 1 Tim 2. Still, there are many "loose ends" that need to be considered to demonstrate satisfactorily that that text and biblical theology as a whole are permanently uniting *ministry, authority*, and the difference between man and woman in *creation*. Without the proper considerations suggested, it may seem that the CTRE document is arbitrarily elevating the so-called "kefalê structure" ("head") to prove that the woman cannot be ordained to the ministry.

Some important issues to consider concern other aspects of biblical theology and its relations with the ministry. In general, we disregard these other aspects with brief, passing comments, which may cause us to lose sight of teachings relevant to the subject in question.

An important example is justification by faith and the fact that there is no "man or woman" (Gal 3). Although our inclination is to say that these texts speak of our position before God and not of our functions in the Church, this does not mean that the reality of justification has no direct implication on interpersonal relations (Jew and Gentile, man and woman, etc.) and in the organization of the Christian community. Similarly, the accounts of creation also have no relation to the pastoral ministry, but we understand that a connection is established from a biblical text (1 Tim 2), and we bring a series of other passages that speak of the subordination of the woman to give weight to the idea that the order of creation is decisive in the subject of ministry.

One might say, "Paul connects only the idea of the subordination of women, based on creation, to the doctrine of ministry, and not the doctrine of justification." Perhaps. But this is not all Paul's application of the doctrine of creation and the role of man and woman. In 1 Cor 11, a passage where he deals with problems of order in public worship among the Corinthians, Paul begins by saying that "man is the head of the woman" from the order of creation. Some verses later Paul states, from his theology of creation and the redemption¹²: [in the] Lord, however, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman was made of man, so also man is born of woman; and all comes from God." (1 Cor

11. CTRE, 5.

12. The Augsburg Confession presents the article of the letter of preaching immediately after the article of justification, for logical and theological reasons.

11.11-12) We readily answered: but here he is talking about essence, while before he talked about functions. As correct as this is correct, this teaching is not obvious in the Bible: neither in Genesis nor in Paul's letters. Therefore, a deeper treatment of why these verses (one is dependent on the other in the Lord) do not gain primacy in the discussion about the role of women in the church is necessary.

Certainly the teaching of God's word, public worship, and the functions of all people in the church are things that happen "in the Lord." It is well known that the doctrine of justification and restoration of things is central to the Apostle Paul. The fact that he states in 1 Cor 11 that in the Lord one is dependent on the other and that this "comes from God" (also referring to creation) shows that, for Paul, the order of creation may not have to do (first) with ideas of *authority* and certainly has nothing to do with the idea of "leadership".

Another central aspect of theology is the accounts of the resurrection, which state that women were the first to proclaim that Christ lives. The cross and resurrection are the events that constitute the main message of pastoral ministry (as evidenced in the preaching in Acts and in the epistles). However, the account of the resurrection is disregarded in the present discussion because clearly there is no talk of "public preaching of the Word"¹³ However, it is important to recognize that in narratives teaching is not as direct as in the epistles, but the facts themselves are relevant and say something to the church. What does it mean for the church that Jesus began the proclamation of the resurrection with the testimony of women? One possibility is that they only went to tell the apostles, who would be sent later. Another possibility is that authority (and emphasis) is placed on the *message*, not on the people involved (a good difference from the Levitical priesthood), and this could have a certain weight in our discussions about ministry.

Sometimes it is argued from the silence of the text: "If Christ wanted shepherd women, he would have called women to the apostolate." Considering the account of the resurrection and [its] centrality to all aspects of Christianity (including the ministry of the Word), we can also raise the hypothesis: "if Christ did not want women for pastors, he would not have let it happen (or at least be narrated in the Bible) that the first people who proclaim the resurrection were women." Why didn't he [wait to] call women for a few days? Since the Bible doesn't respond, we can only conjecture some likely reasons that show how Jesus' decision does not necessarily mean that he is against the ordination of women to the ministry are:

- He did not choose women for the same reasons that he did not choose Gentile men: because the twelve apostles (this serves as Judas's replacement later) should have a typological relationship with the twelve tribes of Israel (i.e., Jacob's twelve sons);
- He did not choose women because he did not want to send them, at that time, away from their homes, to other villages, far from the family, entering hostile places;
- The accounts of the resurrection are quite enlightening: the apostles themselves doubted the women's words about the resurrection!

13. Nor is it clear that 1 Tim 2:9-15 is speaking of the ministry of the Word.

Returning to the main point of this section: why does the "kefalê structure" (I recommend abandoning this terminology) have so much weight in this discussion? We need to strive to make more explicit the exegetical and theological movements that allow us to emphasize some and ignore other areas of biblical theology.

In a similar way, we can reflect on the Baptism of children. The fact that the Bible does not say that babies were baptized and, moreover, present several accounts where adults confessed their faith before receiving Baptism does not make us deny baptism to newborns. Why not? Because we understand that there are some key texts that guide our reflection and lead us to the practice of child baptism. Another example is receiving the Holy Ghost through Baptism. The Bible includes, without explaining why, accounts of situations in which the coming of the Holy Ghost occurred separately from the moment of Baptism (Act 8; 10). However, we emphasize in our teaching that these episodes are exceptional, not the rule. How do we know that? We see in other texts what Baptism means and its relationship with the Holy Spirit, and then explain that these exceptional texts, which differ from the rule, must have occurred because of historical, circumstantial issues.

The role of this discussion in Lutheran confessionality

Finally, two questions that need to be answered:

- In order to be confessional Lutherans who submit to the Bible as the Word of God and Lutheran confessions as an exposition of biblical truths, do we need to accept the exposition of the relationship between man and woman in creation as set out in the Documents of CTRE (and CTCR)?¹⁴
- If the Church accepts disagreements regarding the specific interpretation of the doctrine of subordination (is it a doctrine?), provided that we are not based on ideologies that go against the Word of God, but on biblical exegesis and theology, the Church would be willing to reread biblical texts that speak about ministry and about women in the church considering other doctrinal aspects of our theology (ecclesiology, soteriology, etc.)?

Care for the presentation of the biblical doctrine of creation

Some questions that arose from the reading of the study document of the CTRE go beyond doubts; [it] raised concerns about the type of explanations used to deny the ordination of women.

Undue cultural influence

When discussing the proper relationship between man and woman from the doctrine of creation, the term "leadership" is used.¹⁵ This terminology needs to be revised. "Leadership" refers to different hierarchies than what God establishes in creation. The biblical idea is

14. About "head" meaning leadership, and the subordination of woman to man since creation and with ramifications in various areas (including pastoral ministry).

15. CTRE, 5. This terminology also appears in Schüler's article, which was written 50 years ago.

unrelated to the idea of "boss", or one "boss[es] and the other obeys". Not even the idea of "submission" of Christians in the Bible is correctly expressed through the word "leadership". The use of this term shows that it is possible that part of our reflection on the relationship between man and woman in the order of creation receives cultural, non-biblical influences that inferiorize women.

Insinuations that may lead someone to the conclusion that a woman's sin was more serious also evidence unbiblical influences.¹⁶

Worship or cultivation?

On page 6 there is an attempt to relate our understanding of ministry and ordination to the order God gave Adam to "cultivate and keep" in early Genesis. This application (not exdisplay) of the passage resembles methods of "proof texts", in which the biblical text is compelled to say what we want it to say. Teaching in this case is not coming from the authority of God's Word, but from our own creativity. Both the text of Genesis and the doctrine of ministry are disrespected by this forced connection.

In addition to the above problem, there is the unbiblical (and anti-Lutheran) teaching that the woman did not receive the order to cultivate. According to the American CTCR:

"God gave both of them the order Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subject it. Have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:28). Man and woman receive the same dominion. Both the blessing and the commission of verse 28 assume that man and woman are equal before God in their relationships with the rest of creation.¹⁷

In this part about cultivation, it is said that "When we consider that Eve has not received the function of 'cultivating and keeping', as well as the consequences of her unbelief, it seems inappropriate for women to want to claim for themselves the right to be pastors in the church." (p.7) There is a logical flaw here in implying that ministry according to the Bible is to people who claim it. It would be inappropriate for women to claim for themselves, just as it is inappropriate for men to claim for themselves the right to be pastors; the document is trying to defend (or at least assume) that the ministry is an institution of Christ. The question is not "who has the right", but what is the will of God, who instituted and gave the ministry as a gift to the church. There are many men who believe in the authority of *God's* Word in the Bible and who argue that women can be ordained without advocating that they claim the right for themselves.

16. According to the LC-MS CTCR (*Women in the Church*, 30), the explanation offered in the CTRE study document would be an abuse of biblical doctrine: "The concept of headship is not only misunderstood, but it is also frequently abused. It is a mistake, for example, to identify the Biblical model of headship with a chain of command."

17. CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 20.

Function or ontology?

On page 15 there is the following quote: "just as in the person of the incarnate Son who in his male humanity communicates to us the grace of the Father, it is also just and correct — and this in terms of all God's saving economy from the beginning — that the human instrument of the Father's grace in Christ, in the concreteness of male humanity, be an image of the incarnate Image of the eternal Father."

This is a very creative thesis, but not necessarily well founded. To say that it is "just and right" for the pastor to be a man may be appropriate if the explanation is: because God said it is "just and correct." What we have here, however, is an argument that becomes dangerous. The text is saying (or implying) that somehow man is closer to God's image than woman; he can be a better representation of the Creator by being a man. This denies the biblical doctrine of creation, which states that God created man and woman in his image and likeness. Moreover, this type of super emphasis on the distinction between man and woman (the distinction exists, but not in this aspect), in a way, treats with little zeal the incarnation of Christ. Christ did not become the male sex, but *became flesh*, human being, and neither man nor woman is more human being than the other.

The impression that remains is that in an attempt to argue against the ordination of women to pastoral ministry, the functional distinction between man and woman is elevated to an almost ontological status, to the point of generating the problems described above (in this section, and also in the question of Eve's sin).

Study of the historical and social contexts of the texts

Between pages 9 and 10 the extrabiblical context is mentioned too. From it, it was argued that "If the Apostolic Church had given in to the agenda of society, it would most likely have included, and not excluded, women in the office of ministry." This paragraph of the document is key to an in-depth study of 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2 and the prohibition on women speaking/teaching. The local culture of Ephesus, for example, raised the role of women, and new converts to Christianity could come to the church with wrong understandings of God as Creator, about the value of woman and man before God, and especially as to their participation in the fall of humanity. With this as a background, it is possible to understand the fact that women in Ephesus are generating problems in the teaching of the church, to the point that they need to be taught that Eve was not a liberator and that they could not claim teaching for themselves, since in the house of God it did not occur in the same way as in the worship of Diana.

The background that is mentioned in the document (that women were leaders in pagan religions) helps us conject both aspects that reinforce the prohibition of ordination to the ministry to this day ("certainly the church could have ordained women, but did not command") as well as aspects that reinforce that the Apostle Paul was dealing with a local problem ("it was certainly necessary to act in that way to preserve the teaching of the church of Ephesus. When there is no such risk, there is no prohibition").

If the background leads us to think that the prohibition is because of the culture of the time (and not to all women), then God's teaching through Paul would be evidencing another

problem in our current practice: because of a misunderstanding of interpretation¹⁸, possibly for cultural reasons, we would be misteaching the relations between man and woman, ministry, and even the vision of creation and fall; and this was exactly what Paul was criticizing in the women of Ephesus. In other words, we would need to (re)learn "in silence, with all submission," just as he commands women (1 Tim 2).

Below, I offer some thoughts on the main texts that serve as the basis for not ordering women to pastoral ministry, with the aim of reflecting with the church on what the rule could be and what is the exception in the ministry subject. What teachings is the Word of God giving us from these texts? Can we keep our eyes fixed in some places and not noticing others, and because of that coming to hasty conclusions? Is there reason for us to see a ban on women from speaking/teaching in church as something historical and circumstantial? What other texts on the theology of the ministry could be brought for this reflection?

1 Corinthians 14.34-35

"³⁴Let women keep themselves silent in the churches, for they are not allowed to speak; but are submissive, as the law also determines it. ³⁵But if you want to learn something, ask your own husband at home; for the woman it is shameful to speak in the church."

The principal questions that guide the study of this text are: what is God forbidding in this passage, and what clues do we have, in the Word of God, to know what the word *λαλεῖν* (*lalein*; "talk") means in this passage?

Against the ordination of women!

The study document of the CTRE mentions that the silence of women is related to worship (which is evident by the context of the biblical passage), and that "sometimes, in this pericope Paul forbids women to speak. The third time, you ask them to remain silent. Therefore, in four verses, there are three prohibitions. It is hard to imagine that these prohibitions were an apostolic lapse." (p. 12) Surely these prohibitions were **not** a lapse of the apostle. And that is exactly why we need to seek, with the utmost diligence, to understand exactly what is being banned.

Traditionally, we understand the word *λαλεῖν* (*lalein*; "speaking") in this passage as authoritative teaching of the Word of God in a public way. Put another way, Paul is teaching that women cannot be pastors.¹⁹ In addition to this teaching, it is understood that there is an

18. As the Word of God says, "I would not have known sin, but through the law." (Rom 7.7)

19. Cf. Kleinig, *Disciples but not Teachers*: *1 Corinthians 14:33b-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15*, 3 (page number of the pdf made available on the internet, and not in the book publication). "While the verb *lalein* is used in many different ways in the New Testament, it is never used in the sense of chattering (Barrett, 332). Here, as is often the case, it is a synonym for the teaching of God's word (eg. Acts 4:1; 18:25; 1 Cor 2:6-7; 2 Cor 2:17; Heb 13:7)."

apostolic emphasis (v. 33, 37-38) on the prohibition of the ordination of women, revealing that the text establishes a rule (against female ministry) for all places and all times:

14:33b: "As in all the churches of the saints..."

14:37-38: "If one considers himself prophet or spiritual, recognize that it is the Lord's command what I am writing to you. And if anyone ignores him, he'll be ignored."

The CTRE study document cites Pless's explanation, which states that "Consequently, our Lord entrusted the Office only to qualified men,"²⁰ and then concludes: "We cannot create communion with one another if it means breaking communion with Christ by ignoring or rejecting His words. There can be no communion in the church, that is, communion at the altar and on the pulpit, with those who claim the right to ordain women to pastoral office"²¹

This is only a brief summary of the interpretation of the text of 1 Cor 14 that serves as the basis for the church's argument against the ordination of women. We see that the arguments are based both in the sense of the word (*lalein*; "speak") [and] structure of the passage (verses that precede and succeed). Below, we will make a brief study of the text, offering questions to this interpretation, in order to provide a biblical, exegetical reflection, which will help us understand and, therefore, expose in a more profound and based way the will of God in this passage.

Against the ordination of women?

(It is worth remembering: the Word of God through the Apostle Paul is authoritative for the church of all times! The study below seeks discernment, not detachment from the Word of God.)

The meaning of (*lalein*; "speak")

Does *λαλεῖν* in this passage mean teaching the Word of God (in public worship)? Above, we have seen that the interpretation against the ordination of women understands that this word means the teaching of the Word of God. Where does this interpretation come from? Of the 295 times this verb is used in the NT, some of them have as their object, as the content of what is being said, the gospel—the Word of God. Kleinig's article mentioned above mentions, as an example, the following passages: Acts 4. 1; 18:25; 1 Cor 2.6-7; 2 Cor 2.17; Hb 13. 7. We could also include Phil 1.14 and 1 Thess 2.2. In these passages it is said that someone "spoke" the Word of God, or the gospel of Christ, to others. What they all have in common, however, seems to be ignored in our interpretation of this word in 1 Cor 14. 34-35: The content of what is being said is part of the context. In other words, *λαλεῖν* does not refer directly to the teaching of the Word of God, not even in the NT. However, when someone teaches, someone "speaks" the Word of God, and so this verb (like others) appears associated with preaching at various times.

20. CTRE, 11.

21. CTRE, 12.

One of the most authoritative lexicons of NT Greek and ancient Christian literature, the BDAG, defines λαλεῖν as "emitting sounds, as opposed to being silent"; "talk" "express yourself". And note that, in the oldest Greek, it had the meaning that went from "engagement in small talk to chattering and babbling". According to the meaning of λαλεῖν, the lexicon suggests 1 Cor 14.34-35 means that "(women) *are not allowed to express themselves*". And the explanation offered is that "This pass. refers to expression in a congregational assembly, which would engage not only in worship but in discussion of congregational affairs; the latter appears to be implied here."²²

I know lexicons don't define what words mean in *specific contexts*, therefore, the paragraph above serves only to show what, under normal conditions, what the word λαλεῖν means. As we have seen, the word itself is neutral, and does not concern the content of what is being said.

The question that needs to be answered is: in biblical usage, or at least in Paul's writings, does the word have connotations of teaching or preaching? It seems to me that so far this has not been demonstrated. As much as we say [λαλεῖν] is associated with the authoritative "speaking" of the Word of God, we see that when this is the case, *the object* of the verb "speak" appears in context, and it is [the context which] informs us that a certain speech is an authoritarian preaching or teaching, not the "speaking" itself. Thus, the prohibition on women λαλεῖν in churches alone does not mean a ban on women to ministry, since this "speak" without the object does not seem to *be used* in the Bible as preaching or *authoritative teaching*. The burden of proof remains on our side when we affirm that Paul is referring to a specific "speaking" of technical language, even if he does not make this clear. Arguing from the silence, we could say: if Paul wanted to forbid women from being pastors in this verses, he would have made use of some term of his wide range of words to refer to the ministry in his various letters, instead of using a word that he himself (and the rest of the NT) uses to refer simply to the act of "talking."

But then, what is this "talk" in 1 Cor 14.34-35? As is often the case when interpreting texts, context gives us parameters for understanding isolated verses. The word λαλεῖν occurs 24 times in chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians: 17x associated with when speaking in tongues and the problems they had in this aspect, 5x associated with prophecy and teaching for the building up of the church, and 2x in the prohibition to women. In chapter 14, Paul is teaching that worship is not for confusion (God is not a God of confusion), and therefore the things that should be "spoken" should be for the building up of the church, not of himself. Speaking in tongues could bring benefit to the person in spirit, but it would not build those who would not understand (remembering that [the] context is public worship). On the other hand, in worship, with order and decency, [the Corinthians] should be encouraged to prophesy and "speak" for the teaching and comfort of the church. This being Paul's argument in 1 Cor 14, we can ask [whethe]r: the prohibition for women at the end of the chapter adds a new topic to the apostle's message (pastoral ministry), or concerns the contrast between the uplifting λαλεῖν and the

22. λαλέω, in William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

other, for personal benefit, which he teaches throughout the chapter, until [he] talks about women?

Speaking unedifying

There are indications in the text that Paul's prohibition was not for those women ["speaking"] so that it was *uplifting*, or did not hinder worship.²³ The first clue was shown above: the use of the word in *context*. The problem of disorder in worship had to do with "speaking" that does not build, and the apostle shows that "speaking" must be uplifting. Hardly, in this context, he would forbid women not to speak things that build (preaching the Word) without giving any explanation that is using the term "speak" very differently from more than 20 times in this context.

Here it is worth remembering the words of the apostle as he taught about "speaking" in the church: "What to do, then, brethren? When you get together, one has a psalm, the other has a teaching, this brings a revelation, the one speaks in tongues, and yet another does the interpretation. May everything be done for edification. (1 Cor 14.26)

How should they learn?

The second indication that the prohibition is that women were not saying uplifting things is related to the way the Apostle Paul writes. In verse 35 he says, "If, however, you want to learn something, ask your own husband at home." Here we see that the silence and speaking in question seem to concern the way *they wanted to learn* (and not how they wanted to teach). At the time of worship, there was the uplifting talk of prophecy and teaching for the instruction and comfort of all, but some things disturbed the order in worship: speaking in languages without interpretation; prophets trying to speak at the same time; women speaking during the service, probably because they wanted to learn:

We see in verse 35 that wives are told to ask their 'husbands at home', It seems fair to infer, therefore, that wives were asking disruptive or challenging questions and interrupting the congregational meetings. They were not free to speak in this way, for a wife's public disagreement with her husband in the ancient world would be viewed as humiliating and would dishonor him. Such a reading does not lead to the conclusion that all the women were asking questions in such a way, but Paul uses the occasion to say that no woman should interrupt the service.²⁴

Is it possible that Paul was referring to women asking questions, or talking, and not to women trying to participate in the congregation's ministry? According to the word he uses in

23. If someone reads 1 Cor 14 with the assumption that *λαλεῖν* is related to the ministry (which is not usually the case in the Bible), hardly will [he] accept that or "speak" in the context of the chapter have weight in our understanding of the ban on v. 34-35.

24. Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 297. Schreiner continues (p.298): "Here we find evidence that wives were asking questions in the meeting that were either disruptive or perhaps defiant. It is possible that the questions were entirely legitimate but they were distracting and off-putting. If this latter scenario is correct, the wives perhaps insisted that they should be able to ask questions even when they were informed that they were disruptive. The shame (*Aischron*) here does not consist of women speaking in and of itself. If that were the case, women could scarcely pray and prophesy in church (11:5)."

this context, he gives the understanding that it is not the ministry [that is] the problem, but the simple talk that does not build and, even worse, hinders and causes disorder. In addition to the word used by Paul, the context of the time corroborates this interpretation. Women did not have the same instruction as men, so they needed help understanding or interpreting what was being taught in the church. In this context, breaking taboos for the time, the Apostle Paul states that these women should not speak in church, but that they should ask their questions at home and learn properly. This was also a lesson for the men, who would need to teach his wife at home ([by] order of the apostle), and not continue leaving her on the sidelines of church teaching. However, in the same vein as the rest of chapter 14 teaches, they should not hinder worship with their questions. As one scholar writes: Paul "wants them to stop interrupting the teaching period of the church service, however, because at least until they know more, they are distracting everyone and disrupting church order."²⁵

Silence is not just for women

In addressing the problems that caused disorder in worship, the Apostle Paul says that women should "shut up" in churches. This order is given by Paul through a gift of the imperative of the verb *σιγάω* (*sigāō*; "shut up"). It is interesting to note that the Apostle Paul uses this verb two other times in this context, and both are orders of the apostle through the indicative [mood]. First, in v. 28, he commands those who speak in tongues: "if there is no one to interpret, be **silent in the church (σιγάτω)**, speaking to himself and to God." Soon after, in v. 30, he gives orders to those who bring prophecies: "If, however, a revelation comes to someone who is seated, **shut up (σιγάτω) the first.**" Some verses later, he says to women: "**keep quiet (σιγάτωσαν) in the churches**, because they are not allowed to speak."

We've seen that "talking" itself doesn't mean anything specific. From the context, it is perceived that the problem was the speaking that hindered and did not build. Now we see that Paul's order for women's silence should also not be seen in isolation, but within context. Paul did not entirely forbid speaking in tongues, but there were rules for this that were not being complied with. In the face of this, he orders them to shut up. Likewise, Paul did not forbid prophets to speak, but laid rules for the good order of worship. Depending on the circumstances, there is the order for one to shut up and the other to speak. At the end of the chapter, still within his argument and using the same terminology, the apostle orders women to shut up and not to speak in churches when they wish to learn. From the teaching of the apostle himself, however, we know that this order is also circumstantial, for according to Paul women can pray and prophesy in the church meeting, when they do so according to good order (1 Cor 11. 5).

Precisely because Paul does not explain the extent of silence and does not qualify the forbidden "speaking," we must first seek in context the meaning for these verses. Thus, again, "speaking" would refer to what does not build [up] and disturbs worship, and silence should be for that type of speech.

25. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Second Edition. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014), 490–491.

"Women" or "wives"?

Is the apostle talking about all women, or wives? This is another issue that we need to explain in more depth. Is it clear in the text that Paul's prohibition (whatever it may be) applies to all females? Or could the text be talking about wives and the way they were behaving at the service? The text is somewhat ambiguous (which in itself requires caution), but there are compelling reasons to see that the relationship between husband and wife are part of the argument. The most obvious reason is the fact that Paul explicitly tells her (v. 35) that these women should ask "at home to her own husband; because for women it is shameful to speak in the church."

The Apostle Paul uses the plural of γυνή (gyné; "woman", "wife") 11 times in his epistles. We observed that Paul uses the plural consistently (8x) to speak of "wives" and not of women in general (1 Cor 7.29; Eph 5.22, 24, 25, 28; Col 3.18, 19; 1 Tim 3.11). The three remaining uses, usually understood as "women in general", are found in the passages that are the center of the discussion on the ordination of women (1 Cor 14.34; 1 Tim 2.9, 10),

Another important textual aspect to consider is that, in addition to the plural, in 1 Cor 14.34 Paul uses the article before women (αἱ γυναῖκες). Paul uses this structure, article + γυνή (both plural and singular), 22 times in his letters (in 18 verses). Of all these times, in the majority (17 occurrences) he is talking about "wife(s)" or, in a passage, "single woman", which is still related to marriage (1 Cor 7.3, 4, 14, 16, 33, 34; 11.10; Eph 5.22, 23, 24, 25, 31; Col 3.18-19). Only in 4 times he refers to the "woman" without reference to marriage. In these cases, γυνή is always in the singular, and all are in the same passage of the Bible, where he talks about man and woman according to the order of creation (1 Cor 11.7, 9, 12).

Considering the apostle's own writing style and the principle of letting Scripture interpret Scripture, the question of αἱ γυναῖκες in 1 Cor 14:34 is necessary. Here we have both the article and the plural γυνή, which generally indicate that the apostle has "wives" in mind.

The paragraphs above do not resolve the issue. One might claim that Paul in these verses, is fleeing some of his writing patterns, both with αἱ γυναῖκες and with the supposed use of λαλεῖν to refer to pastoral ministry. However, as we read the verses 1 Cor 14:34-35 carefully, we realize that the apostle's message is quite similar to other passages in which he is teaching about the relationship between husband and wife, and not about pastoral ministry.

1 Cor 14.34-35	Eph 5.21-22	Col 3.18
<p>Αἱ γυναῖκες ..., ὑποτασέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει..., ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἀνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν, αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ.</p> <p>"Women ... be submissive, as the law also determines ... ask your own husband at home"</p>	<p>ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ. Αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ,</p> <p>"Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, each of you be subject to your own husband, as to the Lord."</p>	<p>Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν</p> <p>"Wives, each of you be subject to your own husband..."</p>

It is evident that the context of 1 Cor 14 is primarily talking about something that happens in worship, and not at home. However, the apostle Paul's teaching seems to be about the relations between man and wife (or between husband and wife) in the church, and not about the ordination of women to pastoral ministry.²⁶

Pastoral Ministry in 1 Cor 14? Women and *prophesy* for church education

If the verses in which Paul forbids women from speaking in the church are not speaking of pastoral ministry, does this mean that this important subject in the life of the church (and worship) is not contemplated in 1 Cor 14? Here it is appropriate to reflect on some aspects of the apostle's teaching concerning worship in this chapter.

"Prophesy" in 1 Cor 14

The Apostle Paul uses the verb "prophesy" 11 times in all; all of them in 1 Cor, and most often in association with worship. The first two occurrences are in 1 Cor 11.4-5, where he speaks that man and woman prophesy, and lays down the rules for this to be done in the right way. Note in the poem about love in 1 Cor 13, he mentions since "we prophesy in part".

26. Cf. David K. Lowery, "1 Corinthians." *The Bible Knowledge Commentary An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Ed. J. F. Walvoord and R.B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 541: "Two indications strongly suggest that married women were in view in this passage. The first is the word Submission (*hypotassesthōsan*, v. 34). When it occurs elsewhere in the New Testament with specific reference to a woman, it always refers to a married woman who was to be subject to her husband (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1.5). The second indication is the phrase their own husbands (1 Cor 14:35), whom the inquisitive women were to consult if they had questions. This would obviously be a difficult assignment for single women (e.g., 7:34) or those with unbelieving husbands (e.g., 7:13)." See also David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians: Life in the Local Church*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 251-252: "Whatever this section is teaching, it is not telling women to keep quiet in church. In 11:59 Paul has already referred to women praying and prophesying. The reference to their husbands at home (35) immediately indicates that the apostle is thinking about the behaviour of some married women at Corinth, behaviour which needed firm control of the kind which had clearly proved necessary in all the churches of the saints (33)."

It is chapter 14, however, that he expresses his theology about "prophesying" (8x) in the Church and the relationship of this with other aspects of Christian life (teaching, ministry, submission of women, edification, etc.).

The importance of this theme for Paul's theology is evident when we see that the argument of the entire chapter is about prophesying in worship. Structurally, the beginning and end of the chapter form an inclusion, which emphasizes the main theme of what comes between these tips:

1 Cor 14.1: "Follow love **and zealously** seek spiritual gifts, especially **prophesying**."

1 Cor 14:39-40: "Therefore, my brethren, **seek with zeal the gift of prophesying** and do not forbid the speaking of tongues. But all be done with decency and order."

The first suggestion I make from the relevance of this theological aspect in chapter 14 of 1 Cor is that an in-depth discussion of the role of women in the Church of Corinth needs to take into account God's teaching and context. As we know, the gift of prophesying is a gift received (no one claims it), and it is for everyone (regardless of sex). In 1 Cor 11:4-5 Paul had said that man and woman prophesy in the church, and in chapter 14 he says "³¹ For all may **prophesy**, one after another...". This rule does not change with the prohibition of verses 34-35.

The relationship between prophesy and pastoral ministry in 1 Cor 14

The question we can ask from the paragraph above is: what does it mean to *prophesy in the context of worship*? Let us see what the Word of God tells us in 1 Cor 14:

³But what prophesies speaks (*λαλεῖ*) to people, building (*οικοδομῆν*) exhorting (*παράκλησιν*) and consoling (*παραμυθίαν*). ⁴He who speaks in tongues builds himself, but what prophesies builds (*οικοδομεῖ*) the church. ⁵I want you all to speak in tongues, but much more to *prophesy*. For he who *prophesies* is superior to those who speak in tongues, unless he interprets them, so **that the church receives οἰκοδομῆν**.

³¹For all may prophesy, one after another, that all **may** learn (*μανθάνωσιν*) and be **comforted** (*παρακαλῶνται*).

As we discuss Paul's teaching of pastoral ministry in 1 Cor 14, we cannot fail to notice the apostle's clear connections of *prophesying* in worship with pastoral ministry. The relationship between these matters is evident from the language used by the apostle in the course of his argumentation. Perhaps the most important term linking prophesy to Paul's language about ministry is "**building**". From this, we'll take care of it later.

Exhortation/exhortation: Both the noun *παράκλησις* (*paraklésis*; "exhortation" or "consolation") as the verb *παρακαλέω* (*parakaleō*; "to exhort" or "comfort") appear to be the goal, or at least the result, of *prophesying* in worship. For the apostle, these are not neutral words, for we can see that he uses them as part of his pastoral task (1 Tim 2:3), and teaches Timothy and Titus that they, as pastors, should do the same:

1 Tim 4.13: "Until My arrival, devote yourself to the public reading of the Scriptures, to **exhortation**, to teaching."

1 Tim 5.1: "Do not rebuke an older man; on the contrary, **exhort him** as you would with your father."

1 Tim 6.2: "... Teach and recommend these things."

2 Tim 4. 2: preach the word, insist, whether it is opportune or not, correct, rebuke, **exhort** with all patience and doctrine."

Tit 1.9: "be attached to the faithful word, which is in accordance with doctrine, so that **it may exhort** for the right teaching and convince those who contradict this teaching."

Tit 2.6: "Likewise, as for the younger ones, **urge them** to be moderate in all things."

Tit 2.15: "Teach these things. Also **exhort** and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you."

Consolation: prophesying in worship also has the purpose of bringing παραμυθίαν (paramythia; "consolation"). This noun only appears here in the NT, but the verb παραμυθέομαι (paramytheomai; "console") appears 4 times, of which 2 (1 Thess 2.12; 5.14) are in a writing of Paul. The first of these is part of Paul's task as a pastor: "And you know very well that we treat each of you as a father treats your children, exhorting²⁷ comforting and admonishing you to live in a god-worthy way, which calls you to your Kingdom and its glory."

Learning: the [other] aspect of prophesying in [worship] according to Paul is "**so that all learn them**" (v. 31). The verb μανθάνω (manthanō; "learning") is commonly used by Paul to refer to learning doctrines, faith, and conduct of life. It can even be said that "learning" in this case is the other side of "teaching", which is also used in a technical/theological sense. Do we see this "learning" as something that refers to the official learning of biblical doctrines? The two passages where Paul says women should be quiet in the church also say that they can "learn", and from there we understand that he is referring to the formal teaching of the church (1 Cor 14:35; 1 Tim 2.11). See the "learn" as something technical also in Rom 16.17, Eph 4.20, Phil 4.9 and Tit 3.14, where the apostle is talking about the learning of some authoritative teaching.

Paul describes the "speaking" he builds in worship (in this context, also called prophesying) in a way very close to his own teaching on the doctrine of pastoral ministry in other letters (including in the pastoral epistles). To use the same terms that the CTRE document cites against the pastoral ministry, it is *difficult to imagine that the use of this terminology was an apostolic lapse*.

27. This word is the verb "exhort" (παρακαλέω) discussed above.

"Prophets" and pastoral ministry: is there a relationship?

First, it is necessary to return to the word "build", which is emphasized in 1 Cor 14 as the goal of prophesying. For Paul, the authority of the ministry is also for "edification" (οικοδομῆν; oikodome), as we see in 2 Cor 13:10: "Therefore I write these things, being absent, so that, being present, I will not use strictly according to the authority that the Lord has given me for **edification** and not for destruction". In itself, the emphasis of 1 Cor 14 and Paul's words in the passage mentioned above make us think about the possible relationship between *prophesying* and pastoral ministry. However, this connection is even more evident in Paul's theology, as we see in the apostle's teaching about the ministry in other passages.

In some excerpts of his letters, Paul uses the word "prophets" with the same meaning we find for this word in other writings of the NT: as much as *the prophets of the OT* (Rom 1:2; 11:3), as the part of the *writings of the OT* (Rom 3:21). However, in a peculiar way, most of the time Paul speaks of prophets he refers to people God raised up and gave to the church as a gift to perform ministerial functions (such as the ones we saw above). It is with this last sense that the word is used in the context of 1 Cor 14, where he talks about *prophesying*.

The next question we should ask is: in addition to the strong terminology linked to the pastoral ministry that we find in 1 Cor 14 (indirect teaching), does Paul teach that "prophets" have some relation to ministry (direct education)? We will see that yes, and in texts where he is talking about *ministry*, and not dealing with some specific problem:

1 Cor 12:27-29: "27Now you are the body of Christ and, individually, members of that body. 28To some God he established in the church, first, apostles; **second, prophets**; *third, masters*; then, operators of miracles; then those who have gifts to heal, or to help, or to administer, or to speak in variety of languages. 29Are they all apostles? Are they all prophets? Are they all masters? Are they all miracle workers?"

Here we see that the Apostle is teaching that if pastoral ministry has to do with the *apostolate* and teaching (teachers), [it] is also related to the *prophets*. It is evident that in this passage he is not referring to the famous prophets of the OT, for he places them below himself (first, apostles; second, prophets; etc.). See that in this teaching about ministry, what matters is that "God has established" these things in the church. This teaching is in chapter 12 of 1 Cor, after he said that both man and woman could prophesy (1 Cor 11), and shortly before (1 Cor 14) of him speaking of the "prophets" in worship ("everyone may prophesy").

The passage above is not the only one in which Paul teaches about ministry in these terms. In another central passage to our understanding of ministry as a gift of Christ, he states that the Lord himself has decided, after consummating his victory according to the plan of salvation, to give the ministry as a gift for the **building up** of the Saints. The terms he uses to speak of the ministry are significant: "11And he himself has given some to [be] *apostles*, others **to prophets**, *others to evangelists*, and *others to pastors and teachers*, 12with a view to perfecting the Saints for the performance of his service, **for the building up** of the body of Christ." (Eph 4.11-12) Again, the apostles come before "prophets", because he is not referring to the prophets of the OT.

In these passages we see that apostolic teaching on the ministry places "prophets" as part of pastoral ministry, including above pastors and teachers, in the examples. These texts

are rules that apply to all times and everywhere, because they speak of gifts that Christ gave and of functions that God has established in his church. Surely what we need to ask ourselves is: Did Paul imagine that women could be part of this ministry? According to its rules for worship in 1 Cor 11 and 14, everything indicates that yes, [as long as] certain parameters were observed.

This position of the Apostle Paul on the ministry and God's decision for his church is not strange when we realize that the biblical text speaks of *prophetess* in some places, both in the OT and in the NT.²⁸ It is usually said that "prophets" (or at least "the prophets") did not have a permanent function, and so the fact that the Bibles speak of prophets does not tell us much about the ministry. However, it is important to consider the following: 1) prophetess[es] speak in the name of God (with his authority); 2) apparently, the submission between man and woman (or husband and wife) did not apply while speaking of God (spoke to men, without any qualification as to the order of creation); 3) the "prophetic office" in the OT was the most high authority, preaching to the people about aspects of religious life, and also speaking to kings; 4) the Apostle Paul does not make this distinction that we usually make when speaking of prophets; rather, he is the one who seems to *connect "prophets" with the doctrine of ministry*.

To be clear, *it is not being said in this study* that Paul is saying that all who *prophesy in 1 Cor 14 are shepherds*. No, not at all. What is being suggested is that the testimony of the Word of God connects much more *the prophesy* of 1 Cor 14 with the pastoral ministry than the verses that bring the prohibition to women. It is quite evident that the Apostle Paul teaches about the ministry with the same terminology used in his argument about "speaking that builds" in 1 Cor 14. On the other hand, the relationship of *λαλεῖν* and the submission of women to man with the doctrine of ministry could be better explained.

As much as, in the first analysis, Paul does not seem to be speaking directly about pastoral ministry in 1 Cor 14, the question remains: why can we perceive a strong and decisive teaching about ministry in ambiguous terminology, and disregard this relationship between "prophet" and ministry and the terminology employed by the apostle? Reflecting from the silence of the text, we could also ask: if Paul were against the ordination of women to ministry, why did he establish a strong connection between prophets (including women) and their teachings on pastoral ministry? Or, put another way, why did he not clarify that the

28. Among the best known (Miriam and Deborah), notice the relevance by Hulda as an authoritative figure who speaks in the name of God, including men (2 Kings 22.14-20) "¹⁴Then the priest Hilkias, Aicão, Acbor, Safan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophesy Hulda, wife of Salum, in charge of the garments of the House of the LORD, son of Ticva, son of Harás. Hulda lived in the Lower City of Jerusalem. They told him what had happened, ¹⁵and she said to them," Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel" Tell the man who sent them to me: ¹⁶So says the LORD: Behold, I will bring disgrace upon this place and upon its inhabitants, that is, all the words of the book which the king of Judah read. ¹⁷For they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods, to provoke me to wrath with all the works of their hands, my fury has kindled against this place and will not be extinguished.' ¹⁸But to the king of Judah, who sent them to consult the LORD, say this: So says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the words you have heard: ¹⁹Since your heart was buried and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard the threats I made against this place and against its inhabitants—which would be the object of horror and curse—you tore your clothes and wept before me, I too heard your prayer, the LORD says. ²⁰Therefore, I will let you die and be buried in peace, and your eyes will not see all the evil I will bring upon this place." So they took this answer to the king."

"doctrine" of women's submission should have more weight than her vision of "prophecy" in pastoral ministry?

Verses 33, 37-38

Finally, some considerations about clipping the text. It was mentioned earlier that some see a strong emphasis on the prohibition of women, which would be evidenced by the following verses: "As in all the churches of the saints..." (33b) and "³⁷If one considers himself prophet or spiritual, recognize that it is the Lord's command what I am writing to you. ³⁸ And if any man ignore him, he shall be ignored."

First, verses 37-38 are not reflected only to the prohibition that women speak, but to the whole teaching of chapter 14. Paul is saying that "the things" he wrote are the Lord's commandment. Second, verse 33b may be referring to the question of women who were speaking at the service, but also to what came before.²⁹ Anyway, the Apostle Paul could quietly teach that everywhere women were taught not to see worship as the time to talk or ask questions, and this was worth it to the Corinthians as well.

Final considerations on 1 Cor 14

In this study, some questions were raised and some ideas were offered about Paul's ban on women in Corinth. Finally, I make the following considerations:

- The rule (Paul's prohibition) applies to all times and everywhere! What is under discussion is not the validity or scope of the ban, but the *content*.³⁰
- When we do not understand the rule, we can universalize aspects of Paul's teaching that illustrated a problem, although they were not a problem in itself. An example of this, also of 1 Cor, is the wearing of a veil by Christian women in today's churches. The principle Paul taught transcended the example of the veil.
- The rule of 1 Cor 14 is that women remain silent and ask their questions at home. The question here is: In this passage, what is "veil" and what is the principle that transcends?

1 Timothy 2.11-14

¹¹[Let] The woman learn in silence, with all submission. ¹²And I do not allow the woman to teach, nor to exercise authority over man; but to be

29. Lenski says Luther did not share verse 33, but considered that both parties are connected to what comes before: "The clause: As in all the churches of the saints, is by most of the ancients, by Luther, and by our versions connected with the preceding sentence, but nearly all modern exegetes connect it with the following sentence." R.C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 614.

30. As Paul himself writes, what he teaches is something that "also the law determines" (1 Cor 14:34). A lot of discussion exists about what law this is. Although it is the principle of creation on the relationship between man and woman, this does not mean that it refers, in the context, to the participation of women in pastoral ministry.

silent. ¹³For first Adam was formed, then Eve. ¹⁴And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, fell into transgression."

Without a doubt, this is the most important biblical text (for being unique!) for the discussion of women's ordination, as it brings a direct prohibition on women teaching in the church. In this brief study, we want to look for answers to questions such as: What biblical commandment is valid for all times? What is the prohibition contained in the text? What is the function of the accounts of the creation and fall in the apostle Paul's argument? Do we need to distinguish between cultural elements and the timeless principle so that we can apply this passage correctly? And finally, is there an interpretation of this passage that helps to consistently understand the whole apostolic argument, including verse 15 (which has been considered obscure by many)?

Below, we will first summarize the current position of the IELB by applying the message of this text to the ordering of women. Next, we want to consider the words of the apostle and try our best not to make theological statements that he has not made (disrespecting the Word of God). It is essential that a faithful approach to the text considers *historical-grammatical aspects*, to use known terminology. It is certain that we understand the message of the biblical texts through specific words, phrases and paragraphs, but this does not end the interpretive task. Understanding the world in which the text was written—its customs and language, allows us to state with tranquility, for example, that the Apostle Paul does not command women to wear the veil these days (1 Cor 11.5-6), and that he was thinking in a specific context when he asked, "Doesn't nature itself teach you that it is dishonorable for man to wear long hair?" (1 Cor 11.14). Paul argues from creation, and we understand that he teaches a *principle* in these verses that should be followed by the church to this day, but this principle is not that women wear veils or that men do not wear long hair.

One thing we can say with certainty first of all: there is a clear apostolic ordination in this passage that needs to be observed throughout the church of all time. Other elements of the text may reflect how this clear ordination (principle) should be manifested in the church of Timothy. The following study seeks to read the text carefully in order to discern which (is) was the principle(s).

Against the ordination of women!

The interpretation that sees in these words of Paul a permanent prohibition on the ordination of women usually observes two central aspects in this passage. One is the apostle's use of the verb διδάσκειν (didaskain; "teaching") in verse 12: "The evidence of the New Testament leads us to conclude that the verb is used to designate a special activity, of someone who was placed by God in a special office, following the apostolate that was originally entrusted to the twelve."³¹

Allied to the understanding of the verb "teach" described above is the fact that Paul universalizes the prohibition by basing his words [on] the order of creation and the fall into

31. CTRE, 9.

sin: "Paul calls for the temporal priority of Adam's creation..., just as Eve was deceived in the fall (Gen. 3:6), to show that women should not teach or exercise authority over men in the church."³²

Some, from this passage, end up saying more than Paul and what is taught in Genesis, as we see in this excerpt from the CTRE document: "Paul reminds Timothy that Adam, having been created first, also received the function of spiritual *protector* and *guardian* of the garden (Genesis 2:15) and the vocation of *priest before God*."³³ The language of Adam as spiritual protector, guardian of the garden (without Eve), and vocation of priest before God is not biblical, and seems to mix several themes to make a single point: these functions belong to men, who are like Adam.

Against the ordination of women?

(It is worth remembering: the Word of God through the Apostle Paul is authoritative for the church of all times! The study below seeks discernment, not detachment from the Word of God.)

May the woman learn in silence and with submission

Regardless of whether and how the other parts of this passage of the Bible are understood, the apostle's words in verse 11 are a clear and permanent rule: "Woman learn silently, with all submission. What do you mean by that?"

Let the woman learn!

The only imperative in these verses is *μανθανέτω* (*manthanetō*; "let her learn"). The use of the imperative in Paul, as Voelz notes,³⁴ indicates a standing order, one [which is] the rule. Paul commands women to learn. This order alone considerably elevates the role of women in the context of the first century. Consider the following about women's learning:

Although exceptions were made for women of the elite..., most men considered intellectual activity a predominantly men's exercise. In general, women were less literate than men (sometimes the estimated number is ten percent of women compared to men of the same social class), were trained in philosophy much less than men, were almost never trained in rhetoric, and, more importantly here, in Judaism they were considerably less educated in the law. Boys were raised to recite the Torah; not girls, though they could hear in the synagogues and remember what they heard at home.³⁵

In fact, Paul's order is, as we say, very "ahead of his time." Both women must comply with this rule (learn), and the church needs to create teaching conditions so that no one is left out or marginalized. Note the difference of this passage to 1 Cor 14. In 1 Cor 14, because of

32. CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 22.

33. CTRE, 7.

34. Voelz, James. *Fundamental Greek Grammar* (3rd ed), 202.

35. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Second Edition. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014), 605.

interruptions in worship, Paul says that women who wanted to learn should ask their husbands at home. Here, the problem does not seem to be the same, and so Paul does not give the same order. In 1 Tim 2, women's learning may occur at the time of worship.

What about the "silence" and "submission" of women as they learn? The Word of God does not make the connections that are often made to explain this verse. One perceives the exaggerations of interpretation, for example, in the following words:

"In silence" is for her to learn and not assist in the conduct of [worship] as qualified men ... in "silence" — "without her speaking, without putting herself in [equality] with men conducting the service and realizing the teaching"

This silent learning is to be done "in every submission," by putting [her]self under, not ahead, without self-affirmation, without being heard.³⁶

In the quote above, it is perceived that Paul's text is being explained from the modern discussion in the church about female ministry, and this understood as a violation of the law of women's submission to man in creation. Thus, "silence" and "submission" gain contours of *non-expression* of women and *division between the sexes*.

Silence?

To understand why the above explanation is problematic, we need to observe what is meant by "silence". Unlike the absolute silence we have in 1 Cor 14 ("shut up"), the word here is ἡσυχία (hesychia; "tranquility, rest, silence"). This word and its cognates speak of a "quiet spirit", "quiet", which "does not cause disturbances". Let us observe, for example, the use of this word in 2 Thess 3:12: "To these people we determine and exhort, in the Lord Jesus Christ, that, working quietly, they eat their own bread." Here, the word translated in 1 Tim 2 as "silence" is translated by "quietly". Certainly Paul is not determining and exhorting people to work without expressing *themselves, without making themselves heard*. The point is the orderly spirit with which they must work. Similarly, the order is that women learn quietly, not with *their* mouths shut.

The adjective ἡσυχίος (hēsychios; "quiet, orderly ") is used in 1 Thess 2.2, a few verses before the focus of our study, and helps us understand Paul's use of these words: "Pray for kings and all who exercise authority, that we may live a meek and **quiet life**, with all piety and respect." Paul is not saying that we should pray that we may live *in silence*, but that we may *live without disturbance*.

Considering what we know about the lack of teaching women until the beginning of Christianity, and Paul's order for them to *learn*, the point here seems to be that Paul is saying that "the appropriate way for any novice to learn was in submission and quietly."³⁷

36. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), 562-563.

37. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Second Edition. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014), 605.

"With all submission"

In addition to learning quietly, Paul says that she learns in all ὑποταγῆ (hypotage; "submission"). Obviously, the question we should ask is, "submission to who/what?" Would Paul be referring to the fact that women are submissive to men, or that wives submit to their husbands? Some have already come to the conclusion that this would be the correct interpretation, although Paul's focus is on the aprendizado [apprenticeship] and not on relationships. He does not make it clear that when a woman learns, [s]he should be submissive to the men of the church. So what's he talking about?

The noun and the verb that speak of *submission* serve both to speak of submission to others,³⁸ and to speak of the submission that we must all have to God and his Word. Although in 1 Thess 2 Paul speaks of the authorities and also of men and women, the phrase "with all submission" in verse 11 is changing the imperative "learn." Here, the most natural thing is to understand that he is talking about submission to his own teaching,³⁹ and not the submission of women to men.

In 2 Cor 9:13, Paul writes, "In the trial of this service, they glorify God by the obedience of your confession of the gospel of Christ..." Let us note that in this passage he uses the same word to speak of submission ("obedience") [as] the confession of the gospel. Likewise, he speaks at other times about being submissive "to the law of God" (Rom 7:7) and "to righteousness that comes from God" (Rom 10:3).

Just women?

One might ask, "But the order to learn quietly and with all submission to teaching should not be for everyone, and not just for women?" We have to answer affirmatively! In these verses of 1 Tim, as is customary of the Apostle Paul in his epistles (especially in the pastoral ones), he seems to be correcting specific problems of the church Timothy shepherded. This rule of learning in tranquility and submission to teaching [is] for both women and men, but for some reason it was necessary for him to speak specifically about women (then we will talk about it).

At this point, it is normal to think that if the principle were for everyone, Paul would not have said "women" specifically. However, until this verse, the Apostle Paul has dealt with general principles (serv[ing] men and women) in a contextual way (which men and women of that church needed to take into consideration). For example, in verse 8, he says, "Therefore [I] want men to pray everywhere, raising holy hands, without anger, and without animosity." Certainly the order to pray everywhere, without anger and without animosity, is not something specific to male people! All Christians are called to the life of prayer. A few verses earlier, at the beginning of the chapter, Paul writes, "First of all, I ask that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people." (1:1) The fact that he then specifically mentions men and says that prayers are *without anger and without animosity* makes it clear that this was something that the men of that church (and ours) needed to remember. When we

38. Mutual submission among all Christians (Eph 5.21); submission of wives to husbands (Col 3.18); submission of servants to the bosses (Tit 2.9); submission authorities (Rom 13.1).

39. Or, by extension, to those who teach. Cf. 1 Cor 16:16: "Therefore, be subject to people like them, as well as to all who are co-worker and a worker."

apply this passage to our context today, however, we should not say that only men need to pray in this way, but that everyone should pray without anger and without *animosity*.

In verses 9 and 10 Paul teaches about how women should behave (in prayer, probably, since these verses are a continuation of 8). As in the previous verse, he teaches a principle from local reality. Women should not dress in a certain way, but should have "modesty and common sense", manifesting "good works". Again, although in context it was important to specifically mention women and their conduct, the principle of behaving with "modesty and common sense" and doing "good works" is not specific to the female sex.

The point is that, at least until verse 11, Paul teaches general principles to the church while addressing specific issues between men and women. We cannot, however, from these early verses, teach that only women have modesty and that only men pray without *animosity*.

Similarly, in verse 11, we should understand that the principle of *learning quietly* and in all submission *to teaching* is for everyone, but there were reasons (such as the fact that women do not learn in general) for Paul to speak of women specifically.

"And I don't allow ..."

In the Greek text, 1 Tim 2.12 does not begin with "and I do not allow", but with the verb "to teach" in an emphatic position: "*to teach* (however), I do not allow the woman...". Before talking about what is being banned, it is appropriate to talk about how the ban is introduced. The fact that Paul used the first person in the singular ("I do not allow") does not change the seriousness or diminish the authority of these words.⁴⁰ The Holy Spirit speaks for the apostle, who is fully invested in the authority of the Word of God. Still, one must notice the change in the verbal mode of verse 11 to verse 12.

In verse 11, in establishing an all-time general rule, Paul used the present imperative, which is commonly used in these contexts ("learn..."). When verse 12 [begins] with a possible contrast by the use of "δὲ" ("of;" and, "but"), of course, it is expected that the ban will also be introduced with an imperative. The two verses would look like this: "¹¹[Let] the **woman** learn in silence, with all submission. ¹²And/but that the woman **does** not teach, **nor exercise** authority over man; but be silent." However, what we have is the change from the imperative to the present of the indicative: "¹¹The woman **learn**... ¹²but **I won't** let the woman teach."

What does this exchange mean? For some, this change suggests that Paul, after establishing a general "rule on learning, is temporally restricting the role of women (presumably until they learn). Thus, the present of the indicative in this passage is understood as "I am not allowing them to teach." Paul would have done this because verse 11, which talks about women learning, could be misinterpreted as an apostolic order to which women would also take the lead in teaching at that time, since they would be learning like men. So after

40. Some readings tend to diminish the authority of the ban, saying that Paul is only manifesting his personal preference, and not speaking of God's part.

ordering women to learn, he'd be saying something like, "I don't want to imply that I'm now putting women as the new authority over men..."⁴¹

Of course, the present indicative in this passage does not close the question of women's prohibition on teaching. Scholars who understand that Paul's prohibition is permanent (because of verses 13 and 14) often respond to the above argument by saying that it is linguistic naivety "to insist that orders need to be in imperative mode. ... And one cannot appeal to the present time to say that the order is merely temporary."⁴² Thomas Schreiner quotes a series of passages where the Apostle Paul teaches things that clearly should not be understood as circumstantial, but permanent (Rom 12.1; 1 Cor 1, 10; Eph 4.1; Phil 4. 2; 1 Tim 2.8; 5.14; 2 Tim 1.6; Tit 3. 8).

As we look at the biblical passages above that serve as the basis for showing that the [indicative mood] is used by Paul to establish general rules, we notice that there is a pattern when Paul writes. In Rom 12.1, 1 Cor 1.10, Eph 4.1 and Phil 4.2, Paul uses παρακαλέω (parakaleō; "I exhort"), a common word in apostolic exhortations. In the passages of the pastoral epistles, with the exception of 2 Tim 1.6, the verb used is βούλομαι (boulomai; "desire"), which is notoriously used by Paul in contexts in which he speaks of general principles. It is not clear why the 2 Tim 1.6 pass[age] is listed, as it does not seem to refer to a general principle.

Based on the examples above, we could ask ourselves if there is anything in Paul's use of specific words in his exhortations and teaching that helps us understand whether he has in mind a permanent or temporary principle. In 1 Tim 2.12, he uses the word ἐπιτρέπω (epitrepō; "allow"). Of all the times this word is used in the NT, most are in specific contexts, not general principles.⁴³ However, these uses in other contexts cannot be forced on the passage in question. It is necessary to analyze the immediate context of 1 Tim 2.

As stated above, some note that it cannot be said that Paul's "I [do] not allow" is a temporary ban only for the use of the present of the indicative. Daniel Wallace, for example, even granting that this passage [is] subject to debate, includes Paul's "do not allow" in 1 Tim 2.12 in his section on this gnomic.⁴⁴ The problem, however, is that of all the biblical passages that Wallace includes as examples of a gnomic gift, this would be the only one in which the verb is in the first person of *the singular*.⁴⁵ There may be more biblical examples in which a gnomic gift is in the first person of the singular,⁴⁶ but until we can demonstrate their occurrence, we should be cautious in classifying this passage in this category.

Again, it is worth remembering: this verb, in itself, does not end the debate on Paul's prohibition. However, whatever our interpretation of what Paul is forbidding, it is necessary to consider the grammatical aspects of the passage so that we can demonstrate the extent of the

41. Tom Wright, Paul for Everyone: The Pastoral Letters: 1 and 2 Titus (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 25.

42. Thomas R. Schreiner, "Another Complementarian Perspective." In *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 310, n87.

43. Mt 8.12; 19.8; Mk 5.13; 10.4; Lk 8.32; 9.59, 61; Jn 19.38; Act 21.39, 40; 26.1; 27.3; 28.16; 1 Cor 14.34; 16.7; 1 Tim 2.12; Heb 6.3.

44. Used to refer to something permanent or timeless; non-specific time.

45. Daniel B. Wallace, Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 523-525.

46. I didn't do any deep research.

prohibition. If instead of "not allowing" (present), Paul had written "let the woman not teach" (imperative), we could say with more certainty that he was establishing a universal norm. On the other hand, "if his intention was not this, then the change of an order (manthanetō) to the present state of things (epitrepō) would make sense."⁴⁷

Neither teach nor have authority?

1 Tim 2.12 offers great difficulties in interpretation. On the one hand, we have the verb διδάσκειν (didaskēin; "teach"), whose meaning is usually positive in the NT. On the other [hand], we have the verb ἀθηνεῖν (authentein; "give orders to"), which does not appear anywhere else in the Bible, and in contemporary extrabiblical literature of the NT usually has a negative meaning ("dominate", "control").

Andreas Köstenberger demonstrated that, according to the structure of the verse, the two infinitives connected by οὐδὲ always match.⁴⁸ In other words, both verbs should be considered positive or negative. If the verb ἀθηνεῖν is negative ("master"), then διδάσκειν should also have negative connotations ("false teaching"). If διδάσκειν is positive ("teaching"), then ἀθηνεῖν will also be positive ("having authority"). In this case, Köstenberger and others understand that διδάσκειν, used positively by Paul, leads us to interpret that the apostle's use of ἀθηνεῖν also has a positive meaning.⁴⁹

διδάσκειν

The verb "to teach" in Greek does not always mean the systematic teaching of the Word of God, as we see in 1 Cor 11:14: "Or does nature itself not **teach them** that it is dishonorable for man to wear long hair?" (1 Cor 11.14) But this is an exception to the use of διδάσκειν.

The CTRE study document helps us realize that the verb "διδάσκειν" used in 1 Tim 2.12 concerns something that goes beyond the testimony of the Word to a friend or the informal teaching of the Word of God.⁵⁰ Several examples are offered to show that Jesus and the apostles, especially Paul, appear as the subject of the verb "teach." The inference from this is that "The evidence of the New Testament leads us to conclude that the verb is used to designate a special activity, of someone who was placed by God in a special office, following the apostolate that was originally entrusted to the twelve."⁵¹ From this understanding of the verb, and recognizing that the context in 1 Tim 2 is related to public worship, it is stated: "The Conclusion is, therefore, that the woman should not teach in the public worship of the church

47. Linda L. Belleville, "An Egalitarian Perspective." In *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 81.

48. Andreas J. Köstenberger, "A Complex Sentence: The Syntax of 1 Timothy 2:12." In *Women In The Church: An Analysis And Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.

49. The CTCR document also states that "teaching" and 'exercising authority' are parallel." (*Women in the Church*, 35)

50. CTRE, 8.

51. CTRE, 8.

or, in other words, should not act as the one who leads the teaching of the congregation, in the ministry of the word."⁵²

Are the above inferences and conclusions well founded on the apostle's words? Certainly there are the "teachers" in the church as an established function, but in 1 Tim 2 Paul uses the verb, and does not say that women could not be "teachers". What does he mean by "teaching" in 1 Tim 2? Below, some considerations regarding the use of the verb διδάσκειν in NT.

Distinction between teaching in worship and private education [teaching]

We should ask ourselves whether the distinction between public [teaching] (and worship) and private [teaching] is clearly established in the NT, or whether the NT's emphasis on teaching is more on content (which confers authority) than on occasion. Of course, the formal teaching of the church that takes place in worship is invested with authority. But it is not evident that the NT considers less authoritative the teaching that occurs in a seemingly less formal way. An example of this is the apostle Paul's own ministry.

In the times when Paul appears (perhaps this is worth to all apostles) "teaching" (with the verb διδάσκειν), the biblical text does not consider relevant the distinction between teaching at home, on the street, in the synagogue, or in another environment. The emphasis is that he taught the *Word of God* (Act 18:11; 20:20; 21:28; 28:31). The distinctions we usually make between preaching, bible study, testimony, and private teaching do not always seem to arise naturally from the use of διδάσκειν in the NT.

The Apostle Paul himself seems to consider that the medium or the occasion is not what defines the importance or authority of his "teaching", but the "content" of it: "So, brethren, stand firm and keep the traditions that have been **taught to them**, either by word or by our letter. (2 Thess 2.15)

The "gift" of teaching

Authoritative teaching occurs when someone speaks because God has called them to speak the correct content of the gospel. For Paul, teaching is a gift (χάρισμα) of God (Rom 12.7), and we know that his theology about gifts is not based on distinctions of public and private, or male and female. What counts is that "we have all been baptized into one body" (1 Cor 12:12), and it is among the group of baptized that the Spirit distributes these gifts "to each one individually as he wants." (1 Cor 12.11)

The Spirit may decide not to grant the gift of teaching (to be "teachers") to any woman of all baptized. But if this is the case, should we not find in the Bible a specific caveat to a gift of the Spirit that, unlike the others, would only be distributed among members of the body of Christ who are male? It is remarkable that in times when he deals with gifts, Paul does not make the distinctions that we usually make. In other words, we need to be very sure to state that what he writes in 1 Tim 2.12 qualifies teaching about gifts elsewhere.

52. CTRE, 9

Since this section is about "teaching", it is appropriate to remember that for Paul the "teaching", whether the continuing teaching of some pastor or even an apostle, is not as authoritative as a direct revelation: "But I inform you, brethren, that the gospel I proclaimed is not a human message, because I have not received it from any human being, nor was I **taught**, but I received it through the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal 1.11-12) In practice, we do not expect people (neither men nor women) today to receive this direct revelation without teaching. But the principle remains that what is authoritative *is* what comes from the Lord, not from the teaching of men.⁵³ Thus, the times when the Bible speaks of *prophe[tesses]* who have received revelation and spoke of God are clear examples of women exercising authority in spiritual matters.

All should διδάσκειν

If we read the words of 1 Tim 2:12 as they are in the text, without considering the distinction we make between the work of the pastor and the laity, we can come to other conclusions about the prohibition of the apostle.

Let us note that the Apostle Paul himself, writing to Christians elsewhere, uses the verb διδάσκειν to describe what he expects of all Christians: "May the word of Christ dwell richly in you. **Instruct and counsel** in all wisdom, praising God with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in their hearts." (Col 3.18) Paul is not saying that everyone should be pastors, but he hopes that in the interactions between Christians, each can διδάσκειν ("teach") to others.

Paul is not the only one to use the verb in this way. The author of Hebrews shows displeasure with the unpreparedness of Christians in spiritual matters with the following words: "For when you should already be teachers, taking into account the time elapsed, you again need someone to teach you what are the elementary principles of God's oracles. They needed milk, not solid food." (Heb 5.12) Here, Christians should have the ability to be "teachers" (διδάσκαλοι), but still need *to learn* ("someone [to] **teach them**") because they are not prepared. Of course, after they have effectively learned, they can be "masters".

Returning to the Apostle Paul, the instruction is surprising [that] he gives to Timothy in the second epistle to that pastor: "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, that very transmit to faithful people, suitable to instruct (διδάξαι) to others." (2 Tim 2.2) Biblical translations usually translate the word (anthropois, "to people" or "to men") as "men", which reinforces the idea that Paul always saw pastoral teaching as something that could be played only by men. However, the question is not as clear as we would like.

The term ἄνθρωπος is usually used to refer to humanity, not to the *male sex* specifically. It is evident in Paul's letters, especially in the pastoral epistles. This is not to say that Paul is thinking of women in writing to Timothy that he should pass his teachings on to "faithful people" so that they could teach. But it is at least noteworthy that, in general, the

53. Why it's profitable for us to continue studying the Word of the Lord on this subject.

apostle does not emphasize the same distinctions as to occasion and sex when it comes to teaching, but emphasizes the content and fact of [it] being a gift of the Spirit.

Fake teaching?

Another possibility that needs to be considered is whether in 1 Tim 2.12 Paul could be prohibiting women from transmitting false education. As has already been said, the unqualified use of διδάσκειν usually points to the positive direction. When Paul wishes to criticize the type of teaching, he usually explains that teaching is heterodox (cf. 1 Tim 6.3).

However, it should be remembered that the sense of ἀθεντεῖν (authentēin; "giving orders to") is usually negative (as we will see in the next section). Is there the necessary qualification to understand that Paul is using διδάσκειν with negative meaning? If Paul wanted to say that women could not "have authority," he could have used several familiar words from his vocabulary. The fact that he used this, which is the subject of so much debate among scholars, may be an indication that he is pointing to the kind of teaching that is authoritarian over the men of the church of Ephesus.

It would not be strange for Paul to wish to shut up those who teach what they should not. In another pastoral epistle, dealing with the problems of the church where Titus was pastor, he writes: "It is necessary to make them shut up, because they are perverting entire houses, teaching (διδάσκοντες) what they should not, with the shameful intention of making money." (Tit 1.11)

ἀθεντεῖν

This word, as already mentioned, requires caution as we read 1 Tim 2:12. The lexicon based on semantic domains of Louw and Nida classifies the verb ἀθεντεω in the semantic field of *control*.⁵⁴ According to the lexicon, the meaning of this verb is "control", "dominate", or "control in a dominating way".⁵⁵

The Document of the American CTCR recognizes that there are different interpretations about this word, but understands that the meaning should be positive due to the connection with the verb teach in context:

... careful analysis of this passage indicates that the terms "teach" and "exercise authority" are parallel. They're connected intentionally. The teaching data to which this passage refers is linked to the exercise of authority. The authority forbidden to women here is that of the pastoral office, that is, someone "who strives in preaching and teaching."⁵⁶

The debates about the meaning of ἀθεντεῖν in 1 Tim 2.12 will certainly continue; I do not intend to offer an answer. However, I understand that we can consider studies on this word which, until now, have not been part of the interpretations of this text in our midst.

54. Unlike authority, as is usually understood in the verse in question.

55. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 473.

56. CTCR, *Women in the Church*, 35.

The "authority" between the sexes

Before talking about ἀθεντεῖν, however, I offer another observation about Paul's view of "authority" in the relationship between man and woman. Much is said that, because of the order of creation, man must exercise leadership, and women should not have authority in certain spheres (in worship, for example). This idea of "authority" certainly comes from biblical texts that speak of man as the head *of* the woman, and from the *woman's* submission to man. One common aspect of these passages is that they do not speak directly of "authority". This idea is an inference (which may be correct) that we make from the word *submits*.

There is, however, a clear passage in which Paul speaks of the exercise of authority in the relationship between man and woman. And in 1 Cor 7.4 is written: "The wife has **no authority** over her own body, but the husband; and also, likewise, the husband has **no authority** over his own body, but the wife."⁵⁷ It is interesting that when Paul explicitly speaks of authority in the relationship between husband and wife he does so to speak of the mutual submission from one to the other, and of the mutual authority of one over the other.

Is this teaching of mutuality not behind the other passages that we usually see as central to the vision of a certain hierarchy between man and woman? In 1 Cor 11, for example, Paul says that "¹¹In the Lord, however, neither woman is independent of man, nor man is independent of woman. ¹²For as the woman was made of man, so also man is born of woman; and all comes from God." And in Eph 5 he begins to deal with marriage with the following words: "²¹[Be] subject [to] one another in the fear of Christ." After teaching about how husband and wife should subject themselves to each other, he states, "Behold, this is why man will leave his father and his mother and join his wife, becoming both one flesh." Again, Paul's teaching from Genesis in this context is about mutuality.

This does not explain how Paul *uses head* and *submission* in these passages. A more in-depth study of these uses in their contexts may be produced by those who see in the words of the apostle an affirmation of hierarchy or authority of man in the relationship with women. For now, it is sufficient to emphasize that there are different ways of understanding these texts as we look at the apostle's probable teaching.

Meaning of ἀθεντεω

Belleville states that meanings other than those that the lexicons show ("dominate", "control") do not arise until the third or fourth century, and that, therefore, this verb cannot be translated as "having/exercising authority over" based on historical testimony of the first century. The author shows that two Latin translations, the second and fourth century (Vulgata), [use] "dominate" in this verse. To demonstrate that [this] historical witness allows us to understand ἀθεντεω as negative in Paul's use, Belleville lists the following later translations: Geneva (1560 edition), Casiodoro de Reina (1560-61), Bishop (1589) and KJV (1611). The author's conclusion is that "there is basically a continuous tradition, extending from the oldest version to the 21st century, which translates *authentein* as 'mastery' and not as

57. The bold words in Greek ("exousiazo") are generally translated as "has power over".

'exercising authority over'.⁵⁸ According to the author, the negative understanding of this verb is now obscured in the translations of the Bible into English from the 1940s to the early 1980s.⁵⁹

We may disagree with Belleville's interpretation of external evidence on the meaning of *αὐθεντεῖν*. It can also understand that the evidence presented by scholars so far does not address the issue. What we cannot ignore is that this debate exists. We were ever seeking biblical-theological subsidies against the ordination of women in clearer passages, where at least the lexical meaning of words is clear, so that we can go ahead and discuss the contextual and theological meanings.

Creation and fall in the argument about the silence of the woman

In this section, we will not make a study of the accounts of creation and the fall into sin. We could certainly benefit from such research, but that is not the purpose of this text. Here, we just want to discuss what implications the theological reasons Paul cites (creation and fall) have for our understanding of the prohibition of teaching for women in 1 Tim. [As] was mentioned earlier, Paul's call to the order of creation and fall is often interpreted as a universalization of the principle that women can never teach with authority, that is, they can never be pastors.

Does the use of the OT imply universality?

When discussing the function of Paul's explanation, we need to test the premise of how the use of the OT universalizes the apostle's teaching. We know that the Apostle Paul can make use of narratives of the OT to teach an important theological point, even extrapolating the meaning of the text.⁶⁰ In Gal 4, Paul argues that there is a typological (or allegorical) relationship between the mothers of Ishmael and Isaac and the covenants of law and promise:

²²For it is written that Abraham had two children: one of the slave woman and the other of the free woman. ²³The son of the slave was born according to the flesh; the son of the free woman was born by promise. ²⁴These things are allegorical, for these women are two covenants. One refers to Mount Sinai, which it generates for slavery; This is Agar. ²⁵Now Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to present Jerusalem, which is in slavery with its children. ²⁶But Jerusalem from above is free, and she is our mother. (Gal 4.22-26)

After making these connections, Paul rebuts with an explanation that comes from the OT [it]self: "For it is written: Rejoice, O barren, you who do not give birth; rejoice and scream, you who do not feel labor pains; because the children of the abandoned woman are more numerous than the children of the one who has a husband." (Gal 4.27[; Is 54:1-3])

58. Linda L. Belleville, "An Egalitarian Perspective." In *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 86-87.

59. Belleville, 87.

60. For our standards of exegesis, but certainly not for the Holy Spirit, who is behind Paul's words!

It is evident that Paul's use of the passages above is different from what we find in 1 Thess 2.13-14. The purpose in mentioning Gal 4 is not to say that the functions of the OT are identical, but to draw attention to the fact that we need to recognize that there are different uses of passages of the OT in apostolic argumentation.

Two other examples, also of the Apostle Paul, are sufficient. In 1 Cor 10, Paul gives an order with the imperative [mood], and as justification for such an order, he cites a passage of the OT: "²⁵Eat of everything sold in the market, without any questioning for reasons of conscience. ²⁶*For the Lord is the land and its fullness.*" (1 Cor 10:25-26) Surely the Apostle is not saying that Christians need to *eat* from all that is sold on the market; this doesn't make sense. Nor is he claiming that we can eat today from everything that is sold on the market without questioning any reason for conscience. There may be things today that the apostle would indeed consider problematic, even if the Lord *is* the *earth and its fullness*. How to understand this order of Paul based on a principle of the OT? Paul had in mind the markets of his time in the city of Corinth, and the kind of problems of conscience that eating certain things, such as meat sacrificed to idols, could bring to Christians. The principle, therefore, is that we do not need to have problems of conscience when eating certain foods that are not intended for the Lord, for in fact, everything comes from the Lord! The principle (the order) *is not* that you eat everything that is sold on the market!

Another passage in which the apostle Paul bases his contextual teaching on a teaching of the OT is in 1 Cor 6. In rebutting likely erroneous ideas of the Corinthians as to our bodies, Paul writes: "¹⁶Or do they not know that the man who joins [to] the whore forms one body with her? Because, as they say, "they will both become one flesh." (1 Cor 6.16) It is interesting that Paul is applying a text of creation that talks about the union of man and woman before the fall into sin to the union between someone and a prostitute. Paul's use is fundamentally different from Jesus' application of this passage. In both accounts in the gospels (Mk 10; Mt 19) describing Jesus' response to the Pharisees on the divorce, the Lord adds, "Therefore, let no one separate what God has gathered together." Jesus is bringing the context of the OT into discussion, recognizing that current marriages, as well as in the account of creation, are unions made by God himself. Paul, on the other hand, without explaining, is just talking about sexual intercourse and the impact on the lives of human beings, without considering that the union between someone and a prostitute is a union made by God himself in the same way as the union between Adam and Eve.

The brief discussion shows that, in general, the use of the OT serves as a theological basis for principles taught in the NT. The universal principle based on the text of the OT, however, needs to be carefully considered in context, since the NT authors do not always explain the reasons they have in mind to bring in the OT for their argument.

Universalizes what principle?

In the face of all that has been seen so far on 1 Thess 2:11-14, the question rests: even though Paul evokes creation and the fall to universalize the principle he is teaching, what is this principle exactly? Let's look at some possible readings.

Against women's ministry

First, the current position of our church. After Paul established that women should learn in silence and with all submission, and have forbidden them to teach with authority in the context of worship, he cites the OT to demonstrate that God wanted the woman to have a position subordinate to man from creation. She shouldn't be an authority. The fact that Eve was deceived may demonstrate that women are more inclined to error, or that the woman's deception resulted from the reversal of roles (man and woman) in the Garden.

Eve was not prepared to take the lead, so Paul forbids women from doing the same. The permanent principle: all women are excluded from the church's authoritarian teaching (pastoral ministry).

"Teach" and "have authority" as positive

Because of the problems faced in the church of Timothy, Paul teaches how men and women should behave. Women should correctly learn the doctrines of God's Word. As this was still going to happen, Paul said that he was forbidding them to teach and [to] exercise authority over the men of the congregation. Even if they started to learn, as men were already doing, they should not assume that it was time to lead, which men were already doing. Everything has its time, including for incipient Christianity. The very narrative of creation shows that Adam was first created, and then Eve. The time would come for the women of Ephesus to assume their role alongside men. But they shouldn't run over things. Adam was not [d]eluded, but Eve went and fell into transgression. Unless these women obeyed the apostle's rule of learning quietly and in all submission, they would be deceived, and fall into transgression.

The permanent principle: anyone who has not submitted to the authoritative teaching of the Word of God continuously, cannot have room to teach those who are already more prepared, because he will trample steps and be more susceptible to error.

"Teach" and "have authority" as negative

As in the example above, Paul [institutes] a permanent principle from the situation of the church of Timothy. He begins by teaching how men and women should behave. Women should correctly learn the doctrines of God's Word. At the same time, they needed to remember that any attitude of domination was expressly prohibited.⁶¹ It is not because now women could occupy the same space until then reserved for men (learn) that they were free to control or dominate others. If you have forgotten, men should not be despised, not least because the account of creation shows that Adam came before Eve. Controlling, disrespectful attitudes have no place in Christ's church. To act like this is to act like Eve, who was deceived and fell into transgression.

61. An objection that's raised a[gainst] this interpretation is that Paul would not need say that women were prohibited from "dominate", because this teaching is obvious. Nevertheless this objection does not consider that it's also obvious that men should pray "without anger and without animosity" (1 Thess 2:8), but Paul writes this because the context required [it].

The permanent principle: many (like the women in Ephesus's congregation) misuse the liberating teaching of the Word of Christ, and abuse their position as a valuable member of the church to impose their wills. They need to be silenced, for they despise their position in the good order of God and incur transgression.

Contexts

Finally, it is necessary to make some notes about contexts. The above study surveyed different positions, and sometimes made suggestions about the interpretation of 1 Tim 2. Now we need to see in what directions the contexts of the epistle and the culture's place and the time (as far as we can ascertain) seem to take us.

Biblical context: women were the target of false education

We know that one of Paul's goals in writing to Timothy was to fight false teaching. Having studied part of chapter two and the prohibition for women to teach, let us consider the following:

The only passage in the Bible that specifically prohibits women from teaching is addressed to the only church where we know that false teachers had effectively had women as their targets. A major problem in Ephesus was false teaching (1 Tim 1.3-20; 4.1-7; 6.6-10, 20-21; 2 Tim 2.16, 3.5-13, 4.3-4), and the leading false teachers (who were men—1 Tim 1.20; 2 Thess 2.17) were exploiting women in order to spread their false teaching. How do we know that? If women, as a rule, had less training than men, they would become a natural target because they were particularly susceptible to this false teaching. Thus, it is not surprising to know that these false [masters] targeted women in the houses (2 Thess 3:6). who were unable to learn correctly (3.7; cf. 1 Tim 4.7).⁶²

Cultural context: women in Ephesus and Paul's words

⁸And I want men to pray everywhere, raising holy hands, without anger, and without animosity. ⁹Likewise, that women, in decent attire, embellish themselves with modesty and common sense, not with braids in their hair, gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, ¹⁰but with good works, as befits women who profess to be pious. ¹⁵But she shall be saved by having children, if she remains in faith, love, and sanctification, with common sense.

Scholars of the epistles to Timothy often comment that Ephesus was marked by religiosity, having the largest temple in Asia Minor, dedicated to Artemis, goddess of fertility.⁶³ They argue that some aspects of Paul's teaching in 1 Tim 2, for example, start to make more sense when we tend [to] the context in which his words would be received:

62. Craig S. Keener, "Another Complementarian Perspective." In *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 232.

63. Stanley J. Grenz, *Women in the Church: Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*, 126.

An influence of Artemis would certainly explain Paul's corrections in verses 13-14. While some may have believed that Artemis arose first and then her male consort, the true story was exactly the opposite. For Adam was formed first, and then Eve (v. 13). Eve was deceived (v. 14)—which hardly serves as the basis for claiming superiority. The influence would also explain Paul's statement (v. 15) that "she will be saved by having children"....; for Artemis was the protector of women. The women turned to her for a safe trip during pregnancy.... For this reason, the goddess Artemis was invoked by women during childbirth."⁶⁴

The suggestion that Paul's teaching was considering the context of Ephesus described above is not recent. However, those who see in the apostle's words a prohibition on the ordination of women often dispute that the suggested reconstruction is very uncertain and should not serve as the basis for the correct interpretation of the text.

More recently, however, scholars have confirmed that much of what appeared to be a hypothetical reconstruction of Ephesus' religiosity in the first century has historical testimony. Gary H. Hoag, in the book *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the First Letter to Timothy: Fresh Insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus*, 2015, lists several parallels between 1 Tim and Eph. Xenophon's writing of Ephesus appeared in the spotlight of Bible exegetes due to new analyses that place its probable date of origin in the first century in Ephesus."⁶⁵

Some terms Paul uses to speak of women's dress appear only in 1 Tim 2.9-10 in the Bible. From his analysis of Ephesians, Hoag points out that almost all the words of these verses also appear in Xenophon's work.⁶⁶ On the term *πλέγμα* ("braided"; 1 Tim 2.9), for example, he comments:

Previously, scholars generally saw this term as braided or intertwined hair associated with non-modest or dismayed women, and did not connect this rare term in Ephesia with 1 Tim 2:9-10. In the context of Ephesus, Xenophon of Ephesus uses it to refer to the hair style or hairstyle worn by those who served and wished to imitate Artemis.⁶⁷

The author then discusses possible implications of the use of Paul's terminology in 1 Tim 2.9-10. For him, the specific term Paul uses (*πλέγμασιν*)

may represent more than a ban on ostentatious hairstyles. This word seems to point to a hair style that was strongly associated with the goddess Artemis in the social context.

In addition, the practice of imitating Artemis is described *in Ephesia* as something of the culture that was expected of all young women.... The forbidden hairstyle along with the order to stop wearing expensive costumes may represent instruction to stop participating in cultic activities.⁶⁸

64. Linda L. Belleville, "An Egalitarian Perspective." In *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 90-91.

65. Gary H. Hoag, *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the First Letter to Timothy: Fresh Insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus*, 15.

66. Hoag, 79.

67. Hoag, 75.

68. Hoag, 79. Hoag further demonstrates other language connections.

If Xenophon faithfully portrays the reality of Ephesus in the first century, Paul's words certainly had a great impact on the lives of the women of the community [shepherded] by Timothy. In his study of *Ephesus from Ephesia*, Hoag also comments that

the myth of Artemis claimed that the goddess, the woman, was the author of man. In view of the myths present *in the world of Ephesia*, the order to silence 'the woman' (singular in 1 Tim 2:12) seems to send a message to young women like Anthia⁶⁹ to abandon the myths she would have learned from childhood.⁷⁰

Finally, Hoag also suggests that the context of Ephesus provides the background necessary for us to understand Paul's words in 1 Thess 2.15 ("shall be saved by having children"):

Artemis was widely known as the mother of all life, the goddess of pregnancy, a goddess of vengeance who overthrows those who do not follow her laws of purity, a goddess in which all women placed their trust. Women who chose to serve God over the goddess of pregnancy would put their lives at risk because of the goddess's possible wrath. In view of this, 1 Tim 2:15 offered hope instead of fear to Ephesian women in God's church, despite the tremendous social and religious pressures of this context.⁷¹

Final considerations on 1 Tim 2

Whatever the decision on the [ordination] of women, it will be based on a set of biblical principles, not just on isolated passages. However, as the text of 1 Tim 2 [has been] decisive, it is important to consider the various aspects that are at stake in the interpretation of these verses. Some certainties arise from this study, but perhaps the greatest of them was that there are still many uncertainties in the question of the content and scope of Paul's prohibition on teaching by women in 1 Tim 2.12. Where do these certainties and uncertainties lead us? The paragraph below may indicate a path, but it is certainly not the only one.

If 1 Tim 2.11-15 can be legitimately understood as a relevant prohibition only for women of specific circumstances historically (and can), and if there is no other biblical text that explicitly prohibits women from teaching or having authority over men (and there is not), and whether there are texts that affirm fundamental spiritual equality of women and men (and there is), then women who are not in the same circumstances for which the prohibition of 1 Tim 2.12 was addressed can surely follow whatever their call to ministry. In other words, one should at least recognize that traditionalist interpretation is debatable on biblical basis.⁷²

69. Ephesian character.

70. Hoag, 91.

71. Hoag, 91-92.

72. *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 140.

Conclusion

Before I conclude, I would like to reaffirm: the Bible is the Word of God! Repeating, and explaining: the Bible is authoritative in ALL matters, and any doctrine that is under discussion must have this confession as a principle.

What is the purpose of having reacted to the CTRE document and, at the same time, to have shared these exegetical studies? I do not know if I can sum it up in a single goal, but surely the main thing is the deepening of biblical study in the face of controversial issues, recognizing the authority of the Word of God.

Frankly speaking, from personal experience, I decided to share this because I have had difficulties (perhaps intellectual, perhaps of another kind) to realize that the argument in our church regarding female ministry is biblically and theologically coherent. I have not yet been able to assimilate any connections and assumptions, nor to relate the conversations about female ministry to Lutheran confessions. By this I do not mean that there is no coherence and relationship between these things. In fact, one hope I have in sharing these texts is that the conversation will continue, and more arguments of the Word of God (and Confessions) be brought into the conversation, so that we can all submit to the will of the Lord of the Church.

Should we start ordaining women in pastoral ministry? Today, I would not see any problems with this, and I think our church needs to study the subject in the light of arguments from the Word of God. I do not share this text with the first intention of changing this aspect of our church (because, as a good Lutheran, I know how difficult it is to change culture!).

What really motivated me to share was the feeling that, because I have doubts (and opinions contrary to those accepted at the time) on this subject, I would automatically be seen as someone who opposes the authority of God's Word. Perhaps I am the only confessional Lutheran who lives the drama of conscience to see that there may be problems in our church, but shut up for fear that their restlessness will be considered heresy. Maybe there are others who live the same dilemma. In fact, regardless of how many there are, I needed to try to demonstrate that this drama is caused exactly by my attempt (perhaps frustrated, and accept[ing] corrections) to be faithful to the Word of God.

I will have considered this venture a success if the dialogues on this subject begin to go beyond labels. Not everyone who considers female ministry as acceptable according to the Bible is feminist (although there are many), just as not everyone who is against feminine ministry is not sexist (although there are many). There are people committed to learning with peace of mind and with all submission from both sides of the debate.

May God bless our IELB, which I submit joyfully. I hope I have been convincing enough in my emphasis that the *Word of God is authoritative* in everything (for me, and the whole church), even though everything else I have written can be dismissed as irrelevant or erroneous.